

>> Germany rebuilt its military during the 1930s in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Here, troops stand at attention during a Nazi rally in Nuremberg, Germany.



Interactive Flipped Video

### >> Objectives

**Describe** how the Western democracies responded to aggression.

**Explain** the significance of the Spanish Civil War.

**Understand** how German aggression led Europe into World War II.

### >> Key Terms

appeasement

pacifism

Neutrality Acts

Axis powers

Francisco Franco

Anschluss

Sudetenland

Nazi-Soviet Pact

9.1

Throughout the 1930s, the rulers of Germany, Italy, and Japan were preparing to build new empires. After the horrors of World War I, the leaders of Britain, France, and the United States tried to avoid conflict through diplomacy. During the 1930s, the two sides tested each other's commitment and will.

## Aggression, Appeasement, and War

### A Pattern of Aggression

Challenges to peace followed a pattern. Dictators took aggressive action but met only verbal protests and pleas for peace from the democracies. Mussolini, Hitler, and Japanese militarists viewed that desire for peace as weakness and responded with new acts of aggression. With hindsight, we can see the shortcomings of the policies followed by the democracies. These policies, however, were the product of long and careful deliberation. At the time, many people believed they would prevent war.

**Japanese Imperialism Grows** One of the earliest tests had been posed by Japan. Japanese military leaders and ultranationalists thought that Japan should have an empire equal to those of the Western powers. In pursuit of this goal, Japan seized the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931. When the League of Nations condemned the aggression, Japan simply withdrew from the organization.

Japan's easy success strengthened the militarist faction in Japan. In 1937, Japanese armies overran much of eastern China, starting



PEARSON  
**realize**

www.PearsonRealize.com  
Access your Digital Lesson.



the Second Sino-Japanese War. Once again, Western protests did not stop Japan's acts of imperialism.

**Italy Invades Ethiopia** In Italy, Mussolini decided to act on his own imperialist ambitions. Italy's defeat by the Ethiopians at the battle of Adowa in 1896 still rankled after almost 40 years. In 1935, Italy invaded Ethiopia, located in northeastern Africa. Although the Ethiopians resisted bravely, their outdated weapons were no match for Mussolini's tanks, machine guns, poison gas, and airplanes.

The Ethiopian king Haile Selassie (HY luh suh lah SEE) appealed to the League of Nations for help. The League voted sanctions against Italy for violating international law. League members agreed to stop selling weapons or other war materials to Italy. But the sanctions did not extend to petroleum, which fueled modern warfare. In addition, the League had no power to enforce the sanctions. By early 1936, Italy had conquered Ethiopia.

**Hitler Violates the Treaty of Versailles** Hitler had also tested the will of the Western democracies, as well as of the League of Nations, and found it weak. First, he built up the German military in defiance of the Treaty of Versailles. Then, in 1936, he sent troops into the "demilitarized" Rhineland bordering France—another treaty violation. Germans hated the Versailles treaty, and Hitler's successful challenge made him more popular at home.

The Western democracies denounced his moves but took no real action. Instead, they adopted a policy of **appeasement**, or giving in to the demands of an aggressor in order to keep the peace.


**Reasons for Appeasement** The Western policy of appeasement developed for a number of reasons. France was demoralized, suffering from political divisions at home. It could not take on Hitler without British support. The British, however, had no desire to confront the German dictator. Some even thought that Hitler's actions constituted a justifiable response to the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which they believed had been too harsh on Germany.

In both Britain and France, many saw Hitler and fascism as a defense against a worse evil—the spread of Soviet communism. Additionally, the Great Depression sapped the energies of the Western democracies. Finally, widespread **pacifism**, or opposition to all war, and disgust with the destruction from the previous war pushed many governments to seek peace at any price.

**The United States Remains Neutral** As war clouds gathered in Europe in the mid-1930s, the United States



**>> Analyze Political Cartoons** British cartoonist David Low was known for speaking out against the policy of appeasement. How does this cartoon reflect his message?

 **Interactive Cartoon**



**>> Here, Japanese cavalry have successfully occupied the northern section of Manchuria. The freezing weather did not stop Japanese imperialism.**

Congress passed a series of **Neutrality Acts**. One law forbade the sale of arms to any nation at war. Others outlawed loans to warring nations and prohibited Americans from traveling on ships of warring powers. The fundamental goal of American policy, however, was to avoid involvement in a European war, not to prevent such a conflict.

**Formation of the Axis Powers** Germany, Italy, and Japan were encouraged by the apparent weakness of the western democracies. The three aggressor nations formed what became known as the **Axis powers**, or the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis. The Axis powers agreed to fight Soviet communism. They also agreed not to interfere with one another's plans for territorial expansion. The agreement cleared the way for these anti-democratic, aggressor powers to take even bolder steps.

**? RECALL** Describe the early acts of aggression of Germany, Italy, and Japan.

## The Spanish Civil War

In 1936, Spain was plunged into civil war. Although the Spanish civil war was a local struggle, it soon drew other European powers into the fighting.

**From Monarchy to Republic** In the early 1900s, Spain was a monarchy dominated by a landowning upper class. Most Spaniards were poor peasants or urban workers. In 1931, popular unrest against the old

order forced the king to leave Spain. A republic was set up with a new, more liberal constitution.

The republican government passed a series of controversial reforms. It took over some Church lands, redistributed some land to peasants, and ended some privileges of the old ruling class. These moves split the country. Communists and others on the left demanded more radical reforms. Conservatives and the military rejected the changes.

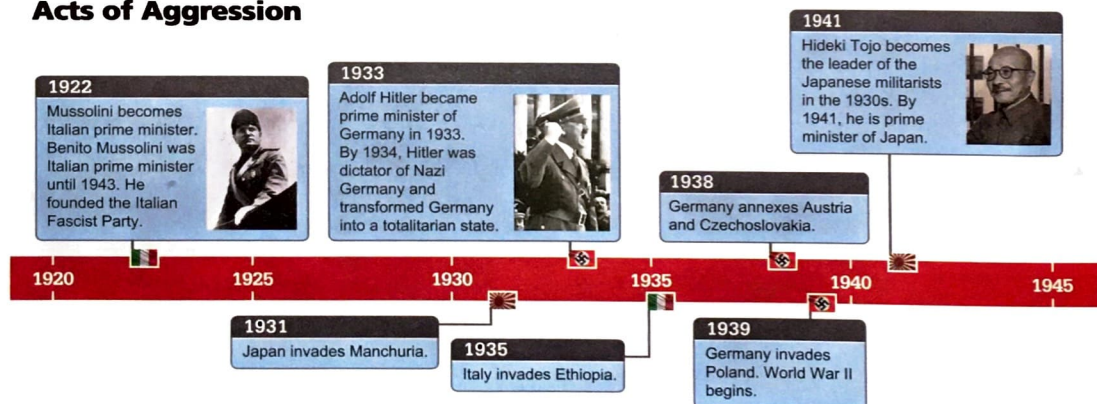
In 1936, a conservative general named **Francisco Franco** led a revolt that touched off a bloody civil war. Franco's forces, called Nationalists, rallied conservatives to their side. Supporters of the republic, known as Loyalists, included communists, socialists, and supporters of democracy.

**Other Countries Get Involved** People from other nations soon jumped in to support both sides. Hitler and Mussolini sent arms and forces to help Franco. The Soviet Union sent soldiers to fight against fascism alongside the Spanish Loyalists. Although the governments of Britain, France, and the United States remained neutral, individuals from those countries, as well as other countries, also fought with the Loyalists. Anti-Nazi Germans and anti-Fascist Italians joined the Loyalist cause as well.

**A Bloody War** Both sides committed horrible atrocities. The ruinous struggle took more than 500,000 lives.

One of the worst horrors was a German air raid on Guernica, a small Spanish market town, in April 1937. Germans timed their attack for an afternoon on a

## Acts of Aggression



>> Italy, Germany, and Japan formed an alliance and continued their aggressive actions. **Analyze Information** Why was it important for these three nations to form an alliance?



market day with thousands of people in town. German planes dropped their load of bombs, and then swooped low to machine-gun anyone who had survived the bombs. Nearly 1,000 innocent civilians were killed.

To Nazi leaders, the attack on Guernica was an experiment to identify what their new planes could do. To the rest of the world, it was a grim warning of the destructive power of modern warfare. Later, commentators viewed the Spanish Civil War as a “dress rehearsal” for World War II because it had allowed new tactics and weapons to be tested, which would soon be used in a new global war.

By 1939, Franco had triumphed. Once in power, he created a fascist dictatorship similar to the dictatorships of Hitler and Mussolini. He rolled back earlier reforms, killed or jailed enemies, and used terror to promote order.

**? RECALL** Explain how other countries got involved in the Spanish Civil War.

## German Aggression Continues

In the meantime, Hitler pursued his goal of bringing all German-speaking people into the Third Reich. He also took steps to gain “living space” for Germans in Eastern Europe. Hitler, who believed in the superiority of the German people, thought that Germany had a right to conquer the Slavs to the east. Hitler claimed, “I have the right to remove millions of an inferior race that breeds like vermin.”

Hitler also had economic and military reasons for expanding eastward. He wanted access to the natural resources of Eastern Europe, which would help boost production of military equipment. New lands would also provide additional markets for German products.

**Germany Annexes Austria** From the outset, Nazi propaganda had found fertile ground in Austria. By March, 1938, Hitler was ready to engineer the **Anschluss** (AHN shloos), or union of Austria and Germany.

When Austria's chancellor refused to agree to Hitler's demands, Hitler sent in the German army to “preserve order.” To indicate his new role as ruler of Austria, Hitler made a speech from the Hofburg Palace, the former residence of the Hapsburg emperors.

The Anschluss violated the Versailles treaty and created a brief war scare. Hitler quickly silenced any Austrians who opposed annexation. And since the Western democracies took no action, Hitler easily had his way.



>> Robert Capa's famous photograph, *The Fallen Soldier*, shows the death of a Loyalist militiaman during the Spanish Civil War. The Loyalists were supported by most urban workers and peasants, along with much of the educated middle class, which preferred a liberal democracy.



>> On March 15, 1938, Hitler gave a speech at the Hofburg Palace in Vienna announcing annexation of Austria by Nazi Germany.





>> British prime minister Neville Chamberlain believed he had delivered peace to Europeans. After the Munich Pact, he assured a jubilant crowd in London that they could sleep soundly, as he returned from Germany bringing peace with honor.



>> German troops ride in a convoy through the streets of Prague during the occupation of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Czech citizens lined the streets and watched silently in the rain and sleet.

 **Interactive Timeline**

**The Czech Crisis** Germany turned next to Czechoslovakia. At first, Hitler insisted that the three million Germans in the **Sudetenland** (soo DAY tun land)—a region of western Czechoslovakia—be given autonomy. Czechoslovakia was one of only two remaining democracies in Eastern Europe. (Finland was the other.) Still, Britain and France were not willing to go to war to save it. As British and French leaders searched for a peaceful solution, Hitler increased his demands. The Sudetenland, he said, must be annexed to Germany.

At the Munich Conference in September 1938, British and French leaders again chose appeasement. They caved in to Hitler's demands and then persuaded the Czechs to surrender the Sudetenland without a fight. In exchange, Hitler assured Britain and France that he had no further plans to expand his territory.

**The Munich Pact** Returning from Munich, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain told cheering crowds that he had achieved “peace for our time.” He told Parliament that the Munich Pact had “saved Czechoslovakia from destruction and Europe from Armageddon.” French leader Edouard Daladier (dah lahd yay) reacted differently to the joyous crowds that greeted him in Paris. “The fools, why are they cheering?” he asked.

British politician Winston Churchill, who had long warned of the Nazi threat, judged the diplomats harshly: “They had to choose between war and dishonor. They chose dishonor; they will have war.” Churchill vocalized his strong opposition to appeasement and the Munich Pact in a speech he gave in the House of Commons. He warned:

“And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.”

—Winston Churchill, October 5, 1938

Churchill's warning was largely ignored amid the celebration of the Munich Pact. However, he would very soon play a dominant role in the war he had predicted.

**? CHECK UNDERSTANDING** How did Hitler justify taking over Austria and the Sudetenland?

## World War II Begins

Just as Churchill predicted, Europe plunged rapidly toward war. In March 1939, Hitler broke his promises and gobbled up the rest of Czechoslovakia. The democracies finally accepted the fact that appeasement had failed. At last, thoroughly alarmed, they promised to protect Poland, most likely the next target of Hitler's expansion.

**Nazi-Soviet Pact** In August 1939, Hitler stunned the world by announcing a nonaggression pact with his great enemy—Joseph Stalin, the Soviet dictator. Publicly, the **Nazi-Soviet Pact** bound Hitler and Stalin to peaceful relations. Secretly, the two agreed not to fight if the other went to war and to divide up Poland and other parts of Eastern Europe between them.

The pact was based not on friendship or respect but on mutual need. Hitler feared communism as Stalin feared fascism.

But Hitler wanted a free hand in Poland. Also, he did not want to fight a war with the Western democracies and the Soviet Union at the same time. For his part, Stalin had sought allies among the Western democracies against the Nazi menace. Mutual suspicions, however, kept them apart. By joining with Hitler, Stalin tried to protect the Soviet Union from the threat of war with Germany and grabbed a chance to gain land in Eastern Europe.

**Germany Invades Poland** On September 1, 1939, a week after the Nazi-Soviet Pact, German forces invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun. History had again arrived at one of its great turning points.

The devastation of World War I and the awareness of the destructive power of modern technology made the idea of more fighting unbearable. Unfortunately, the war proved to be even more horrendous than anyone had imagined.

**? IDENTIFY CENTRAL IDEAS** Why did Britain and France end their policy of appeasement?



WONDER HOW LONG THE HONEYMOON WILL LAST?

>> The cartoon portrays the two long-time enemies, Hitler and Stalin, uniting in marriage, representing the nonaggression pact they signed. **Analyze Political Cartoons** Why would the cartoonist caption this cartoon "Wonder how long the honeymoon will last?"

### ASSESSMENT

1. **Identify Central Issues** Why did the western powers follow a policy of appeasement even though it seemed to encourage more aggression?
2. **Synthesize** Why did Germany and Italy become involved in the Spanish Civil War?
3. **Infer** Why did Churchill believe the Munich Pact was the "beginning of the reckoning"?
4. **Describe** How did the Nazi-Soviet Pact contribute to the start of World War II?
5. **Identify Central Ideas** What reaction did Britain have to Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939?