LONGMAN 20th CENTURY HISTORY SERIES

ROADS TO WAR

The Origins of the Second World War 1929–41



1

THE 'NEW ERA': HOPES FOR PEACE IN 1929

In 1929 many people believed that the world was entering a long period of peace. They had several reasons to be so hopeful.

Locarno and the 'New Era'

Hopes for lasting world peace had first been raised in 1925, when leading European statesmen met for a conference in the Swiss town of Locarno. There they discussed a number of problems that had not been settled at the end of the Great War. The most difficult problem facing them was the fact that Germany and France were still on bad terms after fighting each other in the Great War. Their hostility deepened in 1923 when French and Belgian armies occupied Germany's Ruhr Valley after the German government said that it could not pay for damage done to France and Belgium in the Great War.

The result of the conference at Locarno was a group of agreements known as the **Locarno Treaties**. The first of these was between France, Germany and Belgium, agreeing to respect each other's borders: Germany would never attack France and Belgium as she had done in 1914, while France and Belgium would never use force against Germany as they had done in 1923. Britain and Italy agreed to make sure the terms were not broken.

Several other Locarno Treaties were signed. France promised to support, Poland and Czechoslovakia if Germany ever quarrelled with them. All the countries involved agreed that they would never go to war if a dispute took place between them.

The Locarno Treaties removed many of the suspicions between Germany and her neighbours. Gustav Stresemann, Germany's Foreign Minister at Locarno, said shortly after the Treaties were signed:

A. 'May later generations have cause to bless this day as the beginning of a new era.'

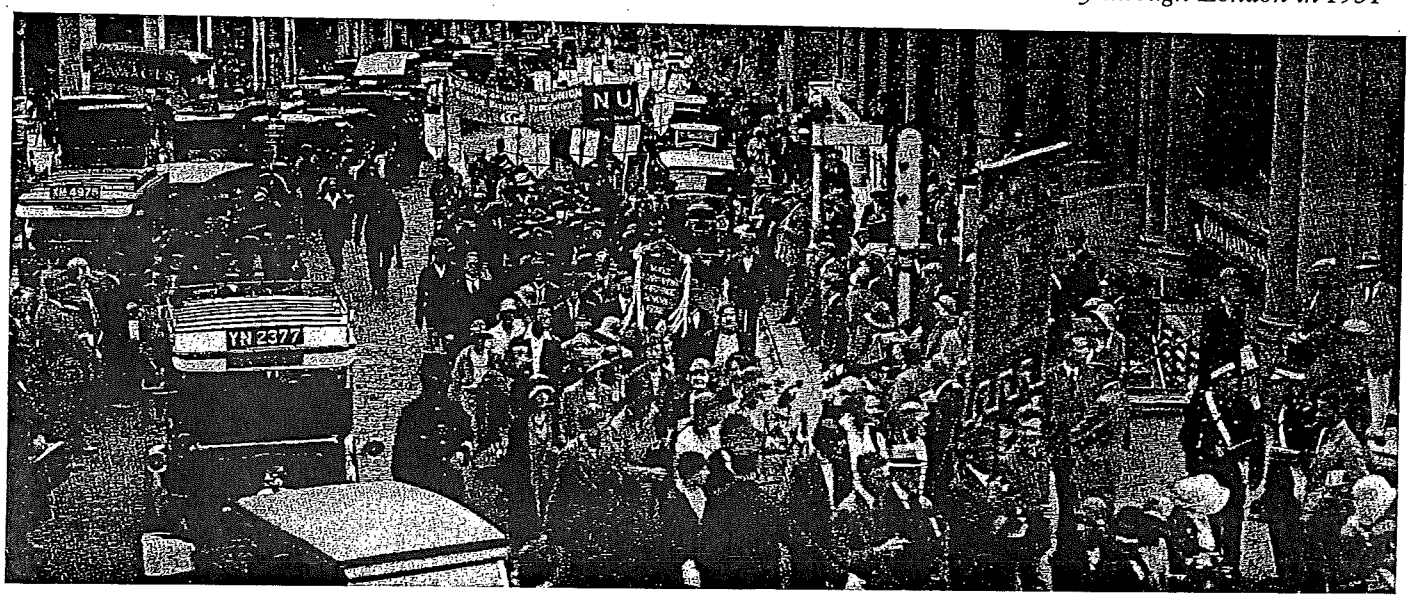
Friendship between nations

By 1929 it seemed that a 'new era' really had begun. All but two of the world's nations were at peace. Only a border clash between Paraguay and Bolivia disturbed the calm, and that was quickly over.

Far from fighting wars, many countries signed agreements of peace with each other in 1929. The most important of these was the **Kellogg–Briand Pact**. It was an agreement thought up by the Foreign Ministers of the United States and France, Kellogg and Briand, not to use war as a way of settling disputes. By July 1929, when it came into force, sixty-five countries had signed the Kellogg–Briand Pact.

Several other peace agreements were made in 1929. The USSR signed an **Eastern Pact** with six of its neighbouring states agreeing not to use war to settle disputes amongst themselves. Also a number of pacts of friendship were made between countries which had recently been in dispute with each other: Greece and Yugoslavia, Chile and Peru, Arabia and Turkey, Iran and Iraq, all settled long-standing quarrels in 1929.

Marchers in a peace demonstration organised by the League of Nations Union make their way through London in 1931



The League of Nations

It was not only the signing of peace pacts that made 1929 a hopeful year for world peace. 1929 was also the tenth anniversary of the world's first peace-keeping organisation, the League of Nations.

The League of Nations was created in 1919 by the peace treaties which ended the Great War. It had two aims: to keep peace between nations and to make the world a better place for all people.

To help achieve the aim of keeping world peace, countries which joined the League had to sign a promise not to go to war with any other member of the League. They also agreed that if any member did attack another, the other members would join forces to defend the country which was under attack. This idea for keeping peace was called **collective security**.

The rules of the League stated that it would take 'any action' to keep the peace between nations. There were, however, only three peace-keeping actions that the League could realistically consider taking. One was to deal with a dispute by legal means, in the League's Permanent Court of International Justice. Another was to impose economic **sanctions** on an attacker; this meant that all other League members would refuse to trade with the attacker, thus threatening it with economic ruin if it did not stop the attack. The third and most extreme course of action would be to impose military sanctions against the attacker. This would mean forming a League of Nations army from the armies of League members and using it to fight off the attacker.

During its first ten years, the League was asked to deal with nine disputes between member countries. In all but two cases it settled the disputes without even having to use sanctions. Also to its credit, the League had a number of special departments which by 1929 were doing valuable work to improve international relations. One of these was the **Disarmament Commission** which tried to persuade member nations to reduce their weapon stocks and to rely instead on collective security for their defence. Great hopes were aroused when the Commission announced that sixty nations would meet in Geneva in 1932 for the world's first ever disarmament conference.

The limitations of the League

Although the League achieved much in its first ten years, even its supporters admitted that it had some serious limitations.

First and most important, not every nation belonged to the League. The United States of America was not a member, for the US governments of the 1920s followed a 'policy of isolation' from the affairs of Europe, and did not want to get involved in unnecessary foreign affairs. The USSR was not a member because its communist leaders saw the League as a club of 'capitalist' countries opposed to communism. Although there were only ten non-members in 1929, the fact that these two major powers did not belong to the League was a serious weakness.

A second problem was that some members lacked enthusiasm for the League. Germany, beaten in the Great War, was excluded until 1926; and even after being admitted, many Germans looked on the League as a 'club of victors' – the countries which had beaten them in 1918.

A third problem was that the League's ability to keep the peace had never been fully tested by 1929. Although it had solved many of the disputes brought before it, none had involved the world's major powers and none had required the use of sanctions. There was no proof as yet that the League could settle a dispute between two major powers and there was no proof that sanctions could stop a war.

Despite its limitations, the League was an established feature of the world scene by 1929 and was highly regarded by people all over the world. In Britain alone, 400,000 people showed their support for it by joining the League of Nations Union, a body which aimed to promote the League's work in the country. Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Britain in that year, summed up many of their feelings when he said:

B. 'The League of Nations' . . . frowns will soon be more dreaded than a nation's arms, and when that happens you and I shall have security and peace.'

Work section

A. Study the photograph opposite, then answer these questions.
1. List the different kinds of people you can see taking part in the demonstration. In each case, explain how you can tell what kind of people they were.
2. How useful is this photograph as evidence that many people between the world wars wanted lasting world peace? What are the limitations of the photograph as evidence?
3. For what other purposes might a historian use this photograph as evidence?

B. Read source B again. Then, using the information in this chapter to guide you, answer the following questions.
1. Explain in your own words what Ramsay MacDonald meant by this.
2. In what ways did the first ten years in the life of the League of Nations encourage him to think like this?

2

THE GREAT DEPRESSION

You read in Chapter 1 that many people in 1929 thought a 'new era' of world peace was beginning. Sadly, a series of events in that year made it unlikely that the 'new era' would last.

The Great Depression

1929 saw the start of a breakdown in the world economy – the Great Depression of 1929–33. In October 1929 share prices on the Wall Street stock exchange in New York fell to an all-time low. As a result, thousands of American firms went bankrupt and millions of share-holders were ruined. The United States economy nose-dived into the deepest slump in its history.

The Great Depression which began in the USA quickly spread to most other countries. In those countries trade dwindled, profits fell, factories and businesses closed down and millions of people lost their jobs.

How did this affect the prospects for world peace? First, the governments of the countries hit hardest by the Depression tried to protect their people with new economic policies. Some – in the USA and Britain, for example – raised the customs duties on foreign goods coming into their countries. This was called **protectionism** and its aim was to boost the demand for goods made in their own countries by keeping out foreign goods. This, governments hoped, would create more jobs for their people. Some countries – Italy, for example – went even further. They tried to keep out foreign goods entirely, by making themselves self-sufficient. In the long run these policies of protectionism and self-sufficiency harmed international relations. The more selfishly each country acted to protect its people, the more they forgot the ideas of world co-operation that lay behind the League of Nations.

The second way in which the Depression affected world peace was by causing unrest among the people of many countries. Social unrest was the result of mass unemployment. In Germany, six million out of a population of sixty-four million were without work by 1933. Half Japan's factories were idle, while millions of Japanese peasants starved when the prices of their crops such as silk plummeted. In Eastern Europe millions of peasants were reduced to total poverty as the price of their wheat fell to a record low.

In many of the countries where there was mass unemployment, people blamed their governments for what had happened. Desperate for food and work, people often gave their support to extreme political parties which promised to help them if elected to power. As we shall see, in Germany and Japan this led to the collapse of democratic governments. In their place, anti-democratic governments came to power. They quickly started to act aggressively towards other countries in an attempt to improve the situation in their own country.

Out-of-work, homeless Germans living in a hut they have built from rubbish on open ground, Berlin, 1931

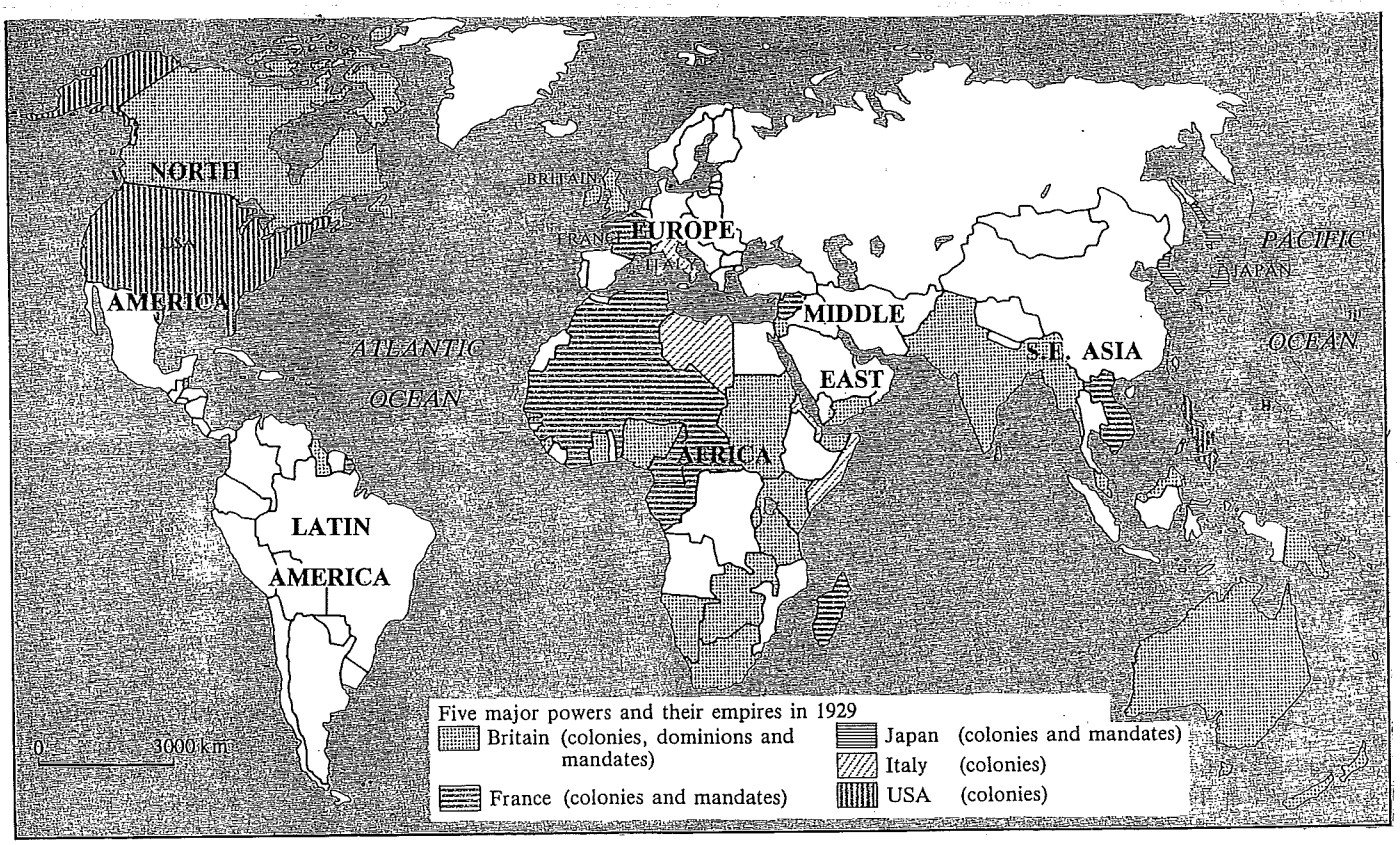


The problem of empires

The Great Depression added to a problem that was already a threat to world peace in 1929 – the division of the world into powers which owned large empires and those which did not.

You can see from the map opposite that Britain and France owned the largest empires in 1929. They had built these empires during the nineteenth century. As a result of their victory in the Great War they enlarged their empires by taking over Germany's colonies as 'mandates', governing them on trust for the League of Nations. As a result Britain and France between them ruled over one third of the world.

How did this affect world relations? First, some countries envied the French and British empires and wanted to enlarge their own. The Italians, who were



that they were not given any German colonies at the end of the war. The Japanese, also on the winning side, had been given some German islands in the Pacific Ocean, but these were small and of little value. The Japanese therefore wanted to add to their empire with land nearer home. And the Germans themselves were angered by the loss of their entire empire.

The Great Depression increased the resentment of Italy, Japan and Germany, for, as the Depression worsened, Britain and France were able to increase their trade with their empires and thus avoid its worst effects. Ambitious soldiers and politicians in Italy, Japan and Germany began to think that adding colonies to their own empires would also help them to avoid the worst effects of the Depression – even if this meant grabbing land from other countries.

Owning large empires, however, caused problems for Britain and France which no other country faced. In many of their colonies, native people were demanding the right to govern themselves. In the Middle East, in India and South-East Asia, and in many parts of Africa, native demands for independence often led to violent clashes. Britain and France therefore had to keep large military forces in the colonies. Not only was this expensive, but it also meant that Britain and France could not fully support the aim for world peace and disarmament. As a British writer and wit, A. P. Herbert, wrote in 1929:

A. 'Poor old Britannier! Excuse a little sob;
Ain't your far flung Empire a full-time job?
Less of this Locarney-blarney! Why d'you want to roam?
Ain't you got enough misfortunes in the home?'

Work section

A. Study the photograph opposite.
1. Suggest why these men were living in a makeshift camp rather than their own homes.
2. What evidence is there in the photograph that the men were living uncomfortably?
3. What effect might living in such conditions have on the way these men voted in elections? Explain your answer.

B. Study the map above.
1. Judging by the size and number of their colonies, rank the five empires according to their size.
2. In which areas of the world were the five powers (a) most heavily involved and (b) least heavily involved?
3. In which areas of the world do you think the five powers would be most likely to conflict with each other? Explain your answer.

C. Read source A again.
1. What do you think A. P. Herbert meant by 'Locarney-blarney'?
2. What argument does the rhyme make against Britain getting involved with 'Locarney-blarney'?

3

JAPAN, MANCHURIA AND THE LEAGUE, 1931–33

One of the many people who thought the world was entering a new era of peace was Viscount Cecil, chief British representative to the League of Nations. In a speech to the League Assembly on 10 September 1931, he said:

A. 'I do not think there is the slightest prospect of any war . . . . There has scarcely ever been a period in the world's history when war seemed less likely than it does at present.'

Viscount Cecil was an intelligent and well-informed statesman, but within a week he was proved totally wrong. Japan, a leading member of the League of Nations, invaded Manchuria, part of the territory of a fellow member, China. It was the first of a series of attacks that eventually brought most of South-East Asia under Japanese control.

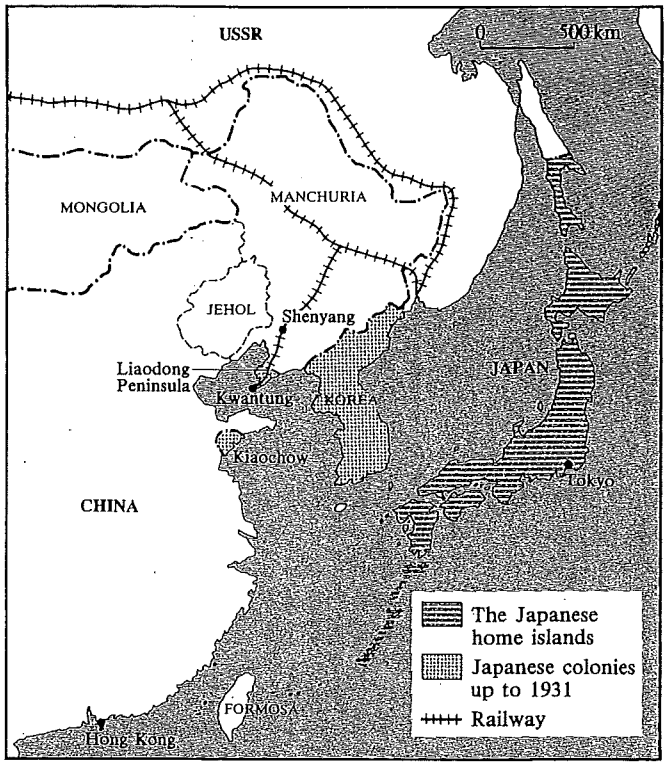
The attraction of Manchuria

As you can see from the map, Japan had already taken over four areas in and around China – Formosa, Korea, Liaodong and Kiaochow. But Manchuria was the area which the Japanese wanted more than all the others. Some of their reasons for wanting Manchuria are described in this letter which the Prime Minister of Japan sent to the Japanese Emperor in 1927:

B. 'It is an area of 192,000 square kilometres, having a population of 28 million people. The territory is more than three times as large as our own empire, not counting Korea and Formosa, but it is inhabited by only one third as many people. The attractiveness of the land does not arise from the scarcity of the population alone; its wealth of forestry, minerals and agricultural products is also unrivalled elsewhere in the world. In order to exploit these resources . . . we created especially the South Manchuria Railway Company.

The total investment involved in our undertakings in railways, shipping, mining, forestry, steel manufacture, agriculture, and in cattle raising . . . amount to no less than 440 million yen.'

By 1931 the Japanese controlled most of Manchuria's economy. Japan owned all its most important mines, railways, factories and ports. To protect these possessions it kept a large army in Kwantung in South Manchuria.



Japan and Manchuria, 1931

As you read in Chapter 2, the Great Depression which started in 1929 ruined Japan's trade, closed half her factories and reduced millions of peasants to starvation level. When the Japanese government proved unable to help them, there was widespread unrest among the people. Their unrest spread to the army. Army officers began to talk about conquering foreign land as a way out of the Depression. With new colonies, they argued, Japan would gain raw materials, trade and many more jobs. Where better to start than Manchuria, where Japan already had the Kwantung army in place and where it already owned the South Manchuria Railway Company?

Japan invades Manchuria

Acting against the orders of the Japanese government, officers of the Kwantung army plotted a military take-over of Manchuria. During the night of 18 September 1931, Japanese soldiers blew up a section of the South Manchuria Railway at Shenyang. They then blamed the explosion on local Chinese people and used it as an excuse to occupy Shenyang.

China immediately asked the League of Nations for help. The League's first response was to order the Japanese government to withdraw is troops. The

Japanese delegate to the League agreed to this demand and claimed that the invasion had been the work of 'some military hot-heads'.

But while the Japanese government agreed to the League's demands, the Kwantung army continued to advance into Manchuria. By the end of 1931 it had occupied the entire province and made it into a semi-independent state named Manzhouguo (Manchukuo). The problem was that the government had lost control of the Kwantung army: its officers were acting against their orders. This meant that the League was, in the words of Britain's ambassador to Japan, 'in the unpleasant position of seeking assurances from a government which had not the power to make them good'.

The League and Manchuria

As you read in Chapter 1, the League of Nations was meant to keep world peace through 'collective security'. If persuasion did not work, the League could use economic sanctions (a ban on trade with the attacker) or military sanctions (a League army) against the attacker.

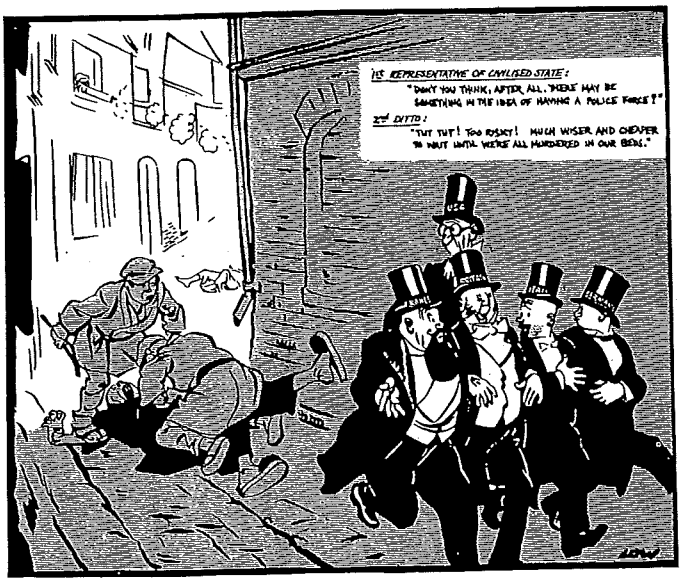
In 1931–32, however, no member of the League wanted to use sanctions against Japan. For a start, the Great Depression had already damaged trade between nations and nobody wanted to damage it further by refusing to trade with Japan. Second, even the most powerful members of the League doubted whether they could enforce sanctions. As one British minister put it:

C. 'If you enforce an economic boycott, you'll have war declared by Japan and she will seize Singapore and Hong Kong [*Britain's main ports in South-East Asia*] and we can't, as we are placed, stop her.'

The League therefore tried to restore peace by means of persuasion. A Commission of Enquiry, led by Britain's Lord Lytton, was sent to Manchuria to investigate the crisis. After a lengthy tour of the Far East the Lytton Commission produced a report in October 1932 trying to satisfy both China and Japan. The report suggested that the Japanese should leave Manchuria, but that the region should continue to be a semi-independent country instead of returning to Chinese rule.

This attempt to satisfy both China and Japan was approved by the League early in 1933. But before any further progress could be made, Japan resigned from the League and went on to occupy the Chinese province of Jehol, a mountainous area which Japan claimed was vital for the military defence of Manchuria.

The Manchuria affair damaged the reputation of the League of Nations. One of its leading members had gone to war with another member and the League had failed to stop it. By the end of the affair in 1933, even the League's strongest supporters had doubts about its ability to maintain world peace.



'Uneasy Street'. A cartoon on the Manchuria affair drawn in 1931 by the great British cartoonist, David Low

Work section

A. Study source B.
1. Bearing in mind who wrote the letter, and to whom it was written, how useful do you consider source B as evidence of Japan's intentions towards Manchuria? Explain your answer.
2. According to source B, what attracted the Japanese towards Manchuria?
3. Judging by the map opposite, suggest another reason, not mentioned in source B, why Japan wanted to control Manchuria.

B. Study the cartoon above.
1. Which countries are represented by (a) the man being attacked, and (b) the two men attacking him?
2. Which organisation is represented by the men running away from the scene?
3. Explain in your own words the question asked by '1st representative of civilised state'.
4. Judging by source C above, suggest why '2nd ditto' thought this 'too risky'.
5. What point do you think the cartoonist was trying to make?
6. Judging by what you have read in this chapter, how fair do you think the cartoonist's point was? Explain your answer.

4

THE REVIVAL OF GERMANY, 1933–35

While Japan was occupying Manchuria, events of a different kind on the other side of the world were also threatening world peace. In a series of elections in Germany, between 1930 and 1932, the extreme right-wing Nazi Party massively increased its share of the vote, allowing its leader, Adolf Hitler, to become Chancellor of Germany in January 1933.

Hitler's foreign policy aims

Hitler and the Nazis had strong views about Germany's place in the world. The Nazi Party was set up in 1919 shortly after Germany's defeat in the Great War. Like many other Germans, the Nazis refused to believe that the German army had been beaten. They blamed Germany's defeat on government ministers whom they accused of cowardice. They were even angrier when, in July 1919, the Allies forced Germany to sign the **Treaty of Versailles**.

The Treaty of Versailles blamed Germany for starting the Great War, cut her armed forces to the bare minimum, took away all her colonies, ordered her to pay for war damage and gave large areas of her land to neighbouring states. But not only was the Treaty harsh: many Germans also felt that it was unfair. For while peoples like the Poles and Czechs were allowed to form their own nations at the end of the Great War, the Treaty did not allow the German-speaking people of Austria to unite with Germany in a single German nation. Also, the transfer of German land to neighbouring states meant that millions of Germans were now living under foreign rule.

When Hitler became Chancellor in 1933 he had three basic aims in his foreign policy. First, he aimed to tear up the Treaty of Versailles. Second, he intended to unite all German-speaking people in one country (to be called 'Greater Germany'). Third, he aimed to give Germans '**lebensraum**', or 'living space'; Germany was overcrowded, he said, and did not have enough food or raw materials. The way to get these things would be to take over the land east of Germany, particularly in the USSR and Poland.

Hitler was well aware that his aims could only be achieved by conquering much of Europe. He made this clear in conversation with a fellow Nazi, Hermann Rauschning, in 1934:

A. '"We need space," he almost shrieked, "to make us independent . . . . In the east, we must have mastery as far as the Caucasus and Iran. In the west, we need the French coast. We need Flanders [*Belgium*] and Holland. Above all we need Sweden. We must become a colonial [illegible] of Britain . . . . We cannot . . . limit ourselves to national aims. We must rule Europe or fall apart as a nation . . . . In the centre I shall place the steely core of a Greater Germany . . . . Then Austria, Bohemia, Moravia, western Poland. A block of one hundred million, indestructible, without a flaw, without an alien element. The firm foundation of our power."'

Re-armament

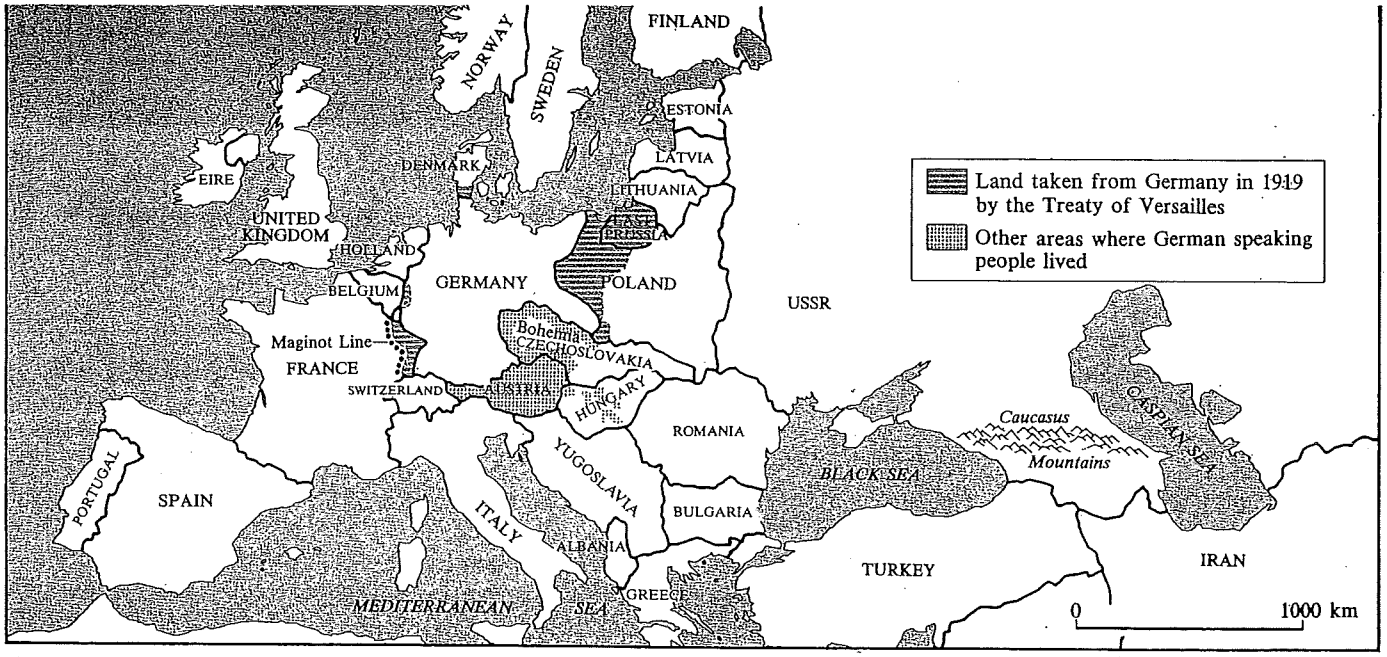
None of Hitler's aims could be achieved without large armed forces; Germany would have to conquer, or threaten to conquer, the land that Hitler wanted. The armed forces, however, were weak when Hitler became Chancellor. The Treaty of Versailles had limited the army to 100,000 men, abolished the air force, forbade the navy to have submarines and allowed it only six warships of over 10,000 tonnes. To achieve his aims, Hitler would have to build up the armed forces in defiance of the treaty.

At a secret meeting early in 1933 Hitler announced to the army generals a plan to increase the armed forces. The army was to be trebled in size to 300,000 men. A new Air Ministry was to build 1000 aircraft and secretly train pilots in civilian flying clubs. Barracks, airfields and fortifications were to be built. Later in 1933, Hitler withdrew from the Geneva Disarmament Conference (see Chapter 1) and from the League of Nations.

For the next two years the German armed forces re-armed in secret. By March 1935 the new air force, the *Luftwaffe*, had 2500 aircraft and the army had 300,000 men. On 16 March 1935 Hitler decided there was no longer any need to re-arm in secrecy. He announced in public that there would be compulsory military service for all men, and that the army was to increase to 550,000.

A German propaganda postcard issued in 1935 shortly after the introduction of compulsory military service





Germany and Europe, 1919–39

Reactions to German re-armament

When Hitler became Chancellor in 1933, Germany was crippled by the Great Depression, its armed forces were weak and the country was in political turmoil. From 1933 to 1935 Germany's re-armament could have been halted by any of the major powers which wanted to uphold the Treaty of Versailles.

This did not happen. The British, as you have read, had problems of their own in the empire and did not want to be deeply involved in European affairs. Moreover, the Great Depression meant that the British government did not want to spend scarce money on building up Britain's armed forces.

The French were also unwilling to halt Germany's re-armament by force. Instead, they put their efforts into defending France with the **Maginot Line**, a series of heavily armed concrete forts built along the length of the French border with Germany.

Italy was the only country that came close to taking action against Germany at this time. When, in 1934, Nazis in Austria tried to overthrow the Austrian government, killing the Austrian Chancellor in the process, many people thought that Hitler would try to take control of Austria and unite it with Germany. To prevent this, the Italian leader Mussolini placed army units in threatening positions on the border between Italy and Austria. It was a clear warning to Hitler that he would not allow such a union to take place. Hitler therefore abandoned any plans he might have had for a take-over of Austria.

Hitler's announcement of compulsory military service in 1935 alarmed the other European powers, but again they took no military action. Instead, the Prime Ministers of France, Britain and Italy met at Stresa in Italy to form what they called the **Stresa Front**. They issued a protest against Hitler's re-armament plans, but otherwise took no action.

By April 1935, then, the 'new era' of peace which seemed to have started in 1929 was a very uneasy peace. Events in Manchuria and Germany had shown that two of the world's leading nations were not prepared to abide by international law – and that nobody was going to try to make them do so.

Work section

A. Study source A. Then, on a copy of the map above:
1. Shade or colour all the land which Hitler said Germany needed.
2. In another shade, show the areas that would become part of a German-speaking 'Greater Germany'.

B. Using the map you have made, as well as the information in this chapter, answer these questions:
1. Which countries would suffer most if Hitler put his plans (source A) into practice?
2. Explain how (a) the British, (b) the French, and (c) the Italian governments might have reacted if they had heard Hitler's plans in 1934.

C. 1. Explain in your own words the point made by the propaganda postcard opposite.
2. Judging by what you have read in this chapter, do you think the point was a fair one?
3. For what purposes do you think the postcard was made?

THE ETHIOPIA CRISIS, 1935–36

The system of collective security broke down in 1935–36 when the League of Nations failed to settle a conflict between two of its members – Ethiopia and Italy.

The origins of the Ethiopia crisis

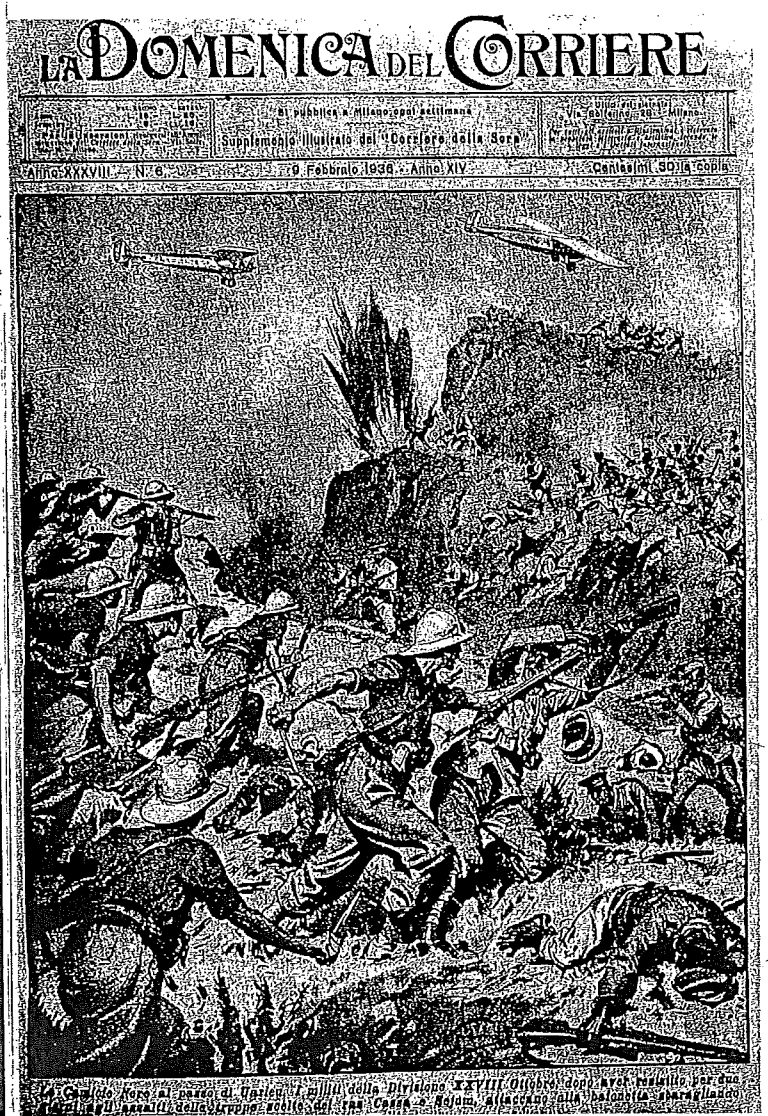
As you read in Chapter 2, much of the world in the 1930s was still governed by European empires. In Africa, only two out of forty states were independent. One of those was the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia, ruled by Emperor Haile Selassie.

Like most European countries in the nineteenth century, Italy had taken part in a 'scramble for Africa' – a contest to get as many colonies there as possible. Italy, however, came last in the scramble and gained only three African possessions – Libya in the north and Eritrea and Somaliland on either side of Ethiopia. When the Italian army tried to take control of Ethiopia in 1896 it was smashed by Ethiopian forces at the Battle of Adowa. The reputation of the Italian army was ruined when 6000 Italian soldiers were killed.

Their defeat at Adowa did not stop the Italians from wanting more land in East Africa. After coming to power in 1922 the Fascist dictator of Italy, Benito Mussolini, made plans to take control of Ethiopia. While publicly signing a treaty of friendship with Haile Selassie in 1928, his generals were making preparations for a military invasion of Ethiopia.

By 1934 the Italian armed forces had large quantities of weapons and ammunition stockpiled in Somaliland and Eritrea. All they needed was an excuse to use them. They found their excuse in December when Italian and Ethiopian troops clashed at an oasis named Wal Wal (see map). Mussolini accused Ethiopia of aggression and ordered the armed forces to prepare for its 'total conquest'.

The front page of La Domenica del Corriere, *a colour supplement to an Italian newspaper, showing an artist's impression of fighting between Italians and Ethiopians*



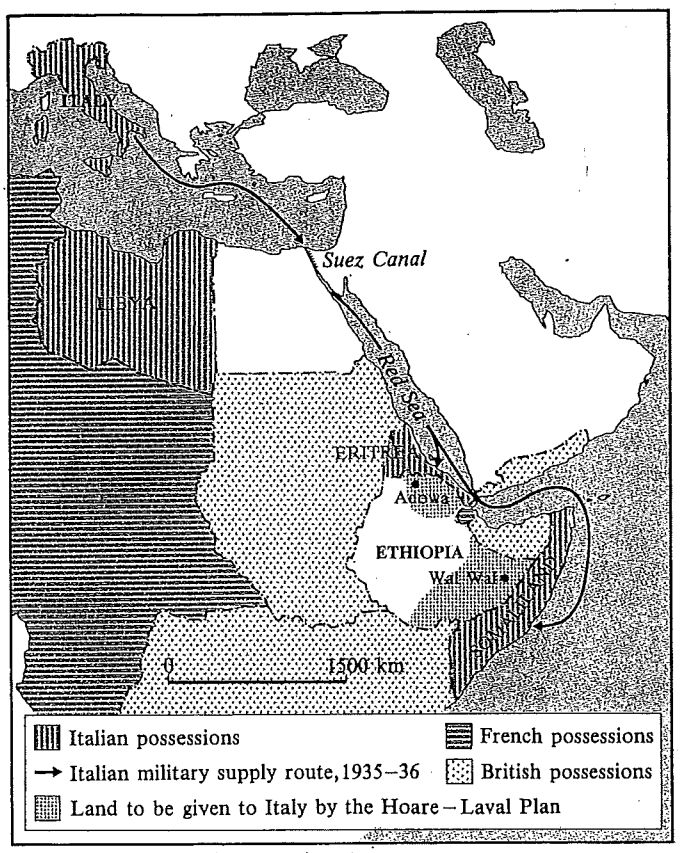
The invasion of Ethiopia

On 3 October 1935 two immense Italian armies invaded Ethiopia. Half a million soldiers and several million tonnes of equipment were transported from Italy to take part in the invasion. Marching from their bases in Somaliland and Eritrea, the Italians rapidly forced the Ethiopians into the jaws of a trap.

The Ethiopians stood little chance of winning the war. A British military historian, Lt. Col. A. J. Barker, described the situation facing them like this:

A. 'The Ethiopians were ill-equipped and . . . ill-prepared for the sort of war with which they were faced, and Haile Selassie's ragged army, with its spears and 1874 vintage Etienne rifles, never really had any hope of stemming the Fascist juggernaut with its Fiat machine guns. . . . The extensive use of motorised columns made possible a rapid advance into the very heart of Ethiopia; the use of mustard gas and vast numbers of aircraft simplified ground tactics and helped to compensate for lack of training. . . .'

With all those advantages, it was hardly surprising that the Italian army beat the Ethiopians in every battle they fought. In May 1936 they captured the capital, Addis Ababa. King Victor Emmanuel of Italy was named Emperor of Ethiopia in place of Haile Selassie. The country was united with Somaliland and Eritrea and renamed Italian East Africa.



Italy and Ethiopia, 1935–36

The reaction of the League of Nations

When the Italians invaded his country in October 1935, Haile Selassie went to Geneva and asked the League of Nations for help. The League immediately condemned the Italian invasion and ordered all members to impose economic sanctions on Italy.

This was the first time that the League had imposed economic sanctions on a country and, sadly, they did not work. It took six weeks before sanctions were imposed on 18 November and, even then, three of Italy's allies refused to take part. The sanctions, on goods such as steel, grain, gold and textiles, caused difficulties for Italy, but they did not include a ban on oil supplies, the only thing that could have stopped the Italian invasion immediately. This was largely because the United States, the world's biggest oil supplier at that time, was not a member of the League. It was also because the British and French, the League's leading members, feared that a ban on oil would provoke Mussolini into making war on them too. For this reason, the British did not close the Suez Canal, which it controlled, to Italian ships taking military supplies to Ethiopia.

While the League was slowly organising sanctions against Italy, the British and French were following their own line of action. Their aim was to negotiate a peaceful end to the conflict. In December 1935 Samuel Hoare, Britain's Foreign Secretary, and Pierre Laval, Prime Minister of France, drew up a plan which they hoped would satisfy both sides. The **Hoare–Laval Plan** was to give two large areas of Ethiopia to Italy and to reserve the south of the country for Italian businesses. In return, the Italians would halt their invasion.

Mussolini agreed to accept the Hoare–Laval Plan, but in Britain there were strong protests from people who thought that the Plan betrayed Ethiopia. As a result of their protests, Hoare had to resign as Foreign Secretary and the Plan was abandoned.

Both sanctions and the Hoare–Laval Plan had failed to halt the Italian army: there was nothing left to stop it from conquering the rest of Ethiopia.

The importance of the Ethiopia crisis

The Italian conquest of Ethiopia was a disaster for the League of Nations. It had failed to stop one of its members from invading another. Moreover, the League's two leading members, Britain and France, had privately followed their own line of action while the League was still organising sanctions. Worse still, the sanctions annoyed Mussolini so much that he turned away from his old allies and looked instead for support from Adolf Hitler's Germany. Also, while the world's attention was on Ethiopia, Hitler himself quietly took the opportunity to pursue his own aggressive aims in Europe.

Work section

A. Study the painting opposite, read source A again, then answer these questions.
1. What impression of the fighting between Italians and Ethiopians does the painting create?
2. In what ways does this impression differ from that created by source A?
3. Suggest why the editor of *La Domenica Del Corriere* used this painting rather than a photograph to illustrate the fighting.
4. Judging by what you have read in this chapter, what changes would you make to the painting to make it more accurate?

B. Study the map above, then answer these questions.
1. Why do you think Britain and France took such a close interest in the Italian invasion of Ethiopia?
2. Suggest two reasons why a ban on oil supplies to Italy would have halted the Italian invasion.
3. What effect might closing the Suez Canal have had on the Italian invasion?
4. Why do you think many people called the Hoare–Laval Plan a betrayal of Ethiopia?

6

FROM THE SAARLAND TO THE RHINELAND, 1935–36

As you read in Chapter 4, Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party took power in Germany in 1933. They aimed to get rid of the Treaty of Versailles, to unite all German-speakers in a 'Greater Germany', and to gain 'living space' in the east. All this required a revival of German military strength. So, for two years, Hitler secretly enlarged the army and created an air force. By 1935 he felt strong enough to drop the mask of secrecy and to start undoing the Treaty of Versailles.

The Saar Plebiscite

One of the areas taken from Germany by the Treaty of Versailles was the Saarland, a 2500 km^2 region on the border with France. Although small, it was a valuable area, containing coalfields, factories and railway centres. The Treaty put the Saarland under League of Nations control and allowed the French to run its valuable coal mines for the next fifteen years. At the end of that time the people of the Saar would vote to decide their future. They would have three choices: to remain under League control, to return to Germany, or to become part of France.

In 1935 the required vote, or **plebiscite**, was held. Nine out of every ten Saarlanders voted to return to Germany. The region was duly transferred to German rule seven weeks later. For Hitler, this was the first small step towards the union of all Germans in Germany. He was also able to claim that the plebiscite was a demonstration of support for his government.

The Anglo–German naval agreement

Another promising step forward for Hitler in 1935 was an agreement with Britain about the size of the German navy. The Treaty of Versailles forbade the German navy to build warships of more than 10,000 tonnes and banned submarines entirely. The German navy in 1935 was thus virtually non-existent.

In June 1935 the British government signed an agreement with Germany, allowing the German navy to have one third the tonnage of the British navy and an equal tonnage of submarines. This was a breach of the Treaty of Versailles. The British defended the agreement by saying that Hitler was going to re-arm the German navy anyway and that it was better to

The occupation of the Rhineland: German troops march through the streets of Karlsruhe on 9 March 1936



agree a limit on its size than have no limit at all. Even so, the fact remained that Britain was allowing Hitler to break the Versailles Treaty. Some people found this hard to understand when the British government, only two months earlier, had signed the Stresa Front condemning German re-armament.

The occupation of the Rhineland

The Treaty of Versailles made the Rhineland area of Germany (see the newspaper map opposite) into a **demilitarised zone**. This meant that the German army was not allowed to enter it, nor to keep any weapons or fortifications there. This was confirmed by the Locarno Treaty in 1926. The aim of keeping the Rhineland demilitarised was to ensure that Germany could not attack France as it had done in 1914.

Ever since 1919 German governments had aimed to get rid of the demilitarised zone at the earliest possible moment. They claimed that it left Germany open to attack from Belgium, Holland and France. They also felt it was an insult to German self-respect.

In March 1936, while Britain, France and the rest of the League of Nations were busy dealing with the Ethiopia crisis, Hitler ordered the German army to reoccupy the Rhineland. A combined force of 10,000 soldiers and 22,700 armed police marched into the demilitarised zone on 7 March and crossed the River Rhine soon after. At the same time, Hitler tried to reassure neighbouring France and Belgium by offering to sign peace pacts with them.

This was another serious breach of the Treaty of Versailles. Britain and France considered whether they should try to expel the German army from the Rhineland. France, however, was going through serious political difficulties at the time and did not want to risk war. The British took the view that the Germans had only moved into their own territory – 'their own back garden', as the press called it. So, although the German soldiers had secret orders not to shoot if opposed by French or British troops, they were left unchallenged in the Rhineland.

The occupation of the Rhineland was a huge gamble for Hitler. As he said later:

A. 'The forty-eight hours after the march into the Rhineland were the most nerve-racking of my life. If the French had then marched into the Rhineland, we would have had to withdraw with our tails between our legs.'



CLASSIFIED RESULTS — FINAL NIGHT

Don't be Vague — ASK FOR Haig

Evening Standard

No. 34,799 — LONDON, SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1936 — ONE PENNY

Dunville's OLD IRISH WHISKY

GERMAN TROOPS ENTER RHINELAND

Hitler Denounces Locarno And Offers New Pacts

FOOTBALL RESULTS And League Tables BACK PAGE

25 YEARS' PEACE WITH FRANCE | RE-ENTRY INTO THE LEAGUE

Hurried Talks in Paris Follow Breaking of Treaties

HITLER TO-DAY SMASHED THE LOCARNO AND VERSAILLES TREATIES BY SENDING TROOPS INTO THE DEMILITARISED RHINE ZONE.

FRANTICALLY CHEERING CROWDS THREW FLOWERS AT THE SOLDIERS AS THEY MARCHED, WITH DRUMS BEATING AND COLOURS FLYING, INTO COLOGNE, MAINZ, COBLENCE AND FRANKFURT.

In Berlin Hitler handed to the Ambassadors of Britain, France, Italy and Belgium (the guarantor Powers, a Note which said: "The Government declare themselves liberated from the obligations imposed on them by the Treaties of Versailles and Locarno. They have effected during the night of Friday and Saturday the re-occupation of the Rhineland zone. The operation is now being completed."

Simultaneously he laid proposals for new pacts and the entry of Germany into the League.

France is once called a meeting of the Locarno Powers, excluding Germany, to be held in Paris this evening. It is reported that the French Government will appeal to the League for action against Germany, under the Covenant.

Foreign diplomats who called on Herr Hitler were told that only a few battalions of German troops had marched into the Rhineland. The action was officially called a "symbolic occupation," and was stated to have been done "to establish equality."

The Note and a memorandum handed to diplomatic couriers three hours before the Reichstag met to-day contained the following proposals:

1. Germany is ready to establish with France and Belgium demilitarised zones on either side of the frontier as deep as those countries desire.
2. Germany is ready to conclude a non-aggression pact with France and Belgium, supported by England and Italy as guarantors, for 25 years, as a satisfactory period for this.
3. Germany invites Britain and Italy to become guarantors of the non-aggression pact with France and Belgium.
4. Holland might join this pact if she so desired.
5. Without specifying which powers should sign it, Germany reiterates the proposal for the conclusion of an air pact for Western Europe, designed to avert unprovoked air attack.
6. Germany expresses her willingness to conclude a non-aggression pact, with all States bordering her on the East, including Lithuania.
7. Germany is willing to return to the League of Nations now that she has obtained equality in arms and full territorial sovereignty. This hope is expressed that Colonial questions and the problem of separating the League Covenant from the Versailles Treaty may be regulated later by "friendly negotiations."

The memorandum then goes on to blame France for destroying the Locarno Pact by negotiating a mutual assistance pact with Russia.

"Germany Will Keep Peace"

"An hour later Hitler told the Reichstag of the coup d'état. Points from his speech:—

"Germany will never break the peace of Europe.

"We have no territorial claims in Europe.

"There is talk of a 'German menace.' For us the German question is

(Continued on PAGE ELEVEN)

INDEX

BRITAIN'S AIR PACT PROPOSAL TO GERMANY

German Ambassador Sees Mr. Eden

How London's Evening Standard *reported the occupation of the Rhineland*

But it was a gamble that paid Hitler handsomely. Not only did he get back control of the Rhineland, but he also learned several valuable lessons for the future. One was that the French would not fight to stop him taking over one of their main defences against Germany; and if the French would not fight for that, would they go to war at all? The other lesson was that the British were sympathetic to some German complaints about the Versailles Treaty. Both lessons suggested that it would be worth trying another gamble to get the European territory which he wanted.

Work section

A. Study the newspaper front page above, then answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think the occupation of the Rhineland was headline news in Britain?
2. Explain what is meant by 'Hitler denounces Locarno'.
3. To which countries do you think Hitler offered 'New Pacts'? Why do you think he did this at the same time as occupying the Rhineland?

B. Study the photograph opposite, then answer these questions:

1. What evidence is there in the photograph that the people of Karlsruhe supported Hitler's decision to place troops in the Rhineland?
2. In what way does the appearance of the soldiers confirm Hitler's statement in source A above?
3. How far does the photograph support paragraph two of the newspaper report?

SPAIN, EUROPE AND THE AXIS

The Spanish Civil War

Less than five months after Hitler occupied the Rhineland, a civil war began in Spain. On one side were **Republicans**, supported by socialists, liberals, communists, anarchists and other left-wing groups. On the other were **Nationalists**, supported by royalists, the Catholic Church, landowners and a small Fascist party.

The Spanish Civil War lasted nearly three years, from July 1936 to March 1939. It was a brutal conflict in which half a million Spaniards died. Although they had many reasons for fighting, both sides tended to explain their reasons in simplified terms. Many Republicans, for example, claimed they were fighting against fascism in defence of democracy. Many Nationalists claimed they were defending the Christian faith against communists and atheists.

Although such claims were over-simple, most people outside Spain accepted them as true. As a result, many foreigners believed that the Spanish Civil War was more than a local conflict between Spaniards: they saw it as a war of ideas concerning the whole world. In several cases, the governments of foreign countries decided to take part in the fighting to help the side whose ideas they supported.

Spain and the Axis powers

The first country to get involved was Germany. In July 1936 Hitler sent aircraft to help the Nationalist leader, General Franco, ferry his troops from their base in Morocco, a Spanish colony, to Spain. Shortly afterwards, Mussolini of Italy also sent aircraft to help the Nationalists.

Since May 1936, when his armies defeated Ethiopia, Mussolini had become more friendly towards Hitler. He had been annoyed by the League of Nations' sanctions against Italy and wanted a new ally. In October 1936 the two leaders agreed to work together on matters of common interest. Mussolini called this agreement the **Rome–Berlin Axis**. From then on, Germany and Italy were known as the **Axis powers**.

From 1936–38 the Axis powers poured aircraft, ammunition, weapons and troops into the parts of Spain held by the Nationalists. During that time Italy provided 73,000 troops, 759 aircraft, 157 tanks, 1800 big guns and 320 million rounds of ammunition. Germany sent some 16,000 troops, 600 aircraft, and half a billion marks worth of war materials.

Germany's most effective contribution to the Nationalists was the **Condor Legion** of the German Consisting of 45 fighter planes, 45 bombers and three dive-bombers, the Condor Legion was a modern, efficient and dangerous fighting machine. It showed its terrifying power in April 1937 when it bombed the small town of Guernica in northern Spain, entirely destroying the town's centre and killing 1000 civilians.

Foreign support for the Republicans

The Republican side in the Civil War got much of its foreign support from the USSR. In all, Soviet aid amounted to about 1000 aircraft, 900 tanks, 1500 guns and large quantities of ammunition. Around 1000 Soviet soldiers, mostly advisers and technicians, served in Spain.

Also fighting on the Republican side were units of volunteers recruited by the communist parties of many foreign countries. These units were known as the **International Brigades**. Around 40,000 young foreigners fought in them and more than a third were killed in action. One young man who fought for the Republicans, twenty-six-year-old Jason Gurney, later described why he volunteered for the International Brigades:

A. 'The Spanish Civil War seemed to provide the chance for a single individual to take a positive and effective stand on an issue which seemed to be absolutely clear. Either you were opposed to

Scottish volunteer ambulancemen shortly before leaving Glasgow for a second tour of duty with the International Brigades in Spain, January 1937



the growth of Fascism and went out to fight it, or you acquiesced in [*did not oppose*] its crimes and were guilty of permitting its growth. . . . For myself and many others like me it was a war of principle. . . . By fighting against Fascism in Spain we would be fighting against it in our own countries, and every other.'

Non-intervention

Most countries did not involve themselves in the Spanish Civil War. The British and French governments, for example, feared that if other countries got involved, the conflict would spread and become a major European war. They therefore set up a **Non-intervention Committee** in 1936. Most European countries joined the Committee and agreed not to supply arms to either the Republicans or Nationalists.

Britain and France stuck firmly to the idea of non-intervention and did not involve themselves in the Civil War. Italy, Germany and the USSR, however, continued to send men and weapons to Spain, even though they belonged to the Non-intervention Committee. Britain and France knew that these countries were supplying aid to Spain, but ignored it – even when Italian submarines attacked British ships heading for Republican ports there. The policy of non-intervention has thus been criticised by many historians. For example, the British historian Jill Edwards wrote in 1979 that:

B. 'By turning a blind eye both to the intervention of the dictators and to the need to protect British shipping to Spain, the British government aided Franco [*the Nationalist leader*] as decisively as if it had sent arms to him.'



A pro-Republican propaganda poster issued by the British Labour Party in 1937

The importance of the Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War had important effects on the relations between other countries in Europe, for it strengthened the ties between the two Axis powers. Hitler and Mussolini saw themselves as fighting a crusade against communism in Spain and in 1937 Mussolini joined the **Anti-Comintern Pact**, an agreement made in 1936 by Germany and Japan to oppose international communism. The relationship between Hitler and Mussolini became even closer when they visited each other's countries in 1937 and 1938.

For Hitler and Mussolini the Spanish Civil War had a practical use. They were able to use Spain as a testing ground for their new armaments, particularly their air forces. Some historians have suggested, for example, that the Germans bombed Guernica as an experiment to observe the effects of aerial bombing on a defenceless population.

Finally, the Civil War in Spain affected the way in which many Europeans thought about war. As you have read, most people in the 1920s and early 1930s hated war, saying that the Great War must be the 'war to end war'. Ideas changed during the Spanish Civil War, however. The young people who joined the International Brigades thought they were fighting in a good cause and that only war could stop the spread of fascism. The Spanish Civil War thus made the idea of war acceptable once again.

Work section

A. Study the propaganda poster above.
1. Describe in your own words the message you think the poster was trying to put across.
2. What kinds of people in Britain do you think were likely to be convinced by this message?
3. Why might a supporter of the Spanish Nationalists have claimed that the poster was biased?

B. Study the photograph opposite, then read source A again. Suggest why such men wanted to return to Spain for a second tour of duty with the International Brigades.

8

THE EMPIRE OF THE SUN, 1933–39

Japan conquered the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1931–32 and made it a puppet state under its control. It was the first step in a process of expansion that would soon make Japan, the 'land of the rising sun', into a mighty empire dominating East Asia.

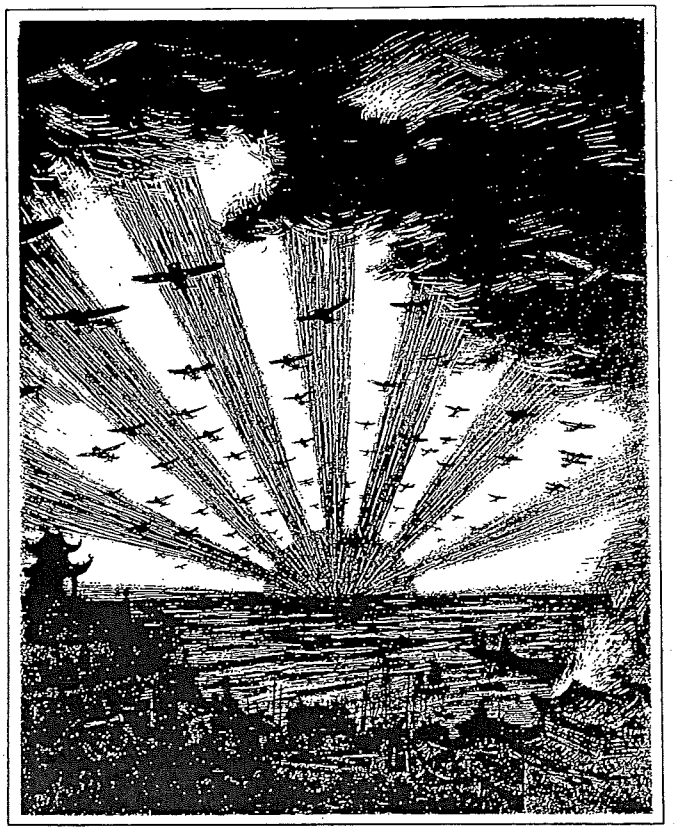
Japanese expansion, 1933–36

Japan's occupation of Manchuria alarmed its communist neighbour, the USSR. Japanese soldiers now faced Soviet soldiers along a 2000-km border, from Korea to Outer Mongolia. Armed clashes between the two sides soon broke out. Japanese army chiefs began to think it was only a matter of time before they would have to fight the Soviet Union.

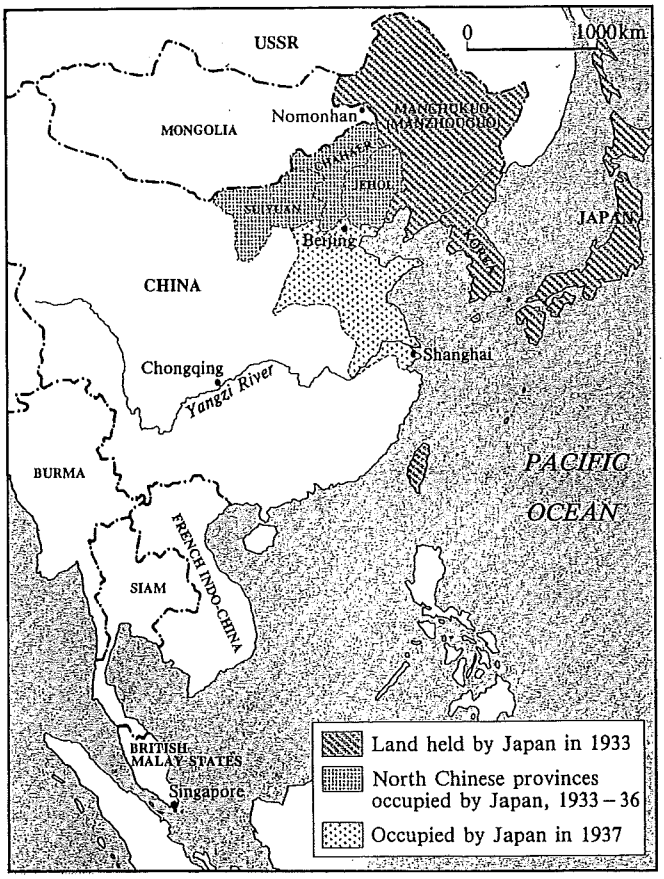
To protect Manchuria from attack by the USSR or China, the Japanese army took over several provinces in North China to act as a 'buffer zone'. These provinces also contained iron and coal reserves which the Japanese needed for their growing industries.

At the same time as occupying North China the Japanese government announced in the **Amau Declaration** of 1934 that Japan had special rights in China as well as 'responsibility for maintaining peace in East Asia'. In other words, Japan would not allow other countries to interfere in China and East Asia.

Keeping control of Manchuria and North China was very expensive, for it meant maintaining huge armies there. By 1934 nearly half Japan's yearly income was being spent on its armed forces. The bigger the armed forces became, the more influence they gained over the government. They used their influence to persuade the government to follow even more aggressive policies.



A British cartoon drawn in 1937 about the Japanese



The expansion of Japan, 1933–39

There were three policies which the armed forces urged on the government. The navy chiefs wanted to take over the islands and coast of the Pacific Ocean which contained raw materials such as oil, which Japan lacked. One group of army generals wanted to strengthen Manchuria and North China in readiness for war with the USSR. Another group of generals wanted to occupy more of China, by taking over the river valleys and cities in the heart of the country.

The Anti-Comintern Pact

By 1936 the threat to Japan from the USSR seemed greater than ever. In Moscow, the international communist organisation **Comintern** ordered communist parties all over the world to join with other political parties to help stop the spread of fascism. In China, the Chinese Communist Party followed

party, the Nationalists. The aim of both parties was to drive the Japanese out of North China.

The Japanese government reacted to these developments by signing an **Anti-Comintern Pact** with Germany in 1936. This was an agreement between the two countries to oppose international communism and to consult with each other if either was attacked or threatened by the USSR. When Italy joined the Pact in 1937, it meant that the three most aggressive nations of the 1930s were in alliance with each other.

Japan invades China, 1937

In July 1937 Japanese soldiers provoked local Chinese soldiers into a fight on the Marco Polo Bridge near Beijing. Claiming that the Chinese had started shooting first, the Japanese attacked their bases around Beijing and then occupied the city itself.

Japan's attack on Beijing was followed by a full-scale invasion of China. The Japanese army swept southwards, taking control of all the main ports, cities and lines of communication in the provinces around the Yangzi River, the most fertile and densely populated area of China.

By early 1938 around a million Japanese troops were in China. They acted with great savagery in nearly every area they occupied. Looting, rape, torture, murder and pointless destruction created a reign of terror in which millions of Chinese died. The Japanese, however, never gained real control of the country, for they did not have enough men to occupy every region. Even in the regions they were able to occupy fully, they never had full command. For although they controlled most of the ports, cities and lines of communication, the Chinese communists kept control of many countryside areas, while the Nationalists held the centre of the country from their base at Chongqing.

The reactions of other countries

How did the rest of the world react to Japan's occupation of China?

The League of Nations responded by condemning Japan and by advising members to cut their trade with her. But following its failure in the 1935–36 Ethiopia crisis, the League now commanded little respect and most members ignored its advice.

The British government wanted to halt the Japanese invasion, for Britain had many valuable trading links in ports such as Shanghai. It did not dare, however, to provoke Japan; if war began between Britain and Japan, it would take ten weeks for a British battle fleet to reach the nearest naval base at Singapore. By that time the Japanese could have built up even greater forces in China. So even when the Japanese attacked a Royal Navy ship, the HMS *Ladybird*, in 1938, the British did no more than demand compensation and an apology from Japan.



Chinese refugees, carrying their possessions, fleeing from Shanghai in September 1937

Britain hoped that the USA would take the lead in defending China, for the Americans also had valuable trading links in East Asia. But at this time the USA was following a policy of neutrality in foreign affairs. All the US government did was to advise American businessmen to reduce their trade with Japan.

The strongest reaction to Japan's invasion of China came from the USSR. In 1937 the USSR signed a non-aggression pact with China. Soviet forces on the Manchurian border were strengthened, and in 1938 and 1939 they fought a series of battles with the Japanese, massively defeating them at the Battle of Nomonhan in 1939.

By 1939, then, the Japanese had discovered that it was possible to act aggressively in East Asia and that only the Soviet Union was prepared to take action to stop them. It was a discovery that would lead them to act even more aggressively in the years to come.

Work Section

A. Study the cartoon opposite. Then, using the information in this chapter, answer these questions:
   1. What country is represented by the rising sun?
   2. What do you think is represented by the dark clouds in the foreground?
   3. What point, in your opinion, was the cartoonist trying to make?

B. Study the photograph above. Then, using the information in this chapter as well as your imagination, answer these questions:
   1. Judging by their possessions, what kind of family was leaving Shanghai?
   2. Why do you think the family was leaving Shanghai and why do you think they were taking so many possessions with them?

9

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF AUSTRIA

On 11 March 1938 the government of Austria was taken over by pro-German Nazis. The next day the German army marched into Austria. On 13 March Adolf Hitler, 'Fuehrer' of Germany, announced that Austria and Germany were now a single country. Within forty-eight hours an important and independent country had disappeared from the map of Europe.

Although the major powers of Europe had promised in 1919 to protect the independence of Austria, none made any move to stop this **anschluss**, or union, of Austria and Germany. Not a shot was fired and the German army entered Austria with its bands playing and its soldiers smiling.

With hindsight, we can now see that the anschluss was an important step towards a second world war. Why was it so easy for Hitler to take that step?

The background: Austria after 1919

Until 1919 the empire of Austria–Hungary was one of the world's major powers, dominating central and south-eastern Europe. During the Great War, however, the empire began to break up and, in 1919, its many national peoples became independent, with the right to form their own nations.

As you can see from the map, the new nation of Austria had Germany as a neighbour. Most Austrians spoke German and wanted to unite with Germany, but were forbidden from doing so by the Treaty of Versailles. Despite this, many Austrians hoped one day to become German; few grew to love their country.

Austria suffered severe political problems in the 1920s and 1930s. The two leading political parties kept private armies – the right-wing *Heimwehr* and the socialist *Schutzbund*. These frequently clashed with each other in street battles. There were riots in Vienna, the capital, in 1927, and a short civil war in 1934 when the *Heimwehr* bombarded blocks of workers' flats in Vienna where socialists were hiding.

The socialists were defeated in the 1934 civil war, but this did not help the right wing, for it was deeply divided. In July 1934 a Nazi group of right-wingers tried to take over the government, killing the Chancellor, Dollfuss. As you read in Chapter 4, Mussolini of Italy prevented a German take-over at that time by threatening to send his army into Austria. After this, the new Chancellor of Austria, Kurt von Schuschnigg, had to rely on Mussolini's support to stop the Nazis trying to seize power again.

In 1936 Mussolini became an ally of Germany when he formed the 'Rome–Berlin Axis' with Hitler (see Chapter 7). As a result, he withdrew his support would no longer defend Austria against attack. He also told Hitler that he regarded Austria as a German state and that he would do nothing to stop it becoming German. Austria thus lost its main protector.

The anschluss with Austria, 1938

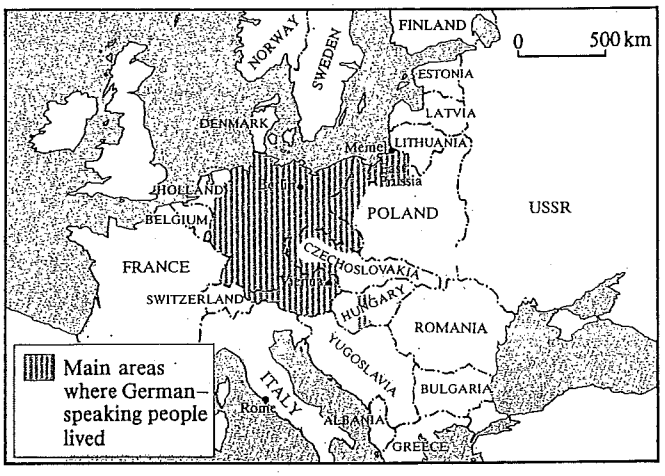
In February 1938 Hitler met Schuschnigg for a discussion about the future relationship between their two countries. According to Schuschnigg, writing in his memoirs nearly ten years later, Hitler said to him:

A. 'The whole history of Austria is just one uninterrupted act of high treason. That was so in the past, and it is no better today. This . . . must now reach its long-overdue end. And I can tell you, here and now, Herr Schuschnigg, that I am absolutely determined to make an end of all this. The German Reich is one of the Great Powers, and nobody will raise his voice if it settles its border problems.

Listen. You don't really think that you can move a single stone in Austria without my hearing about it the very next day, do you? You don't seriously believe that you can stop me, or even delay me for half an hour, do you . . .? Do you want to make another Spain of Austria? I would like to avoid all that, if possible. . . .

Think it over, Herr Schuschnigg, think it over well. I can only wait until this afternoon. . . . I don't believe in bluffing. All my past is proof of that.'

Hitler threatened Schuschnigg in this way for several hours and then handed him a list of ten demands. The chief demand was that an Austrian Nazi, Seyss-Inquart, must be given a government post as Minister of the Interior. This would, among other things, give him control of the police.





Young Nazis of the Hitler Youth Movement watch as Jews are forced to scrub the streets of Vienna in March 1938

Schuschnigg could see that Hitler was aiming at a Nazi take-over of Austria. To try to prevent this he organised a plebiscite, or vote, by the people, asking the Austrian people whether they wanted:

B. 'A free and Germanic, an independent and social, a Christian and united Austria.'

It was a cunning question, for most Austrians were bound to answer 'Yes', whatever their feelings about Germany. And with a massive 'Yes' in favour of Austrian independence, Hitler would have to think again about whether to unite Austria with Germany.

Hitler was furious when he heard about the planned vote. He demanded that it be postponed and that Schuschnigg must resign as Chancellor. If he refused, Hitler would order the German army to invade Austria. Rather than allow that to happen, Schuschnigg resigned, along with every other government minister except Seyss-Inquart.

Seyss-Inquart was now the only minister still in office. He promptly invited the Germany army to occupy Austria. German troops crossed the border early on 12 March 1938. Hitler followed later in the day and was welcomed by cheering crowds in Linz, where he had gone to school. Three days later he entered Vienna. According to the *Daily Telegraph* in Britain:

C. 'Herr Hitler arrived in Vienna, the capital of the new province he has added to Germany, at 5 o'clock this evening, amid scenes of tumultuous enthusiasm.

All along the 120-mile route from Linz cheering Nazis lined the streets of the villages and towns through which he passed. . . .

Herr Hitler stood upright in his car, saluting with outstretched hand, as he entered the city. There were scenes of indescribable enthusiasm as the younger Nazis tried to break through the police cordon shouting "We want to see our Fuehrer! Hitler! Hitler!" Older men and women had tears of joy in their eyes.'

While the crowds cheered Hitler and the German army, Germany's political police, the Gestapo, rounded up Austrian opponents of the Nazis. Many were arrested, including Schuschnigg, and sent to prison camps in Germany. Worse still, Austria's 183,000 Jews were deprived of their civil rights: for example the right to own property or the right to be in public places such as parks and cafés. As you can see from the photograph above, Austrian Jews also faced being tormented in public by Nazis.

As Hitler had predicted, the major powers of Europe did nothing to stop him from swallowing up Austria. Mussolini made no protest at all. France and Britain delivered protests to the German government, but shrank from backing up their protests with arms. Hitler had destroyed another country's independence simply by threatening to use force.

Work section

A. Study source A, then answer these questions:

1. Judging by what you read in Chapter 7, what do you think Hitler meant by saying 'Do you want to make another Spain of Austria'?
2. Using Chapters 4, 6 and 7 for information, give examples of Hitler's previous actions which support his claim that 'I don't believe in bluffing'.
3. What do you think Hitler meant by saying that 'nobody will raise his voice if it [*Germany*] settles its border problems'? What reasons might he have had for thinking this?
4. What impression of Hitler does Schuschnigg create in source A?
5. How useful do you consider source A as an account of Schuschnigg's meeting with Hitler? Explain your answer.

B. Study the map opposite, then answer these questions:

1. Judging by the positions in Europe of Germany and Austria, why do you think the Treaty of Versailles prohibited a union of the two countries?
2. Suggest why, until 1937, Mussolini of Italy wanted to protect Austria against a German take-over?
3. Which other countries in Europe do you think opposed a German take-over of Austria and why?
4. After the union of Germany with Austria in 1938 which European country do you think was most at risk from Germany? Explain your answer.

C. Study the photograph above. What does it tell you about the nature of Nazi rule in Austria?

10

THE CZECH CRISIS OF 1938

Only weeks after the German occupation of Austria in 1938, another crisis began in central Europe when Germany threatened the independence of Czechoslovakia. On this occasion the great powers of Europe came to the brink of war with Germany.

The state of Czechoslovakia

To understand the Czech crisis it will be useful to know a little about the state of Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. Study the map below and then answer question A on page 25 before reading further.

After doing that exercise you will have gathered that Czechoslovakia in 1938 was a powerful, well-defended state in central Europe, rich in resources and industry. The Czech state, however, was home for several different nationalities, each with its own language and culture. Ever since Czechoslovakia was created in 1919, there had been conflict between those nationalities. The most serious conflicts involved the Slovaks and the Germans, who disliked the fact that the Czechs controlled the country.

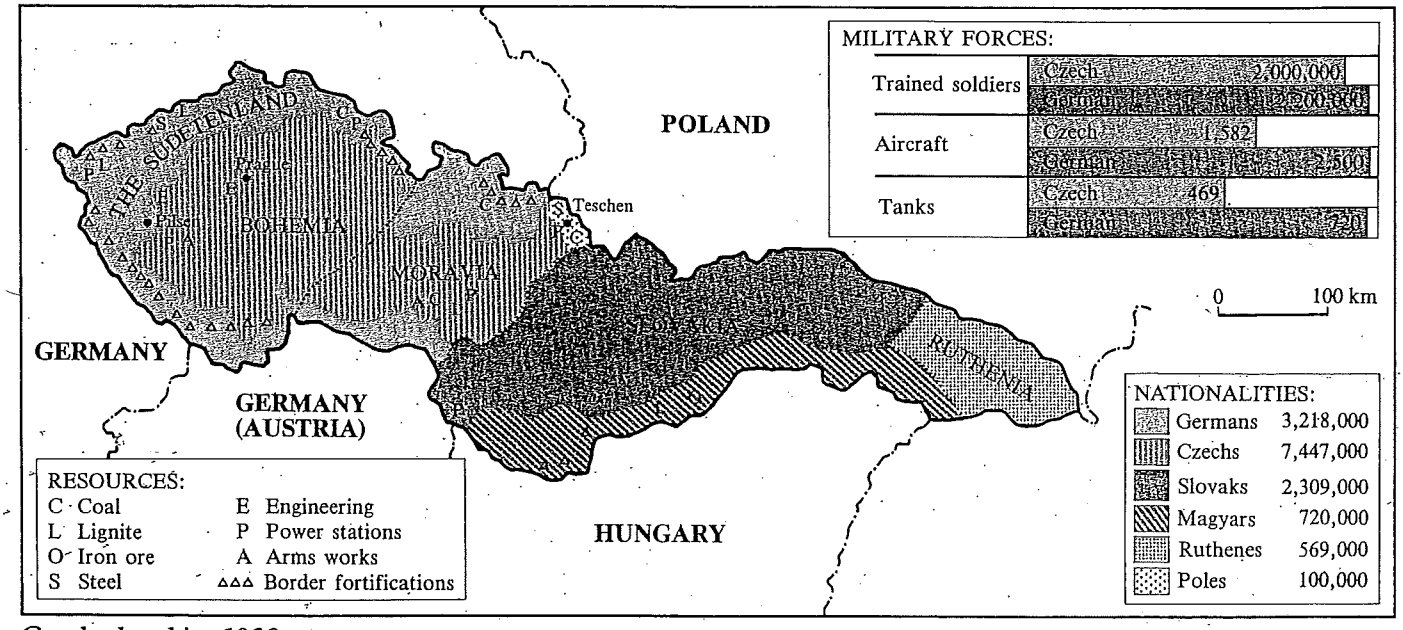
In 1931 Germans in the Sudetenland set up a Sudeten German People's Party, led by Konrad Henlein. Their main demand was for the Sudetenland to be transferred from Czechoslovakia to Germany. The new party was a great success, winning more votes in a 1935 general election than any other party. Despite the Party's popularity, the Czech government refused to give the Sudetenland to Germany. If it did so, the Slovaks, Poles, Magyars and Ruthenes would also demand independence, and that would lead to the break-up of Czechoslovakia. Moreover, as you can see from the map, the Sudetenland contained valuable resources as well as the country's main border defences. Czechoslovakia simply could not afford to lose these.

Hitler and the Sudeten question

Ever since it was set up, the Sudeten German People's Party had been in close contact with the Nazi Party in Germany: Konrad Henlein had meetings with Hitler and got financial help from him. In 1938 Hitler openly supported Henlein's demands for the transfer of the Sudetenland to Germany. It was part of his aim of uniting all Germans in one country.

In April 1938 Hitler instructed his generals to make plans for invading Czechoslovakia. At the same time he told Henlein and his followers to make trouble in the Sudetenland. Henlein was to make impossible demands for independence which the Czech government would be certain to reject; then his followers would stage riots, demonstrations and murders to make it look as if the government had no control over the Sudetenland. The German army would then occupy the area on the grounds that it was going to maintain order since the Czechs had failed to do so.

Hitler's plans involved two risks. First, as you can see from the map, Czechoslovakia was well-equipped for fighting a war; its army was only slightly smaller than Germany's, it had a large air force, and it had its own arms factories. Second, Czechoslovakia had two powerful allies; France and the USSR, who had promised to defend it against attack. In theory, therefore, Hitler risked war with France and the USSR if he sent his army into Czechoslovakia.



Czechoslovakia, 1938

In practice, the risks were not as great as they looked. The French, as you read in Chapter 6, had already shown they were unwilling to fight Germany. In 1938 they were even less willing to do so; they had no effective plans for attacking Germany and the French army would need two years to prepare for a war. The Soviet government was more willing to defend Czechoslovakia, but was having great political and economic difficulties at home. Moreover, Soviet forces were already at war with Japan in 1938 (see Chapter 8). For all these reasons, Czechoslovakia's allies were unlikely to fight in its defence.

Appeasement

If the French and Russians were unwilling to fight for Czechoslovakia, what about the British?

Britain's attitude was conditioned by the size of its empire which, as you can see from the map on page 3, covered a quarter of the globe. If Britain's armed forces were to defend this huge empire, they could not afford to fight in more than one part of the world at the same time. The Royal Navy, for example, could not fight in the Atlantic and Pacific Ocean at the same time, and expect to win. The British government therefore wanted to avoid any situation in which it might have to fight Japan in the Far East at the same time as fighting Germany in the West.

The way in which the British chose to avoid such a situation was to use a policy of **appeasement** towards countries like Germany which might threaten the empire. Appeasement meant agreeing to whichever of their demands seemed reasonable in order to prevent them from starting a war. Although this might make them stronger, it was less of a threat to Britain and the empire than going to war with them.

There were other reasons why the British had a policy of appeasement. First, the government believed that war with Germany would cause appalling damage to Britain. The chiefs of the armed forces thought that Germany would make bombing attacks on London from the first day of a war. They estimated that over a million people would be killed after sixty days of air-raids and that they would have to be buried in mass graves because Britain did not have enough timber for so many coffins. Faced with such estimates of death and destruction it was hardly surprising that the British government preferred appeasement to war.

Another reason for appeasing Germany was a widespread feeling that many of Hitler's demands were just demands. Many Britons felt that the Treaty of Versailles dealt too harshly with Germany. They thought that if German complaints about the Treaty could be settled by revising it, this would satisfy Hitler and remove the causes of German aggression.

The Munich Agreement

Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, followed the policy of appeasement when the Czech crisis began. When in September 1938 it looked as if Germany was preparing to occupy the Sudetenland, Chamberlain flew to Germany and discussed the matter in a private meeting with Hitler. At this meeting Hitler demanded the transfer of the Sudetenland to German rule. Chamberlain agreed that areas in which more than half the population were German should be handed over. On his return to Britain he persuaded the French and Czech governments to agree to this handover. It seemed that Chamberlain had solved the crisis.

On 22 September Chamberlain flew to Germany for a second meeting with Hitler, to work out the details of the handover. At this meeting, however, Hitler made new demands: German troops must be allowed to occupy the Sudetenland and the Czech government must also give land to the Poles and Magyars. The Czech crisis therefore flared up again.

The French and British governments rejected Hitler's new demands and started preparing for war with Germany. The French army was mobilised and the British fleet put to sea. Civilians dug air-raid shelters and tried on gas masks. At the last moment, however, Hitler agreed to talk again. At the suggestion of Mussolini, who was not yet ready to help Hitler fight a war, a conference was held at Munich in southern Germany on 29 September 1938.

Only Britain, France, Italy and Germany were represented at Munich. Neither the Czechs nor the Soviets were invited. At the conference the four powers agreed that the Czechs should give the Sudetenland to Germany without delay. The Czechs had to accept this 'Munich Agreement' because to reject it would mean fighting Germany alone. So Czech frontier guards left their posts on 1 October and German troops marched into the Sudetenland unopposed. Shortly after, Polish and Hungarian troops marched into Teschen and Slovakia, seizing 10,000 km^2 of territory. Czechoslovakia had started to break apart.

Work section

A. Study the map opposite, then answer these questions:
   1. Name the three dominant nationalities in Czechoslovakia in 1938.
   2. What problems can arise in a country which contains several different nationalities?
   3. Which areas of Czechoslovakia were richest in resources?
   4. In which area were Czechoslovakia's most important border fortifications?
   5. Which neighbouring country do you think the Czechs had most reason to fear?

B. Explain in your own words what the term 'appeasement' meant in 1938. Give three reasons why the British government followed this policy.

11

EUROPE'S LAST YEAR OF PEACE

For a while in autumn 1938 it looked as if there would be lasting peace in Europe. Hitler said of the Sudetenland: 'It is the last territorial claim I have to make in Europe.' The day after signing the Munich Agreement, Hitler and Chamberlain signed an Anglo-German Agreement, declaring their wish never to go to war with each other. A few weeks later an Anglo-Italian Agreement was signed, followed in December by a friendly agreement between France and Germany. Hitler seemed to have stopped acting aggressively.

In reality, Hitler was happy to sign statements of good will at the same time as planning further conquests. As soon as the Munich Agreement was signed, he ordered his generals to make plans to occupy Bohemia and Moravia, the two Czech provinces of Czecho-Slovakia (as it was renamed in December 1938). Plans were already in hand for massive increases in the German armed forces.

Czecho-Slovakia destroyed

The Munich Agreement dealt only with Germans in the Sudetenland. Around half a million Germans living in Bohemia and Moravia were left under Czech rule. The German government now started to claim that these people were being ill-treated by the Czechs. German newspapers carried stories of Czech attacks on Germans living in Bohemia. Although these stories were mostly false, Hitler claimed that the Czech government had lost control of the country. He said there would be a civil war if the German army did not occupy it and restore order. Hitler then bullied the Czech President, Hacha, into inviting German troops to occupy the country by threatening to bomb Prague, the capital. Hacha gave in to the threat and issued the invitation which Hitler wanted.

German troops march through Prague, March 1938. Hacha, former Czech President, takes off his hat to them while von Neurath, German 'Protector' of Bohemia and Moravia, gives them the Nazi salute



On 15 March 1939 German troops marched into Prague. The next day Bohemia and Moravia were made a 'Protectorate' of Germany. Slovakia remained independent but had to sign a treaty accepting German protection. Ruthenia was given to Hungary. Within two days the Czech state had ceased to exist.

The Polish guarantee

After destroying Czecho-Slovakia, Hitler turned his attention north. On 23 March German troops occupied Memel, a German port seized by Lithuania in 1923. However, the main attraction in the north was a strip of land which Germans called West Prussia and Poles called the Polish Corridor. Although many people living there were German, the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 gave the region to Poland so that it would have access to ports on the Baltic Sea. The Germans wanted to get the area back. The Poles were equally determined to keep it. It seemed certain that Hitler would soon try to take it from them.

The German occupation of Czecho-Slovakia showed the British that Hitler could not be stopped by appeasement. Chamberlain now saw that Hitler had deceived him at Munich. He decided that stronger measures were needed to prevent a German attack on Poland. On 29 March the British government therefore gave Poland a guarantee to protect it against any threat to its independence. The French government joined in this **'Polish guarantee'**.

The Polish guarantee did not scare Hitler. Only four days later he gave secret orders to his armed forces to be ready to invade Poland by 1 September.

Italy and the Pact of Steel

On 7 April the situation in Europe grew even more tense when Italian forces occupied Albania. This small country had been under virtual Italian control for the past ten years. The occupation simply confirmed this fact. But because it happened when it did, only weeks after German troops entered Prague and Memel, it looked as if Italy and Germany were acting together. Britain and France feared that Italy would go on to attack other countries in south-east Europe. They therefore gave guarantees to Greece and Romania, promising to protect their independence.

On 22 May Hitler and Mussolini strengthened the ties between their countries by making what they called a **Pact of Steel**. This agreement required each country to help the other in time of war.

By mid-1939, then, Europe had divided into two camps. Britain and France were in one camp, guaran-

teeing the safety of countries in eastern Europe. Germany and Italy were in the other, each preparing to expand into eastern Europe. War seemed certain.

Anglo-French talks with the USSR

A glance at the map on page 23 will show that Britain and France would find it hard to defend Poland because it was so far from them. As war came closer they looked for a way round this difficulty. They approached the USSR, hoping that the Soviet government would add its guarantee to theirs. Then, if Hitler attacked Poland, they could attack western Germany while the Soviets attacked in the east. This would divide and weaken the German forces.

Stalin, the Soviet leader, did not trust this proposal. He had been left out of the Munich Conference, and now he suspected that the British and French were trying to use him for their own advantage. He therefore proposed that Britain, France and the USSR should form a full military alliance, promising to fight together in time of war.

It was now the turn of the British and French to be mistrustful. The British in particular disliked communism. They also doubted the Red Army's ability to fight, for many top Soviet generals had recently been expelled from the army and executed. Talks between the three countries therefore went slowly. They stalled completely when the Polish government said it would not allow Soviet troops into Poland if war broke out.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact

While these talks were going on, the Soviet government was also negotiating with Germany. But whereas the British and French were asking Stalin to consider fighting in defence of Poland, the Germans were asking him the opposite – to agree *not* to fight with anyone over Poland.

It was surprising that Germany and the USSR were talking to each other. Hitler had never hidden his hatred of communism, and his ideas for taking 'lebensraum' from the USSR were well known. The two countries were natural enemies. Stalin, however, was prepared to do a deal with this enemy, for the USSR was going through a political upheaval at the time (the Great Purge, in which millions of Stalin's political opponents were imprisoned or killed) as well as having severe economic difficulties. The USSR was in no position to fight a major war.



A French postcard of 1939, referring to Hitler's claim that the Sudetenland was his last territorial demand

On 23 August 1939 the talks between Germany and the USSR resulted in an agreement signed by their foreign ministers, Ribbentrop and Molotov. The Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, or **Nazi–Soviet Pact** as it is also known, had two main provisions. First, if Germany attacked Poland, the USSR would remain neutral. Second, in a secret part of the Pact, the two countries agreed to divide Poland between them after it had been conquered.

When Hitler heard that the Pact had been signed, he banged the table in front of him and shouted 'I have them!' The way was now clear for him to put into motion the plans for invading Poland.

Work section

A. Study the photograph opposite. What do you think the Germans hoped to achieve with this military parade through Prague?

B. Study the postcard above, then answer these questions:

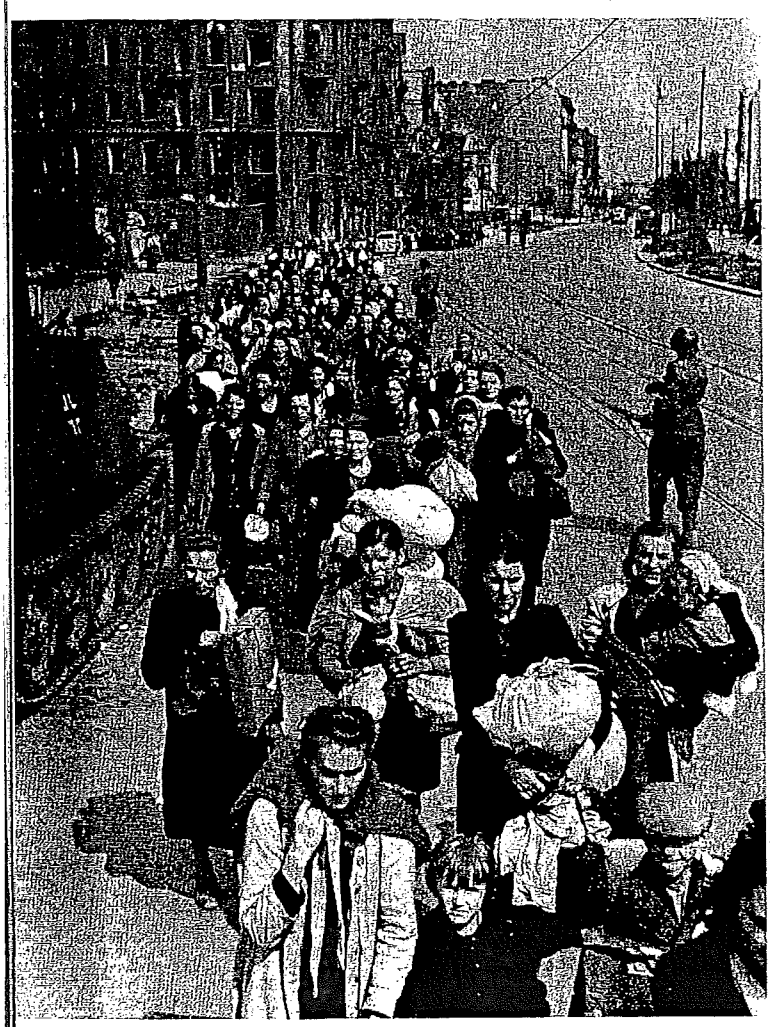
1. What is meant by 'His "I've nothing more to ask" ' in front of each person?
2. What message do you think the postcard was trying to put across?
3. Bearing in mind that this was a French postcard, at whom do you think the message was directed and why? Explain your answer.
4. Do you consider the point of the postcard a fair one? Explain your answer.
5. Suggest the names of some of the other countries represented by the bound men.

17

THE SPREAD OF WAR, 1939–40

German armed forces invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Using a new, fast-moving kind of warfare known as *Blitzkrieg*, or 'lightning war', they took only a week to defeat the Polish army and five weeks to occupy the whole country.

Although Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September, they did not do any fighting for the next six months. For a while it seemed that the conflict would spread no further than Poland. Before a year had passed, however, fighting had spread to most of Europe as well as to North and East Africa. Why did the war spread so quickly after April 1940?



Refugees under German guard leave the bombed-out ruins of Warsaw, Poland's capital, September 1939

The 'Phoney War'

The USSR joined the war on 17 September 1939 when Soviet forces invaded eastern Poland, as agreed in the Nazi–Soviet Pact. By November they had occupied 20,000 km^2 of Polish land. Further north the USSR extended its influence by forcing Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania to allow Soviet troops onto their soil.

In December 1939 the Soviet government demanded territory from Finland and, when the Finns refused to hand it over, invaded the country. Although the Finns fought bravely against the odds, they were defeated in February 1940.

Many countries were angered by the Soviet attack on Finland, but could not agree on how to help the Finns. The only positive action they took was to expel the USSR from the League of Nations in December 1939.

Germany and the USSR were thus able to do what they wanted in eastern Europe during the winter of 1939–40. Britain and France stood on the defensive in western Europe, preparing their forces, but did not fight them. The six months following the invasion of Poland were therefore known as the 'Phoney War'.

Norway and Denmark occupied

The 'Phoney War' ended when the British Royal Navy laid mines in the sea along the coast of Norway in April 1940. The aim was to stop supplies of iron ore reaching Germany from northern Sweden. (Ore ships had to use Norwegian ports in winter because the direct route through the Baltic Sea was frozen.)

The Germans got most of their iron ore from Sweden and could not afford to have their supplies blocked by minefields. In April 1940 they therefore occupied Norway and forced British forces in the north of the country to withdraw. To provide themselves with supply bases the Germans also invaded and occupied Denmark.

The fall of France

Soon after invading Poland, Hitler ordered his generals to prepare for an attack on western Europe at the earliest possible date. His aim was to smash France and to force Britain to surrender.

'Operation Yellow', as the attack was code-named, began on 10 May 1940. Again using the 'blitzkrieg' method of warfare, the Germans attacked Holland and Belgium, defeating them within three weeks. This allowed them to enter France, smashing the French army and forcing the British army in France to retreat across the Channel from Dunkirk. On 22 June the French were forced to make peace and Germany then occupied northern France.

Britain alone

Many people in Europe now thought that Britain would have to make peace with Germany and that the war in Europe would end. But when Hitler offered



A Polish-language poster produced by the German government in September 1940. A wounded Polish soldier shouts 'Britain! This is your work!' to the British Prime Minister

Britain lenient peace terms, Winston Churchill, the new Prime Minister, rejected them and chose instead to fight on. The British Royal Air Force played a key part in this: it prevented a German invasion of Britain by keeping control of the skies in the Battle of Britain during the summer of 1940. War therefore continued in north-west Europe, even though most of the region was in German hands, and Britain stood alone against Germany.

The war spreads south

In southern Europe, Italy entered the war in June 1940, attacking the south coast of France. Although Mussolini was Hitler's ally, he had not helped to invade Poland because the Italian armed forces were not then ready to fight. For many years, Mussolini had dreamed of making the Mediterranean Sea into what he called an 'Italian lake' and of bringing the Balkan states (Greece, Yugoslavia, Albania and Bulgaria) under his control. In October 1940, therefore, Italian forces attacked Greece, taking the war southwards into the Mediterranean. In North Africa, Italian forces in Libya invaded Egypt, driving back the British forces which had been put there to defend Britain's main oil supply route, the Suez Canal.

The Italians did badly in all three of the countries they attacked and this helped the war to spread even further. When the Greeks defeated the Italians, Hitler decided in December 1940 to send German forces to Greece. He feared that Britain, which had given Greece a guarantee in 1939 (see Chapter 11), would now come to her aid. He also feared that British aircraft in Greece would be able to bomb the oil-fields in Romania from which Germany got most of her oil. So, as well as sending forces to Greece, Hitler sent troops to Romania to defend the oil-fields.

Japan and the Axis

On the other side of the globe, as you read in Chapter 8, more than a million Japanese troops had occupied China in 1937, looking for food and raw materials for Japan's rapidly growing population. Now, in 1940, the news of war in Europe encouraged the Japanese to expand still further. The defeat of France and Holland left their East Asian colonies (Indo-China and the Dutch East Indies) open to attack. And with Britain seemingly close to defeat, there was also the likelihood of the British colonies of Hong Kong, Malaya, Borneo and New Guinea becoming available. Between them, these colonies could provide Japan with rice, rubber, coal, tin and, above all, oil.

In 1940, therefore, the Japanese government prepared to stake a claim to the British, French and Dutch colonies in East Asia. It announced that it intended to form a 'Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere', a sort of common market area stretching from Manchuria to the East Indies, in which Japan would be the controlling nation.

The only country strong enough in 1940 to challenge Japan was the USA, which controlled the Philippines and many other islands in the Pacific Ocean. To counter the threat from the USA, Japan became an ally of Germany and Italy in September 1940, by joining the Axis Pact. Now, if the USA were to threaten Japan in the Pacific region, Germany and Italy could threaten the USA in the Atlantic region. And if the USA were to help Britain in the European war, Japan could attack the USA in the Pacific. The war was now set to become a global war.

Work section

A. Study the photograph opposite and the poster above. Then, using the information on pages 27 and 28, answer these questions:
1. (a) What methods did the Germans use to defeat Warsaw and (b) judging by the photograph, what effects did these methods have on the people of Warsaw?
2. In what way does the poster support the evidence of the photograph? Bearing in mind that the poster was made by Germans, how reliably does it support the evidence of the photograph? Explain your answer.
3. Why could the British government be blamed for the destruction shown in both pictures?
4. How fair do you consider the accusation made by the Polish soldier in the poster? How might the British Prime Minister have defended himself against the accusation?
5. At whom do you think the poster was aimed and what do you think the Germans hoped to achieve with it?

B. Arrange the following list of countries into the order in which they became involved in the war. Then select three of them and explain why each was drawn into the war: Belgium, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Greece, Holland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, the USSR.

15

1941: TOWARDS A GLOBAL WAR

Until 1941 the war which began in Poland was mainly a European conflict. During 1941 it spread beyond Europe until, by the end of the year, nearly every part of the world had been drawn into the fighting.

The war in Africa

In January 1941 British and Commonwealth forces in Egypt attacked the Italian army which had invaded from Libya in 1940. They quickly drove the Italians back into Libya. The British attack was so swift and successful that they could have gone on to capture Libya and drive the Italians out of North Africa.

To prevent this from happening, Hitler sent German troops under General Rommel to help the Italians in Africa. For the rest of 1941 there was fierce fighting in Libya and Egypt between German and Italian troops on one side, and British, Australians, Indians and New Zealanders on the other. The war in North Africa would continue for another eighteen months, with fighting involving all the countries there, until the Axis armies were defeated in May 1943.

Farther south in the African continent, 1941 saw fighting for control of East Africa. British forces invaded Italian-controlled Ethiopia in March, driving the Italians out in April and restoring the country's independence in May. British and South African forces also drove the Italians out of Kenya and the Sudan where they had established footholds in 1940.

Operation Barbarossa

At the start of 1941 Germany and the USSR were still allies, bound together by the Nazi–Soviet Pact of 1939. But, as you read in Chapter 11, the two countries became allies only because it was convenient for them both at that time. Hitler did not forget his hatred of communism, nor his desire to gain 'lebensraum' by taking land from the USSR. So, despite the Nazi–Soviet Pact, Hitler was already planning a massive attack on the USSR's western frontier.

The German attack on the USSR began on 22 July 1941. It was code-named 'Operation Barbarossa' (which means 'Red Beard'). The forces on both sides were larger than in any previous campaign. Germany was helped by her eastern European allies – Finland, Romania, Hungary and Slovakia – as well as by divisions from Italy and Spain. By the end of 1941 they had occupied a huge area of the western USSR and were ready to strike southwards into the oil-fields of the Caucasus region.

US warships burning in Pearl Harbor after the Japanese surprise attack on 7 December 1941

