

# **AQA Conflict and Tension: 1918-39**

## How satisfied were the leaders with the Treaty of Versailles given their aims going into the Paris peace conference?

### Georges Clemenceau (France)



A hard, tough politician with a reputation for being uncompromising. He wanted revenge on Germany. He had seen his country invaded twice by the Germans, in 1870 and in 1914. He was determined not to allow such devastation ever again.

- Ever since 1870, France had felt threatened by its increasingly powerful neighbour, Germany. The war increased this feeling.
- France had suffered enormous damage to its land, industry, people – and self-confidence.
- He demanded a treaty that would weaken Germany as much as possible. He wanted compensation for all the soldiers killed and injured and all damage done

### David Lloyd-George (Britain)



A realist. As an experienced politician, he knew there would have to be compromise. He wanted to punish Germany, but not too harshly. Thus he occupied the middle ground between the views of Wilson and those of Clemenceau.

- He wanted to weaken the German Navy and German colonies so Germany would be less of a threat to the British Empire. He didn't want Germany to be too weak, as he wanted them to continue to buy British goods!
- In the British general election campaigns of 1918 politicians knew they could rely on the support of the British people if they demanded a harsh peace settlement with Germany.

### Woodrow Wilson (USA)



An idealist, and a reformer. He believed that the treaty with Germany should not be too harsh. His view was that if Germany was treated harshly, some day it would recover and want revenge. Wilson's main aim was to strengthen democracy in the defeated nation so that its people would not let its leaders cause another war.

He believed that nations should co-operate to achieve world peace. In January 1918 he published his Fourteen Points to help achieve this. The most important for Wilson was the fourteenth. In this he proposed the setting up of an international body called the League of Nations.

## Topic Summary



**Georges Clemenceau (France)**

- The treaty was seen as harsh and out of the three leaders it could be argued that Clemenceau should have been the most satisfied.
- Germany had been punished and had to accept responsibility for starting the war alone.
- The German army and navy had been reduced and the Rhineland had been demilitarised.
- In 1921 Reparations was set at £6.6 billion and France gained the coal from the Saar for fifteen years.
- Clemenceau's problem was that it was not seen as harsh enough by the French people and he was voted out of office in 1920.



**David Lloyd George (Britain)**

- Lloyd-George was in a difficult position of trying to keep the British public happy but at the same time having some private doubts about the consequences of treating the Germans too harshly.
- The British public would have been happy with the war-guilt clause and reparations for the casualties suffered during the war.
- Lloyd-George would be happy with the naval restrictions on Germany to help Britain retain one of the strongest navy's.
- However Lloyd-George was worried that the Treaty was too harsh on Germany and that the people would seek revenge.
- Lloyd-George wanted to continue to trade with Germany and was concerned that the reparations bill was too high. He was concerned that this would not only destroy the German economy but damage other European economies. Keynes a British economist said that reparations would destroy the economies of Europe.



**Woodrow Wilson (USA)**

- Overall, Wilson would be the least satisfied as the treaty was far from the idealistic aims he set out with and was much harsher than he expected.
- Some of his ideas on self-determination were carried out with many small nations who had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire were given independence. Countries like Poland for example became an independent nation.
- The League of Nations was the peacekeeping organisation Wilson wanted and in 1920 forty two countries joined.
- But the reality was that Wilson felt that Germany had to give up far too much land and would be angry. Parts of the German Empire given to the League of Nations as mandates, but the reality was that Britain and France ran them.
- Wilson felt that the Treaty was so harsh that Germany would seek revenge and that another war would follow.

## The Versailles Settlement (Terms of the Treaty of Versailles)

The Treaty of Versailles was a Diktat (Dictated peace). This meant that Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 and could not negotiate any of the terms.

### War-Guilt and reparations

- The War-Guilt clause Article 231 forced Germany to accept responsibility for the war.
- Article 231 provided justification for Germany's punishment at the Treaty of Versailles June 1919.
- Germany was made to pay for the cost of the war. (France – compensation for damage to land and property – also soldiers killed). (Britain- compensation for soldiers killed).
- The total sum was not fixed in the Treaty of Versailles but in April 1921 the reparations commission set the figure at £6,600 billion.
- The original intention was that Germany would pay a certain amount every year over a period of 42 years.



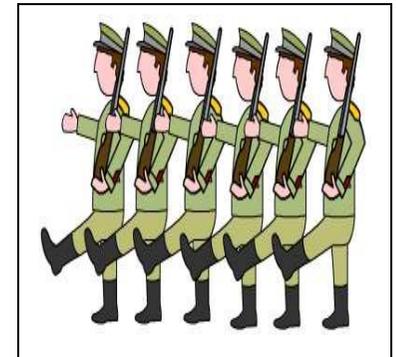
### Land loss

- **Alsace and Lorraine** were returned to France
- **West Prussia, Posen and part of Upper Silesia were given to Poland. (East Prussia was separated from the rest of Germany by Polish land)**
- The League of Nations was to control the Saar for 15 years but France controlled the coalfields.
- The Germans lost all of its colonies given to Britain and France to rule until they were able to rule themselves.



### Military terms

- The German army was limited to 100,000 soldiers
- Conscription was banned, all soldiers had to be volunteers
- Germany was not allowed tanks, submarines or aircraft.
- Germany's navy could have only 6 battleships
- The Rhineland became a demilitarised zone, with no German troops allowed.
- The Allies were keen to keep an army of occupation on the west bank for fifteen years.



## Topic summary

### Why did the Treaty of Versailles make the Germans angry?

*The Treaty of Versailles was a compromised treaty between the leaders of the big three, USA, Britain and France. In the end none of the leaders were happy and the harsh treaty made Germany very angry. Many historians are agreed that German anger and responses of Hitler between 1933-9 were part of the reasons why World War Two happened in 1939. Economically the German economy struggled as did those of the new states created.*

#### Why did the Military terms make Germany angry?

- Traditionally, Germany was always a strong proud nation with a military tradition. They were angry that they had to reduce their armed forces to 100,000 men with no conscription. This was at a level far below where they had been before the war. The Germans were angry that they had to reduce their men to 100,000 whilst there was no general disarmament in Europe. They saw this as unfair that other countries did not disarm and also that Germany was put in a position that they could not defend themselves.
- The German navy was only allowed six battleships and the Rhineland was to be demilitarised. Germany had a strong navy to rival Britain prior to the war and it was felt that Britain wished to dominate the seas and protect its colonies. Germany also realised it would struggle to maintain an Empire without naval protection.

#### Why did the loss of land make Germany angry?

- Alsace Lorraine was a key industrial region returned to France. The new Weimar government had a difficult start and economically would struggle without key economic areas such as the coal, iron and steel lost in Alsace Lorraine.
- West Prussia, Posen and part of Upper Silesia was given to Poland. East Prussia was now separated from the rest of Germany by Polish land. The breaking up of Germany with East Prussia divided would only pave the way for revenge in the future, as Hitler united German-speaking people.
- The League of Nations was to control the Saar for 15 years but France controlled the coalfields. The loss of the coalfields would also have an economic impact seen by the problems of hyperinflation in 1923.

#### Why did the War –Guilt clause and Reparations make the Germans angry?

- Many Germans wanted their government not to sign the peace treaty.
- They felt they had been “stabbed in the back” by the “November criminals”. Those who had signed the armistice and ended the fighting.
- Article 231 blamed the Germans the war and Germany felt badly done by as countries like Britain and France, also played their part in the start of World War 1. Blaming Germany alone, was necessary as the allies could then justify charging Germany for the war.
- A figure of £6.6 Billion was set in April 1921 and although the Germans could pay in instalments over a number of years, it damaged the economy badly. This led to problems with hyper-inflation in 1923 which economists such as Keynes had predicted.

## The Treaty of Versailles (Source based) and possible exam questions.

President Wilson in 1918

“Sometimes people call me an idealist. Well that is the way I know I am an American ...America is the only idealist nation in the world.”

- Clearly this is reference to Wilson wanted to build peace after World War One.
- Wilson wanted to not punish Germany too harshly so that democracy was given a chance in government and also German leaders in the future would not want another war.
- Wilson was seen as an idealist as he wanted to base the Treaty of Versailles on his 14 points.

Georges Clemenceau, speech at the Paris Peace Conference (16<sup>th</sup> June 1919.

“The war began on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1914, was the greatest crime against humanity ....the rulers of Germany, true to Prussian tradition, strove for a position of dominance in Europe. ... The terrible responsibility which lies at her doors can be seen in the fact that not less than seven million dead lie buried in Europe.

- Clearly Clemenceau wanted a harsh treaty and Germany punished.
- The reference to Prussian militarism suggests that when Germany was a nation of states the dominant state Prussia was keen on Empire building in Europe.
- The speech 12 days before the signing of the Treaty reinforces the position of France in wanting a harsh settlement.
- Clemenceau refers to the “responsibility at Germany’s door”, This clearly is blaming Germany for starting the war alone and is a direct link to the war guilt clause. This would also help justify French demand for huge reparations.

Lloyd George speaking to the House of Commons, before the Peace conference.

“We want a peace which will be just, but not vindictive. We want a stern peace because the occasion demands it, but the severity must be designed, not for vengeance, but for justice.”

- Clearly this shows that Lloyd-George wants a harsh treaty but not too severe on Germany that it will destroy them.
- He clearly is under pressure from the British public to punish Germany for soldiers killed. With the election in mind he knows that if he is to retain power he cannot ignore the British public.
- Privately, Lloyd-George does not want to cripple Germany as economically he wants to continue to trade with Germany. He also does not want revenge as he fears this will lead to another war.



THE RECKONING.

PAS-GERMAIN, "MONSTROUS, I CALL IT. WHY, IT'S FULLY A QUARTER OF WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE MADE THEM PAY, IF WE'D WON."

**Punch cartoon 1919.**

Monstrous I call it. Why it's fully a quarter of what we should have made them pay if we'd won.

- Germany is unhappy at what it thinks will be a huge reparations bill. It was as it was fixed at £6.6 billion in 1921.
- The feeling amongst the allies is that if Germany had won they would have produced an even harsher treaty

- The cartoon shows how the relationship with Germany was stained in 1919.
- It shows that in the months in the run up to the signing of the Treaty, Germany did not want to be punished for losing the war.
- It might also indicate, German anger with the allies for blaming Germany for starting the war and the potential for a huge reparations bill.
- The allies believe that Germany does not want to accept the consequences for losing the war and this was confirmed by their anger at the final terms.



### Possible exam questions

- Source A is critical of the Treaty of Versailles. How do you know?
- Study Sources B and C. How useful are they in telling us why the Germans hated the Treaty of Versailles?
- Write an account of the aims of the three leaders at the Paris peace conference
- The main reason why German disliked the Treaty of Versailles was because of its military restrictions. How far do you agree with this statement?
- The leader who was most satisfied with the Treaty of Versailles was Lloyd-George. How far do you agree with this statement?



A cartoon published in Britain in 1919.

- The figures represent the leaders of Britain, Italy, France and the USA. Cannon Fodder means that men will be killed in battle.
- The 1940 class represents the children born in the 1920's who might die in a future war resulting from the Treaty.
- The "Tiger" was Clemenceau's nickname as he was aggressive towards Germany and wanted them punished.
- This was identified with the harsh reparations and land loss.
- Also the fact that the German military was weakened when other countries did not disarm.

## The League of Nations



### How does the League of Nations prevent another war?

- Collective Security – if you attack one member of the League you attack them all

If a country behaved aggressively the League was supposed to use these sanctions:

- **Step 1 Moral Sanction** - Decide who was wrong and condemn the action (tell them that what they were doing was wrong)
- **Step 2 Economic Sanction** - If this was ignored then the members would refuse to trade with the aggressive country
- **Step 3 Military Sanction** - If this was still ignored then the members would send in troops

### Organisation of the League

#### The Council

Britain, France, Italy, Japan and Germany (1926) had a permanent seat.

Met regularly to make decisions about peace keeping.

**They made the main decisions on which sanctions to use.**

The Assembly elected 4 other temporary members each year

#### The Assembly

Met once a year.

Each member country sent 1 delegate and had 1 vote.

It debated and decided on general policy

#### The Secretariat

Carried out various administrative duties

Recorded decisions of the Assembly and council.

#### The International Court of Justice

Sat at the Hague in Holland.

Settled legal disputes over boundaries.

Gave advice on matters of international law

A Punch cartoon from December 1919. The figure in the top hat represents the USA.

- Uncle Sam represents the USA and the cartoonist is rightly predicting that the USA will not join the League. Congress voted not to join in 1920.
- The bridge shows a gap the missing keystone which is the USA. They are the strongest military and economic nation and the League will be much weaker without them.
- The dark chasm underneath shows a gloomy future for Europe without the USA in the League.
- Clearly the cartoonist is trying to put pressure on the USA to join the League.

### The work of the League's agencies

As well as dealing with disputes between its members, the League also attempted to tackle other major problems. This was done through commissions or committees such as:

- **The Mandates Commission.** Many former colonies of Germany were mandates of the League of Nations controlled by Britain or France. The Mandates Commission made sure that Britain and France acted in the interests
- **The Health Committee.** Attempted to deal with the problem of dangerous diseases and to educate people about health and sanitation.
- **The Slavery Committee.** This worked to abolish slavery around the world.
- **The Refugees Committee.** This helped to return refugees to their original homes after the end of the First World War.

## How successful was the League in the 1920's?

### 1920 – Vilna – defeat

- Poland invaded Vilna in 1920, the capital of Lithuania, the League's protests were ignored. This showed the limited nature of the League's powers to enforce decisions.

### 1921 Aaland Islands – Success

- These islands are near enough equal distant between Finland and Sweden. They had traditionally belonged to Finland but most of the islanders wanted to be governed by Sweden. Neither Sweden nor Finland could come to a decision as to who owned the islands and in 1921 they asked the League to adjudicate
- The League's decision was that they should remain with Finland but that no weapons should ever be kept there. Both countries accepted the decision and it remains in force to this day.

### 1921 Silesia – success

- The Treaty of Versailles had given the people of Upper Silesia the right to have a referendum on whether they wanted to be part of Germany or part of Poland. In this referendum, 700,000 voted for Germany and 500,000 for Poland. This close result resulted in rioting between those who expected Silesia to be made part of Germany and those who wanted to be part of Poland. The League was asked to settle this dispute.
- After a six-week inquiry, the League decided to split Upper Silesia between Germany and Poland. The League's decision was accepted by both countries and by the people in Upper Silesia.

### 1923 Corfu – Mixed

- An Italian general was killed while he was doing some work for the League in Greece. The Italian leader Mussolini was angry with the Greeks. He invaded the Greek island of Corfu. The Greeks asked the League to help.
- The Council of the League met. It condemned Mussolini, and told him to leave Corfu. It told the Greeks to give some money to the League. Mussolini refused to accept its decision. He refused to leave Corfu. The League changed its decision. It told Greece to apologise to Mussolini, and to pay the money to Italy.
  - The Greeks did as the League said. Then Mussolini gave Corfu back to Greece.

### 1925 Greece & Bulgaria – Success

- Both these nations have a common border. In 1925, sentries patrolling this border fired on one another and a Greek soldier was killed. The Greek army invaded Bulgaria as a result. The Bulgarians asked the League for help and the League ordered both armies to stop fighting and that the Greeks should pull out of Bulgaria.
- The League then sent experts to the area and decided that Greece was to blame and fined her £45,000. Both nations accepted the decision.



A cartoon from the magazine Punch, March 1919. Punch was famous for its political cartoons.

#### **Overweighted**

President Wilson "Here's your olive branch now get busy"  
Dove of peace "of course I want to please everybody but isn't this a bit thick"?

## Diplomacy outside of the League of Nations

### Treaty of Locarno – 1925

- Germany suggested that France, Germany and Belgium ought to formally agree the borders that had been drawn up at Versailles.
- That Germany would not send troops into the demilitarised Rhineland
- Alsace-Lorraine would always be a part of France
- Germany refused to accept its eastern border with Poland
- As a result of this treaty Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations in 1925

### The Kellogg Briand Pact, 1928

- Frank B. Kellogg – member of the USA government
- Aristide Briand – French foreign minister
- The Kellogg Briand Pact (Paris Pact) was an agreement between the USA and France in which the two countries agreed that they would not go to war against each other. It made war “illegal”
- Over the next few years 46 other countries made a similar commitment, including Germany and Britain. By 1929 most countries in the world had signed.

### Topic Summary

Many felt that collective security was weak and that the League suffered from not allowing defeated countries like Germany into the League at the beginning. Also the USA refused to join and the USSR was not allowed at the beginning because it was communist. Many countries were reluctant to send troops to assist the League and were reluctant to enforce full economic sanctions for fear of affecting their own trade. Also sanctions were ineffective if a country traded outside of the League. Also the fact that countries were signing peace agreements outside the League such as the Kellogg-Briand pact showed they had not got full trust in the League's ability to prevent war.

It is also a fair criticism that the League was dominated by the council and also self-interest of those countries. The Assembly met too infrequently and did not have a say on the key decisions. The unanimous voting system made the process slow and difficult to get decisions passed. The League in the 1920's showed that it could deal effectively with smaller nations. However the warning signs were there when the League was faced with strong nations. Italy received financial reward for withdrawing from Corfu in 1923 and in 1920, Poland had ignored the League after taking Vilna. The lack of unity in the League and its inability to raise an army from member countries saw it struggle to deal with aggressive countries like Italy and Japan in the 1930's.

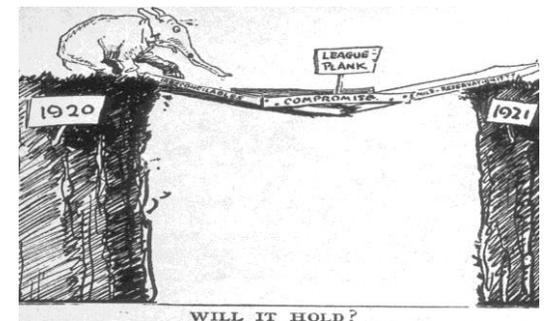
**Arthur Balfour, Chief British representative at the League of Nations, speaking in 1920.**

The League of Nations is not set up to deal with a world in chaos, or with any part of the world which is in chaos. The League of Nations may give assistance but is not, and cannot be, a complete instrument for bringing order out of chaos.

**Balfour is giving the British position that League will struggle to restore order and keep the peace.**

**It may also be a selfish view as Britain was more concerned with protecting its empire than acting on behalf of the League. This was confirmed by its reluctance to provide troops for the League or even enforce economic sanctions with trading partners.**

**It also infers at the League's weaknesses such as membership with the USA not being a part. Also the fact that the League did not have its own army.**



**The collapse of the League of Nations 1930's** - Depression in many countries led to difficult economic conditions in the 1930's. This led to democracy being weakened and in some countries being replaced by military dictatorships. This happened in countries such as Italy, Japan and Germany. Their desire to solve the economic problems in their countries by Empire building meant that the League's authority would be challenged.

### Japan invades Manchuria 1931-2 – Failure

- In October 1929 the New York stock exchange collapsed. The USA placed tariffs (taxes on imported goods) in order to protect their economy. This badly affected Japan because they sold a lot of goods to the USA. As a result Japan had less money to spend on importing food into the country.
- The leaders of the army were not happy with the way Japan was being treated by other countries. As a result of the Washington Naval Agreements Japan had to reduce the size of its navy. The army generals believed that the only way to show Japan's strength was by taking more territory.
- Manchuria contained raw materials such as iron and coal. It was part of China who at this time was a weak country. Japan had already taken advantage of this weakness by placing soldiers in this region. They had agreed with China that they could mine coal, fish and use ports. Japan had also built the South Manchurian Railway.
- In 1931 there was an explosion on the South Manchurian Railway just outside the city of Mukden. Japan claimed that this had been carried out by the Chinese army. The Chinese denied that they had anything to do with the explosion. The Japanese used this incident as an excuse to send in its army to take control of the region, forcing the Chinese to leave.
- Japan then went on to set up a government under their control and renamed the region Manchukuo. China complained to the League.
- The League instructed Japan to remove its soldiers. This was ignored by Japan.
- The League sent Lord Lytton to investigate what had happened. However, the journey by sea and land took months to get to Manchuria. The report was eventually produced a full year after the initial invasion in October 1932.
- All the members of the League accepted that Japan had acted unlawfully and that Japan accept the report and return Manchuria to China.
- **Japan ignored the report and left the League of Nations in March 1933.**
- The League did nothing. Economic sanctions would not have worked as Japan's main trading partner was the USA, who were not in the League.
- These events showed that the League was powerless to prevent an aggressive dictator from invading another country. 'Dictators' of the world noticed this fact. *i.e. Italy & Germany*



A cartoon by David Low, 1933. Low was one of the most famous critics of both the actions of dictators and the weakness of the League of Nations. The paper next to the woman's body is labelled "Honour of nations" and the box beside the man is labelled "Face-saving unit".

**Clearly Low is critical of the weakness of the failure of the League to deal with Japan. The League is seen as a feeble woman who is being walked over by a Japanese soldier.**

**This showed that collective security did not work as the League is embarrassed needed face-saving paint.**

**The fact that member countries were not prepared to take military action reinforced the fact that the League should have had its own army.**

### Italy invades Abyssinia 1935-6 – Failure

- Mussolini was keen to avenge the defeat of 1896 and he also wanted the glory that followed a military victory. He also wanted access to the mineral resources and fertile land.
- The League wanted to avoid a clash as Britain and France believed Mussolini was the best ally against Hitler. In 1935 the British and the French had signed the Stresa front with Italy.
- In October 1935 Italy attacked Abyssinia after a clash of troops at Walwal. The Abyssinians were no match for the Italians who used modern weapons, including tanks, planes and poison gas.
- Abyssinia appealed to the League.
  
- The League covenant said that economic sanctions should be the response. A committee was set up to decide on the response. The response was weak and ineffectual. The League banned the sale of arms and some other goods to Italy.
  
- It did not ban oil exports as it feared the USA would not cooperate. Coal exports were not banned as it feared the British mining industry would be affected. The Suez Canal was not closed.
  
- British foreign secretary Hoare and French Prime minister Laval were preparing a plan in secret. They proposed to divide Abyssinia up Italy getting the best areas for agriculture and the areas richest in minerals. Abyssinia would gain the mountainous areas which were barren. It was damaged by the Hoare- Laval pact as it showed the League was not willing to stand up to a strong country. Also Britain and France were more concerned about self-interest than what would be the right thing to do for the League to respond collectively.
  
- May 1936 Mussolini entered the capital Addis Abba. Emperor Salassie fled to the League of Nations in Geneva but he got no support and it showed the League was a failure against strong countries aggression. Collective security did not work. These events showed that countries could benefit from violence and were not capable of acting firmly against aggression.

### Summary: Why did the League fail?

- The council had the power of veto which meant that any one permanent member could stop action taking place. This made decision making slow and difficult.
- The League did not have its own army and relied too much on goodwill and persuasion.
- The absence of key countries like the USA, Germany and the USSR made the League look like an organisation run for the benefit of Britain and France.
- Treaties like Locarno and the Kellogg-Briand pact undermined the League and its idea of collective security.
- Self-interest from Britain and France led to the League not having the power to deal with strong, aggressive countries like Japan 1931-2 and Italy 1936.

### Possible exam questions

- **The League failed in the 1920's as the Corfu crisis showed. How far do you agree with this statement?**
- **Write an account of the Manchurian crisis.**
- **Write an account of the Abyssinian crisis**
- **The League failed due to the weakness in membership. How far do you agree with this?**
- **The League failed due to weakness in its organisation and structure. How far do you agree with this?**
- **The Abyssinian crisis was the main reason why the League failed. To what extent do you agree with this?**

The British elder statesman Sir Austen Chamberlain late in 1932 in the middle of the Manchurian crisis.

I was sad to find everyone (at the League) so dejected. The Assembly was a dead thing. The council was without confidence in itself. Benes (the Czechoslovak leader), who is not given to hysterics, said (about the people at the League) "they are too frightened. I tell them we are not going to war now; we have five years before us, perhaps, six. We must make the most of them."

- There is direct reference to the inability of the League to deal with Japan. Economic sanctions would not work without the USA and the Lytton report was ignored by Japan.
- The Council with members such as Britain and France were more concerned with self-interest. Britain protecting its Empire and France from another attack from Germany.
- The Council members were not prepared to take military action and the League not having its own army proved part of its downfall.
- Benes, the Czech leader has no confidence in the League, "The Assembly was a dead thing.. the Council without confidence in itself". He predicts war in the future as the League will fail to keep the peace.
- With military dictators like Mussolini and Hitler having now witnessed the weakness of the League will be likely to take land and this will lead to war.

- Mussolini has invaded Abyssinia and once again the League was showing its inability to take action.
- The weakness of countries like Britain and France to take military action is shown in the cartoon. It sarcastically comments that they would produce a statement "suggesting a mild disapproval of you".
- Clearly Britain and France were reluctant to take action. Economic sanctions were limited and Britain continued to export coal to Italy.
- Also they were keen to keep Italy on side against Germany by signing the Stresa front. Their joint investment over the Suez canal was protected as that remained open for Mussolini to trade.
- Punch Cartoon was rarely critical of British foreign policy but this reflected the feeling at the time. A ballot had shown the majority of British people wanted military action but this was ignored by the politicians.
- Instead the Hoare- Laval pact showed Britain and France secretly trying to negotiate and given Mussolini the fertile parts of Abyssinia whilst leaving only the barren parts for the Abyssinians.



THE AWFUL WARNING.

FRANCE AND ENGLAND  
(together?) { "WE DON'T WANT YOU TO FIGHT,  
BUT, BY JINGO, IF YOU DO,  
WE SHALL PROBABLY ISSUE A JOINT MEMORANDUM  
SUGGESTING A MILD DISAPPROVAL OF YOU."

A Cartoon from Punch, 1935. Punch was usually very patriotic towards Britain. It seldom criticised British politicians over foreign policy

### Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two

#### The development of tension

#### Hitler's aims and Allied reactions

- Hitler outlined his foreign policy aims as far back as 1924 in his book Mein Kampf. When he gained power in 1933 he started to carry out his three main aims.
  - 1) Abolish the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler felt humiliated by the terms of the Treaty and promised to reverse it.
  - 2) Expand German territory. Hitler wanted to unite German speaking people and get the territory back lost at the Treaty of Versailles. He wanted Germany united with Austria and German minorities in countries such as Czechoslovakia to re-join Germany. He also wanted to create an Empire in the Eastern Europe to give extra Lebensraum or living space for Germans.
  - 3) Defeat Communism. He wanted to defeat communism as he believed the USSR wanted to take over Germany.

#### Hitler's actions 1933-9

1933 Took Germany out of the League of Nations

1934 Tried to take over Austria but was prevented by Mussolini.

1935 Massive rearmament rally in Germany

1936 Reintroduced conscription in Germany and **sent troops into the Rhineland**

1938 **Took over Austria (Anschluss)**

**Took over the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia**

1939 **Invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia**

**Invaded Poland**

#### The Dollfuss Affair, 1934

- Dollfuss became chancellor of Austria in 1932. He was head of the Christian Social party which wanted a return to former glories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
- Dollfuss established a dictatorship in 1933 and outlawed all other political parties including the Austrian-Nazi party.
- A state of civil war developed and in 1934 Dollfuss declared a new constitution removing the last traces of democracy.
- In July 1934 Dollfuss was assassinated by ten Austrian Nazis. Hitler wanted to invade Austria but Mussolini threatened war which Hitler could not risk at that point.
- Hitler realised he needed to urgently rearm and also gain the support of Mussolini to help with his expansion plans.

#### The Saar, 1935

- The Saar region of Germany had been run by the League of Nations since 1919. In 1935 the League of Nations held a plebiscite (vote) to decide if they should return to German rule.
- Around 90% of the population in the Saar region voted to return to German rule. This was entirely legal and within the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. It was also a morale booster for Hitler.

### Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two The development of tension

#### German rearmament and conscription

- Hitler came to power in 1933 and one of his first steps was to increase Germany's armed forces. Thousands of unemployed workers were drafted into the army.
- Hitler pointed out to other countries that no other countries had disarmed since the 1920's.
- Rearmament began in secret. In 1934, Hitler signed a Non-Aggression pact with his eastern neighbour Poland.
- In 1935 Hitler openly paraded his 2,000 aircraft in the Luftwaffe.
- Hitler introduced conscription in 1935 and by 1939 the army had risen to 1 million.
- Hitler knew that Britain had some sympathy with Germany on this issue. Britain believed that the limits placed on Germany by the Treaty of Versailles were too tight and not enough for Germany to defend itself from attack.
- Britain also thought that a strong Germany was a good buffer against communism.

#### The Stresa Front, April 1935

- In response to Germany building up its armed forces, in 1935 Italy, Britain and France agreed upon the Stresa front. This was a mutual agreement to uphold their territorial boundaries and stop Germany from further undermining the Treaty of Versailles.
- In reality, the agreement had little impact. Britain went on to allow Germany a larger navy and in October of the same year, Italy invaded Abyssinia.

#### The Anglo-German naval agreement, June 1935

- Britain helped Hitler to break the Treaty of Versailles by signing a naval agreement with Hitler.
- This allowed Hitler to increase its navy to 35% of the size of the British navy.
- France was angry over this but there was little that they could do and it showed that Britain would compromise over the exact terms of the Treaty of Versailles.



#### From Hitler's Mein Kampf (My struggle) 1923-4

We turn our eyes towards the lands of the east..... when we speak of new territory in Europe today, we principally think of Russia and the border states subject to her.



- **Hitler outlined his foreign policy aims in Mein Kampf well before he became chancellor in 1933. The source refers to the aim of expanding east (lebensraum).**
- **Hitler carried out his expansion east invading Czechoslovakia in 1938-9 and Poland in 1939. He invaded the USSR in 1941.**
- **Other aims that were mentioned in Mein Kampf include:**
- **Uniting all German speaking people**
- **Breaking the Treaty of Versailles**
- **Destroying Communism**

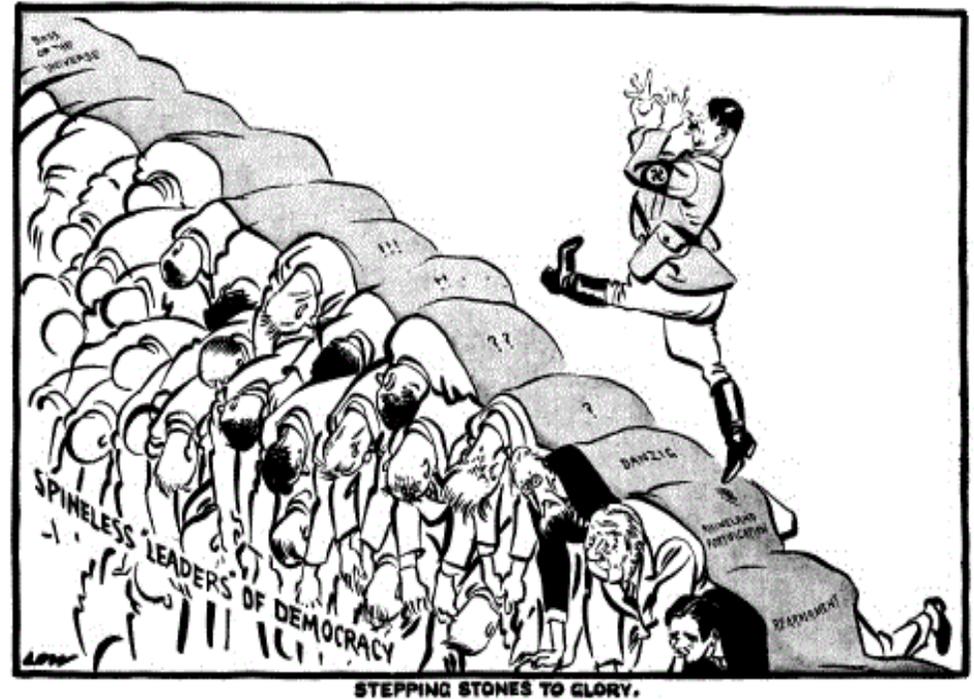
### Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two

#### The Escalation of tension

Britain signed a naval agreement with Germany in 1935 and for the next three years, Britain followed a policy of giving Hitler what he wanted. This policy was called appeasement and Neville Chamberlain is closely associated with this policy although he did not become Prime Minister until 1937.

#### The reasons for a policy of Appeasement

- **Hitler is standing up to communism** – Countries like Britain saw Stalin and the USSR as a bigger threat than Hitler. They feared the spread of communism and saw Hitler as an ally as a way of helping stop communism spreading in Europe.
- **The lack of support from the USA** – There was a fear that countries like Britain and France could not stand up to Hitler without America's support. Their policy of isolation meant it was unlikely they would get that support.
- **Memories of World War One.** The casualties suffered and the cost of war meant that countries like Britain wanted to avoid a war at all costs.
- **Economic depression** – Britain and France were still suffering from the effects of World War One. There was a great depression in Britain in the 1930's and they had large debts and unemployment.
- **The Treaty of Versailles was unfair** – Countries like Britain felt that terms like reparations and disarmament were unfair. Once these wrongs were put right then Germany would be a peaceful country again.



#### Arguments against appeasement

- **Hitler was encouraged to be aggressive** - Hitler took bigger risks because he believed that Britain and France would do nothing.
- **Too much trust was put in Hitler's promises.** Countries believed Hitler too much. For example rebuilding his army because the Treaty was unfair. Not invading anywhere else after the Sudetenland.
- **It scared the USSR** – It sent the message to Stalin Britain and France would not stand in Hitler's way.
- **If they had stopped him in 1936.** Many historians have said that Hitler could have been stopped and not been so aggressive if Britain and France had challenged him over the Rhineland before he got too strong.

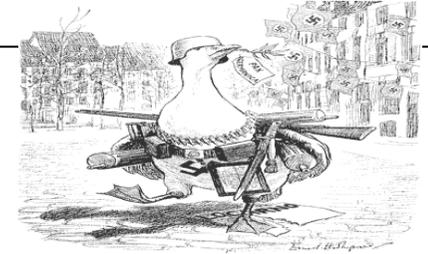


Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two  
The Escalation of tension

The Remilitarisation of the Rhineland March 1936

- In March 1936 Hitler took his first big risk by moving troops into the Rhineland area of Germany.
- Hitler was breaking the Treaty of Versailles as the Rhineland was meant to be a demilitarised area. It had also been accepted by Germany in the Locarno Treaties of 1925.
- Hitler was risking losing the support of the army generals and a stronger France making a stand.
- Hitler knew that many in Britain felt he had a right to remilitarise and they would not get involved.
- 32,000 troops entered the Rhineland with instructions to pull out if challenged by France. The German army was no match for France at this time and lacked essential equipment and air support.
- Hitler was not challenged as the League was focused on the Abyssinian crisis.
- France did not want to go to war or act with the support of Britain.

This cartoon shows that the **remilitarisation of Rhineland** was the first step Hitler took towards abolishing the **Treaty of Versailles** (first gamble) The weapons strapped to the Goose represent the rearmament conference which rapidly increased Germany's armed forces. Also the fact that Hitler was building up his army. There is a map of Europe strapped to his waist, showing his territorial ambitions. The goose symbolises the soldier walking to go to the battlefield to try and remilitarise the Rhineland. The torn "Locarno" paper which the goose stands on represents the **Locarno Treaty** which was made to respect borders and stay within your own, by stepping all over it the cartoonist is saying that Germany is not respecting it, also it shows his desire for greater land for Germany. The cartoon's title is taken from the **goose step**, the special marching step performed on formal military parades and other ceremonies.



Mussolini, the Anti-Comintern Pact, 1936-7 and the Axis.

- In 1936 Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact. In 1937 Italy also signed it.
- The aim of the pact was to limit Communist influence around the world. It was particularly aimed at the USSR. The new alliance was called the Axis alliance.

Anschluss with Austria, March 1938.

- The Austrian people were mainly German and Hitler wanted to join them together (Anschluss). He was aware that this would break the Treaty of Versailles.
- Many in Austria supported the German takeover as Austria was so economically weak. Hitler had attempted this in 1934 but was stopped by Mussolini.
- In 1938 Hitler and Mussolini were now allies and there was a strong Nazi party in Austria.
- Hitler tried to insist Seyss-Inquart and other Nazis be given positions in government
- Hitler encouraged the Austrian Nazis to demonstrate and demand a union with Germany. They rioted and caused trouble for the Austrian chancellor Schuschnigg.
- Schuschnigg was put under pressure from Hitler to unite the two countries and he resisted, seeking the help of Britain and France. They refused to help so Schuschnigg called for a vote (plebiscite)
- Hitler was not willing to risk a vote under Schuschnigg and sent his troops into Austria in March 1938. Under the eye of the Nazi troops 99.75 % voted for the Anschluss.
- Schuschnigg resigned and Seyss-Inquart, invited the Germans into Austria to restore order. 80,000 opponents of Hitler were imprisoned.
- Britain and France stood by and did not challenge Hitler.

### Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two The Escalation of tension

#### The Sudeten crisis

- Hitler was growing in confidence after the Anschluss in March 1938.
- Edward Benes the leader of Czechoslovakia was horrified by the Anschluss. He feared that his country would be next and that he could not guarantee the support of Britain and France.
- France had an alliance with Czechoslovakia and when pushed said they would honour that agreement if Czechoslovakia was invaded.
- The Sudetenland contained a lot of Germans and Henlein, the leader of the Nazis in the Sudetenland stirred up trouble among the Sudetenland Germans and they demanded to be part of Germany.
- In May 1938 Hitler declared he intended to fight Czechoslovakia if necessary.
- The Czechs had a modern army and were prepared to fight. The Sudetenland was a crucial area and Benes knew that without its forts, railways and industries, Czechoslovakia would be defenceless.

#### Munich conference September 1938

- To avoid war, Chamberlain the British Prime-Minister flew to meet Hitler on 15<sup>th</sup> September 1939.
- The meeting initially seemed to go well with Hitler saying now that he was only interested in the parts of the Sudetenland that wanted to be part of Germany after a vote.
- Hitler then changed his mind and demanded all of the Sudetenland claiming that the German people in the Sudetenland were being mistreated.
- A final meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1938 avoided war. Mussolini helped and the leaders of Britain, France and Italy decided to give Hitler all of the Sudetenland.
- They did not speak to Czechoslovakia or the USSR. This agreement became known as the Munich agreement.
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> October 1938 German troops marched into the Sudetenland. The Czechs had been let down.



**Hitler speaking in Berlin, September 1938. The Sudetenland is the last problem that must be solved and it will be solved. It is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe.**

The aims of our foreign policy are not unlimited .. They are grounded on the determination to save the German people alone ... Ten million Germans found themselves beyond the frontiers of the Reich. ...Germans who wished to return to the Reich as their homeland.

- **Clearly the context is Hitler wanting to take over the Sudetenland which has 3 million German speaking people there.**
- **Hitler is suggesting with “our foreign policy aims are not unlimited” that he is wanting to unite the German speaking people but not to take any further territory.**
- **Hitler promised this at the Munich agreement when he was given the Sudetenland providing he did not invade anywhere else. He broke his promises when he invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.**



### Part 3: The origins and outbreak of World War Two

#### The outbreak of war

##### The occupation of Czechoslovakia

On the 15<sup>th</sup> March 1939 with Czechoslovakia in chaos, Hitler took over the rest of the country. The Munich agreement had weakened the state of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia had lost vast defences and key industrial areas. The actions of the Sudeten Germans stirred other nationalities to become independent. The result of the loss of the Sudetenland was that the Slovaks now demanded more rights. The Czech President Hacha was forced to invite the Germans into Czechoslovakia. On the 15<sup>th</sup> March the Nazis marched into Prague and took control. Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist as an independent state.

**David Low is being critical of Britain and France not doing anything to stop Hitler and Germany. The man stood by aloof reading the newspaper could be Chamberlain as he allowed Czechoslovakia to be taken over in March 1939. Britain stood by and did nothing. The rocks that are about to fall relate to the fact that Hitler and Germany will carry on being aggressive and taking land. Low predicts Rumania and Poland. He was right about Poland in September 1939. "what's Czechoslovakia to me anyway" relates to the fact that Chamberlain in a previous speech spoke about the Sudetenland being a far away land. Britain was not prepared to fight over it. Anglo-French security being an unstable rock suggests that they will be a target for Germany at some point. Low was extremely critical of the policy of appeasement followed by Britain and France and fears war will be soon.**

A British cartoon by David Low, 18<sup>th</sup> July 1938. The caption on the cartoon reads "What's Czechoslovakia to me anyway?" The rocks poised to fall read: Anglo-French security; French Alliances; Rumania; Poland; Czecho



##### The Nazi-Soviet pact, August 1939

- As Hitler was gradually taking land lost at Versailles, the logical next step was the strip of former German land taken at the Treaty of Versailles known as the Polish Corridor.
- Stalin had been concerned about the threat from Germany. Even so Stalin could not reach an alliance agreement with Britain and France in the 1930's.
- Stalin grew suspicious of Britain as they seemed to welcome a stronger Germany as a force to fight communism.
- Stalin fears grew in the mid 1930's when he signed a treaty with France in 1935. This said that France would help the USSR if Germany invaded the Soviet Union. Stalin feared that France would not stick to it as they had failed to stop Hitler invading the Rhineland and that was right on their border.
- On 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1939 Hitler and Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet pact. They agreed to not attack each other and privately, they also agreed to divide Poland between them.
- Stalin signed the pact as he felt he could not trust Britain and France. Stalin also wanted large sections of eastern Poland. It also gave him time to build up his armed forces against an attack from Germany that he knew would come at some point.
- Hitler was able to invade Poland without fear of intervention from Stalin. Also he would not then need to fight a war on two fronts in the east and

##### The invasion of Poland and the outbreak of war, September 1939.

- On 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939 the German army invaded Poland from the west. On 17<sup>th</sup> September the USSR invaded Poland from the east. Poland fell. Hitler was certain that Britain and France would not go to war over Poland. Britain and France did keep their word and support Poland. On 3<sup>rd</sup> September they declared war on Germany.

## Topic Summary:

### Summary of appeasement

- There were genuine reasons why Britain and France followed a policy of appeasement in the 1930's. The memories of World War One would have made war an unpopular decision in the 1930's. Economically, Britain would struggle to fight Germany as the armed forces had been significantly reduced and they were not ready for war.
- Winston Churchill spoke out about the threat of Germany and suggested that Germany should have been challenged and stopped. The Rhineland in March 1936 would have been a good point as then France had a bigger army than Germany. By 1939 Germany had at least 950,000 troops and was much stronger. Cartoonists like David Low always criticised the policy of appeasement and suggested that Hitler was always intent on war. The Munich conference with hindsight has been seen as the height of appeasement and a mistake. By allowing Germany to keep the Sudetenland even when Czechoslovakia was ready to fight was a mistake. Hitler broke his promise of not taking over further territory when he invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939.

### A summary of why World War Two started

- Hitler's aggressive foreign policy 1933-9 (Remilitarisation of the Rhineland, Anschluss 1938, Sudetenland 1938, rest of Czechoslovakia march 1939. Invasion of Poland September 1939.
- The trigger for war: Nazi-Soviet pact August 1939.
- The failure of appeasement including the height of appeasement: Munich Conference September 1938.
- The failure of the League of Nations to keep the peace in the 1930's. Examples being Japan in Manchuria 1931-2. Italy in Abyssinia 1935-6.



**Stalin, a speech in 1941** - It will be asked how it was possible that the Soviet government signed a non-aggression pact with so deceitful a nation, with such criminals as Hitler and Ribbentrop..... We secured peace for our country for eighteen months, which enabled us to make military preparations.

- **Stalin is trying to explain why he signed the Nazi-soviet pact in August 1939. Clearly the hatred of the Nazis is shown "deceitful nation... criminals such as Hitler and Ribbentrop". This shows how the communist USSR and Fascist Germany were never going to get on. It also explains one reason why Stalin signed the pact as it "enabled us to make military preparations". Stalin expected a German invasion as in 1941 but he wanted time to prepare.**
- **What it does not tell us is other reasons why he signed the pact with Hitler such as wanting large sections of eastern Poland and the pact divided Poland between USSR and Germany. Also the fact that Stalin had become frustrated at not getting an alliance with Britain and France and did not trust them to support him over Germany.**

### Possible exam questions

- Account for Hitler's invasion of the Rhineland (8 marks)
- Account for Hitler's invasion of the Anschluss (8 marks)
- Account for the invasion of the Sudetenland and the rest of Czechoslovakia (8 marks)
- "World War Two started due to the actions of Hitler's aggressive policy 1933-39". To what extent do you agree with this statement? (16 marks)
- "World War Two started due to the failure of the policy of appeasement". To what extent do you agree with this statement? (16 marks)
- "World War Two started due to the failure of the League of Nations". To what extent do you agree with this statement? (16 marks)

From *The Modern world since 1870*, a school textbook by L.E. Snellgrove, published in 1980.

Hitler regarded the Pact as his master stroke. Although he had promised the Russians eastern Poland, Finland, Estonia and Latvia, he never intended to allow them to keep these territories. Stalin did not expect Hitler to keep his word either. He was sure he could only gain from a long war in which Britain, France and Germany exhausted themselves. Seldom have two countries entered an alliance so dishonestly.

**Soviet Historian Kukushkin, writing in 1981.**

Why did Britain and France help Hitler to achieve his aims? By rejecting the idea of a united front proposed by the USSR, they played into the hands of Germany. They hoped to appease Hitler by giving him some Czech territory. They wanted to direct German aggression eastward against the USSR and the disgraceful Munich deal achieved this.

- The source reinforces the view that both Germany and the USSR both signed the Nazi-Soviet pact as it was convenient at that time.
- Both countries were satisfied that Poland would be divided up between themselves. The source refers to the “Russians being promised eastern Poland”.
- It was a signed where neither country trusted each other nor believed they would stick to it. What it did do is allow Stalin time to build up his army.
- Hitler avoided having to fight Britain and France in western Europe and the USSR in eastern Europe at the same time in 1939.

- The Soviet historian is critical of the British and French policy of appeasement. In particular, there is reference to the Munich agreement of September 1938. “They hoped to appease Hitler by giving him some Czech territory”. This refers to allowing Hitler to keep the Sudetenland providing he did not invade anywhere else.
- This is heavily criticised by the Soviet historian who also felt that they wanted to direct German aggression east by signing the Munich agreement.
- The Soviet historian is also frustrated at what he sees as a mistake made by Britain and France in not signing an alliance with the USSR. This is inferring that this is part of the reason why the USSR signed the Nazi-Soviet pact in August 1939.

