

**CLASS XII**

**SUBJECT HISTORY**

**TOPIC THE SECOND WORLD**

**WAR**

**PART-1**

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## CHAPTER

# 7

# World War-II

## Brief Summary...

Foreign Policy of Germany from 1933 to 1939 • Boycott of Disarmament Conference of 1932 • Ten year Non-Aggression Pact with Poland in 1934 • Plebiscite in Saar region in favour of Germany-German intervention in Spanish civil war • Capture of Rhineland • Annexation of Austria, 1938 • Intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1938-Attack on Poland in 1939-Beginning of the Second World War • Aggressive nationalism in Italy • Aggressive foreign policy of Mussolini • Anti-Germany upto 1934 and Pro-Germany after 1934 • Main objective was territorial expansion and control over raw materials for Industrial development • Capture of Albania in 1939 • Invasion of Abyssia • Involvement in Spanish Civil War • Ground prepared for Second World War • Appeasement policy of Britain and France and how it brought war closer.

## 7.1. SECOND WORLD WAR

### (1) FACTORS LEADING TO THE WAR, AGGRESSIVE POLICY OF GERMANY, ITALY AND JAPAN : ANGLO-FRENCH APPEASEMENT POLICIES

After the First World War, the League of Nations was formed with a passionate desire to end the war once for all. But the United States of America refused to join the League. **In 1925 the Locarno Pact was signed by Great Britain, France, Belgium, Germany and Italy.** By this, Germany accepted as permanent her frontiers as defined by the Treaty of Versailles. Germany now became a member of the League of Nations in 1926 with a permanent seat on its Council.

The First World War was a curse for Germany. After the defeat, the Kaiser William fled to Holland. Germany now became a Republic known as the **Weimer Republic**. From the very

beginning, the Weimar Republic faced a number of problems and became weak. Thus by the end of 1932 the Weimar Republic collapsed. During this period Hitler, an Austrian by birth, formed a party known as National Socialists or Nazi Party. Very soon he became very popular in Germany for his strong criticism of the treaty of Versailles. He also demanded that the treaty of Versailles should be denounced immediately. Gradually the Nazi Party captured 230 seats out of 608 in 1932 elections. He was appointed the Chancellor and Hindenburg became the President of the coalition government. In 1934 President Hindenburg died and Hitler made himself the President and the Chancellor. Thus he became the Dictator of Germany.

The main aim of Hitler was to make Germany a great power again. He wanted to achieve this by his aggressive foreign policy. The main object of Hitler was to:

1. Destroy the hated Versailles Settlement,
2. Build up the army,
3. Recover lost territories such as the Saar and the Polish Corridor, and
4. Bring all Germans inside the Reich. This would involve annexation of Austria, to take territories from Czechoslovakia and Poland. Both of these had large German minorities as a result of the Peace Settlement.<sup>1</sup>

## 1. Boycott of the Disarmament Conference (1932)

From the very beginning, Hitler had no faith in the ideals of the League of Nations. He started to arm Germany as soon as he captured power. He considered Germany's membership of the League as the chief obstacle to his desired foreign policy. In 1932 the World Disarmament Conference was held at Geneva. The representatives of sixty one states including Germany attended the Conference. Japan withdrew from the League. Germany also withdrew from the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations on October, 1933 on the ground that France did not agree to have equality of armaments with Germany. Henceforth, Hitler started to ignore those clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which restricted her arm strength.

## 2. German-Polish Pact of 1934

Next Hitler signed a ten year Non-Aggression Pact with Poland in January, 1934. Some German territories like Danzig, Posen, Silesia and others were handed over to Poland by the Treaty of Versailles. Hitler on the other hand wanted to include all Germans



in a greater German state. Naturally, Hitler's rise to power caused alarm in Poland. But unexpectedly, Hitler signed the ten year **Non-Aggression Pact with Poland on 26 January, 1934**. This pact thus made Poland a neutral buffer state between Russia and Germany. Henceforth, Poland would be less dependent on France for her security. But the real motive of Hitler was to weaken the defence measures of France by separating Poland from France. In the subsequent years, this became clear that Hitler had no intention or desire to guarantee the frontiers of Poland. Britain took this step of Hitler as an evidence of his peaceful intention. This improved relations between France and Russia as they were worried by the apparent threat from Nazi Germany.

### 3. Plebiscite in Saar in 1935

According to the Treaty of Versailles, the Saar region was detached from Germany. France then occupied Saar region and exploited the resources of the region for long fifteen years. It was clearly laid down in the Treaty of Versailles that the future of Saar region would be decided by a plebiscite to be held after January, 1935. Nazis then interfered into the Saar region and continued the propaganda in favour of Germany. On 13 January, 1935, plebiscite was held resulting in a 90 percent vote in favour of reunion with Germany. This clearly showed the importance of the Nazi technique of propaganda.

### 4. German Intervention in Spanish Civil War, 1936

Spain had a Republican government which was moving towards Communism. General Franco then organized a revolt to save the country from the Communists. Thus broke out a terrible civil war there between the Pro-Communists Republican government and the Pro-Fascist Franco's army. The Socialists and the Communists of all countries gave their support for the Republican government while Hitler and Mussolini took up the cause of Franco. Ultimately, the struggle ended in victory for Franco. The Spanish civil war thus became a dress rehearsal of a greater drama to be played soon on a bigger stage. This incident brought Germany and Italy closer to each other.

### 5. Capture of Rhineland, 1936

In the Versailles Treaty, Rhineland had been declared a demilitarized zone. On 7 March, 1936, Hitler announced denunciation of the Rhineland Demilitarization clauses of the Treaty of Versailles and the Locarno Agreement. Hitler then occupied those parts of Rhineland which had been demilitarized by the treaty. This was the first phase of Hitler's aggressive designs because from then Germany started her war preparations.

### 6. Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis, 1937

In 1936, Hitler concluded a pact with Japan known as the **Anti-Comintern Pact** directed against Russian Communism. When Italy joined this Pact in 1937, **the Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis** came into being. This became a new balance of power against Britain, France and Russia.

## 7. Annexation of Austria, 1938

Hitler was an Austrian by birth and that partly explained his interest in Austria. According to the terms of the Versailles Treaty, Austria was separated from Germany and their union in future was forbidden. The first page of 'Mein Kampf' contained the sentence, "German Austria must return to the Great German Motherland." Hitler wanted the union known as 'Anschluss'. On 25 July, 1934, a band of Austrian Nazis attacked the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss who subsequently died as a result of the attack. Italy regarded Austria as a buffer state between her and Germany and accordingly guaranteed its independence. When the Austrian Nazis attacked the Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss, Italy sent three battalions of Italian force there to suppress the insurgents. The Nazi attempt failed to capture power. Hitler strongly denounced his complicity with this incident. When Hitler saw that his intervention in Spain had not been resisted by the powers, he came forward to fulfill his plan of union of Austria with Germany. Thus Nazi agitation was encouraged within Austria and the Austrian Chancellor was compelled to agree to conduct foreign affairs at Germany's direction and also to appoint a Nazi minister. Finally on 14 March, 1938, Hitler poured troops into Austria and incorporated Austria within German Empire. In this way 'Anschluss' was complete. The annexation of Austria was a prelude to the annexation of Czechoslovakia in near future.



Dollfuss

## 8. Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1938 and Final Occupation in 1939

According to Versailles Treaty, a new state of Czechoslovakia was created comprising Austrian territories of Moravia, Silesia and Bohemia. This region had a mixed population such as Germans, Slovaks, Magyars and Poles. The Sudeten Germans were highly conscious of their German blood and Hitler demanded that Sudeten should be handed over to Germany. Hitler then encouraged and instigated the Sudeten Germans to launch a violent agitation under the leadership of **Heinlein** who had formed a German Fascist Party there. Hitler had also decided to destroy Czechoslovakia as a part of his **Lebensraum Policy (Living Space)**.

Thus the situation became critical because if France and Britain supported Czechoslovakia, Hitler would send his army to attain his objectives. In this situation, **British Prime Minister Chamberlain** felt that the only way to avoid a general European war was to accept the German demand. Finally **Britain, France, Germany and Italy** signed the **Munich Pact on 29 September, 1938**. By the Pact of Munich, Hitler was allowed to capture Sudetenland and other areas of mixed but predominantly German population. The Big Powers then declared to protect the remaining part of Czechoslovakia. But this guarantee had little value for only after six months of the Munich Pact, Hitler occupied Prague and the rest of Czechoslovakia on March, 1939. The

Munich Pact was thus the culmination of appeasement policy of the great powers and warrant of death for the Western Democracy.



The European Leaders at Munich, 1938

### 9. German Attack on Poland, September 1939

After the Munich Pact, inspired Hitler now demanded the city of Danzig for construction of a German highway across the Polish Corridor. The Polish government naturally refused to consider the German demand on the basis of Anglo-French guarantee to protect Poland. The British Prime Minister Chamberlain now gave up his policy of appeasement and declared that Britain would help Poland in case of any German attack. Chamberlain wanted Russia to his side and started negotiations with Russia. While the negotiations were going on, **Russia and Germany signed a Non-Aggression Pact on 23 August, 1939, for ten years.** This Pact revealed the imperialistic attitude of both the states because Eastern Europe was partitioned into German and Russian sphere of influence.

In this situation, the Polish government invited Germany for a discussion which Hitler flatly refused. Hitler was now convinced that Britain and France would not risk any intervention in Poland because Russia would remain neutral for the Non-Aggression Pact with Germany. When Britain ratified the guarantee to Poland, Hitler took it as a bluff. This was a miscalculation of Hitler about Poland. He never thought that Britain and France would risk the war. Chamberlain then wrote to Hitler that in his judgment no question was an issue between Germany and Poland which "could not and should be resolved without the use of force."<sup>1</sup>

# ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

1. What was the result of plebiscite in Saar?
2. What was meant by Anschluss?
3. Write the main objectives of Hitler to make Germany a great power.
4. Discuss about the German-Polish pact of 1934.