

Conflict and tension: the inter-war years, 1918-1939

Part 3 – The origins and outbreak of the Second World War

The development of tension	Escalation of tension	The outbreak of war
Aims: In Mein Kampf Hitler said that he wanted to: Destroy the Treaty of Versailles, to unite all German-speaking people, to expand in the east (particularly Poland and Russia) to gain <i>lebensraum</i> and to destroy Communism. The Dollfuss Affair: The Austrian Chancellor, Dollfuss, tried to crack down on the Socialists and Nazis - political factions that he thought were tearing the country apart. Dollfuss banned the Nazi party. In 1934, Hitler ordered the Austrian Nazis to create havoc in Austria. This turned into an attempt to overthrow the government. Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered but the attempted coup failed because the Austrian military intervened to back up the government. In 1934, Italy had an agreement with Austria that it would protect Austria from outside aggression. The Italian dictator, Mussolini, honoured the agreement and moved Italian troops to the Austrian border to deter Hitler from invading. Saar plebiscite: In 1935, the historian HAL Fisher wrote that 'a country which is determined to have a war can always have it.' The Treaty of Versailles had put the Saar under the control of the League of Nations for 15 years. In 1935 the inhabitants of the Saar voted to return to Germany. The Saar plebiscite is cited by many historians as the first step to war. Re-armament: Hitler began to build up his armed forces. In 1935 he introduced conscription (calling up men to the army). This broke the Treaty of Versailles, but Britain and France let him get away with it.	Rhineland: Hitler invaded the Rhineland on 7 March 1936. This broke the Treaty of Versailles. It was a bluff – the German army had only 22,000 soldiers and had orders to retreat if they met any resistance. But once again, Britain and France did nothing. Austria: In 1938, Hitler took over Austria. First, Hitler encouraged the Austrian Nazis to demand union with Germany. Then Hitler invaded Austria (11 March 1938). This broke the Treaty of Versailles, but Britain and France did nothing. Munich: In 1938, Hitler tried to take over the Sudetenland. First, Hitler encouraged the Sudeten Nazis to demand union with Germany. Then, Hitler made plans to invade Czechoslovakia. Appeasement: Neville Chamberlain appeased Hitler. At Munich, on 29 September 1938, Britain and France gave Hitler the Sudetenland. Nowadays, when we use the word 'appeasement', we take it to mean: 'giving in to a bully'. Some of the reasons Britain appease Hitler, however, were: Some British people approved of Hitler's policies. The British people hoped that a strong Germany would stop the growth of Communist Russia. Many people felt that events in Europe were not Britain's business. Many British people wanted peace. Many British people agreed with Hitler that the Treaty of Versailles was unfair.	Czechoslovakia: On 15 March 1939, Hitler's troops marched into the rest of Czechoslovakia. This, for most British people, was the time when they realised that the only thing that would stop Hitler was a war. Nazi-Soviet Pact: In summer 1939, Hitler began to unfold his plan to take over Poland. First, the Germans in Danzig demanded union with Germany. Then, Hitler threatened war. Chamberlain promised the Poles that Britain would support them if Germany attacked Poland. In August 1939, Hitler made a secret treaty with Russia. He thought this would stop Britain & France helping Poland. Poland: In April 1939, Chamberlain announced the 'Polish Guarantee' - a promise to defend Poland if Hitler invaded (this was the event which ended appeasement). On 1 September 1939, Hitler invaded Poland. On 3 September 1939, <u>Chamberlain declared war on Germany.</u>