

The Japanese attack on Manchuria was the first direct challenge to the League of Nations. In the early 1930s, the League's members included all major democracies except the United States. The League also included the three countries that posed the greatest threat to peace—Germany, Japan, and Italy. When Japan seized Manchuria, many League members vigorously protested. Japan ignored the protests and withdrew from the League in 1933. **A**

Japan Invades China Four years later, a border incident touched off a full-scale war between Japan and China. Japanese forces swept into northern China. Despite having a million soldiers, China's army led by Jiang Jieshi was no match for the better equipped and trained Japanese.

Beijing and other northern cities as well as the capital, Nanjing, fell to the Japanese in 1937. Japanese troops killed tens of thousands of captured soldiers and civilians in Nanjing. Forced to retreat westward, Jiang Jieshi set up a new capital at Chongqing. At the same time, Chinese guerrillas led by China's Communist leader, Mao Zedong, continued to fight the Japanese in the conquered area.

MAIN IDEA

Making Inferences

A What was the major weakness of the League of Nations?

European Aggressors on the March

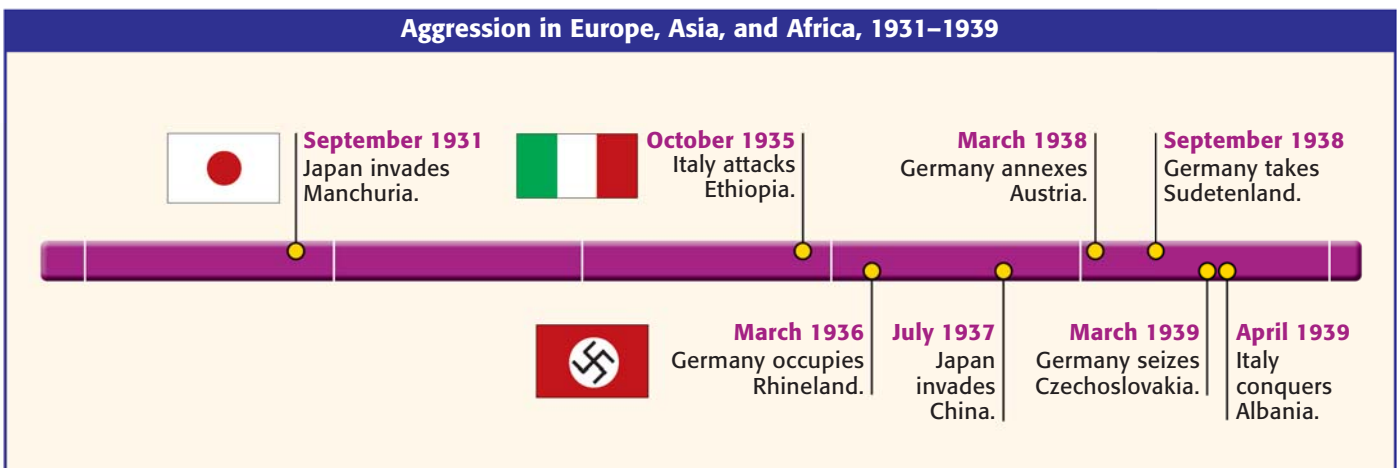
The League's failure to stop the Japanese encouraged European Fascists to plan aggression of their own. The Italian leader Mussolini dreamed of building a colonial empire in Africa like those of Britain and France.

Mussolini Attacks Ethiopia Ethiopia was one of Africa's three independent nations. The Ethiopians had successfully resisted an Italian attempt at conquest during the 1890s. To avenge that defeat, Mussolini ordered a massive invasion of Ethiopia in October 1935. The spears and swords of the Ethiopians were no match for Italian airplanes, tanks, guns, and poison gas.

The Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, urgently appealed to the League for help. Although the League condemned the attack, its members did nothing. Britain continued to let Italian troops and supplies pass through the British-controlled Suez Canal on their way to Ethiopia. By giving in to Mussolini in Africa, Britain and France hoped to keep peace in Europe.

Hitler Defies Versailles Treaty Hitler had long pledged to undo the Versailles Treaty. Among its provisions, the treaty limited the size of Germany's army. In March 1935, the Führer announced that Germany would not obey these restrictions. The League issued only a mild condemnation.

The League's failure to stop Germany from rearming convinced Hitler to take even greater risks. The treaty had forbidden German troops to enter a 30-mile-wide zone on either side of the Rhine River. Known as the Rhineland, the zone formed





Aggression in Africa, 1935–1939



Aggression in Asia, 1931–1937



GEOGRAPHY SKILLBUILDER: Interpreting Maps

- 1. Location** On these maps, which countries are the aggressors?
- 2. Movement** On what two continents did the aggression occur?

a buffer between Germany and France. It was also an important industrial area. On March 7, 1936, German troops moved into the Rhineland. Stunned, the French were unwilling to risk war. The British urged **appeasement**, giving in to an aggressor to keep peace.

Hitler later admitted that he would have backed down if the French and British had challenged him. The German reoccupation of the Rhineland marked a turning point in the march toward war. First, it strengthened Hitler's power and prestige within Germany. Second, the balance of power changed in Germany's favor. France and Belgium were now open to attack from German troops. Finally, the weak response by France and Britain encouraged Hitler to speed up his expansion.

Hitler's growing strength convinced Mussolini that he should seek an alliance with Germany. In October 1936, the two dictators reached an agreement that became known as the Rome-Berlin Axis. A month later, Germany also made an agreement with Japan. Germany, Italy, and Japan came to be called the **Axis Powers**.

Civil War Erupts in Spain Hitler and Mussolini again tested the will of the democracies of Europe in the Spanish Civil War. Spain had been a monarchy until 1931, when a republic was declared. The government, run by liberals and Socialists, held office amid many crises. In July 1936, army leaders, favoring a Fascist-style government, joined General **Francisco Franco** in a revolt. Thus began a civil war that dragged on for three years.

Hitler and Mussolini sent troops, tanks, and airplanes to help Franco's forces, which were called the Nationalists. The armed forces of the Republicans, as supporters of Spain's elected government were known, received little help from abroad. The Western democracies remained neutral. Only the Soviet Union sent equipment and advisers. An international brigade of volunteers fought on the Republican side. Early in 1939, Republican resistance collapsed. Franco became Spain's Fascist dictator.

Vocabulary

axis: a straight line around which an object rotates. Hitler and Mussolini expected their alliance to become the axis around which Europe would rotate.

Guernica

On April 26, 1937, Franco's German allies bombed the ancient Basque city of Guernica in Spain. The photograph (above) shows the city reduced to rubble by the bombing. However, Spanish artist Pablo Picasso's painting, called *Guernica* (below), captures the human horror of the event.

Using the geometric forms of Cubism, Picasso shows a city and people that have been torn to pieces. Unnatural angles and overlapping images of people, severed limbs, and animals reflect the suffering and chaos caused by the attack. At left, a mother cries over her dead child. In the center, a horse screams and a soldier lies dead. At right, a woman falls from a burning house.



SKILLBUILDER: **Interpreting Visual Sources**

- 1. Analyzing Motives** *What were Picasso's probable motives for painting Guernica?*
- 2. Hypothesizing** *What feelings do you think Guernica stirred in the public in the late 1930s?*

Democratic Nations Try to Preserve Peace

Instead of taking a stand against Fascist aggression in the 1930s, Britain and France repeatedly made concessions, hoping to keep peace. Both nations were dealing with serious economic problems as a result of the Great Depression. In addition, the horrors of World War I had created a deep desire to avoid war.

United States Follows an Isolationist Policy Many Americans supported **isolationism**, the belief that political ties to other countries should be avoided. Isolationists argued that entry into World War I had been a costly error. Beginning in 1935, Congress passed three Neutrality Acts. These laws banned loans and the sale of arms to nations at war.

The German Reich Expands On November 5, 1937, Hitler announced to his advisers his plans to absorb Austria and Czechoslovakia into the **Third Reich** (ryk), or German Empire. The Treaty of Versailles prohibited *Anschluss* (AHN•SHLUS), or a union between Austria and Germany. However, many Austrians supported unity with Germany. In March 1938, Hitler sent his army into Austria and annexed it. France and Britain ignored their pledge to protect Austrian independence.

Hitler next turned to Czechoslovakia. About three million German-speaking people lived in the western border regions of Czechoslovakia called the Sudetenland. (See map, page 461.) This heavily fortified area formed the Czechs' main defense against Germany. The Anschluss raised pro-Nazi feelings among Sudeten Germans. In September 1938, Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland be given to Germany. The Czechs refused and asked France for help.

Britain and France Again Choose Appeasement France and Britain were preparing for war when Mussolini proposed a meeting of Germany, France, Britain, and Italy in Munich, Germany. The **Munich Conference** was held on September 29, 1938. The Czechs were not invited. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain believed that he could preserve peace by giving in to Hitler's demand. Britain and France agreed that Hitler could take the Sudetenland. In exchange, Hitler pledged to respect Czechoslovakia's new borders.

When Chamberlain returned to London, he told cheering crowds, "I believe it is peace for our time." Winston Churchill, then a member of the British Parliament, strongly disagreed. He opposed the appeasement policy and gloomily warned of its consequences:



▲ Chamberlain waves the statement he read following the Munich Conference.

MAIN IDEA

Analyzing Primary Sources

B Why did Churchill believe that Chamberlain's policy of appeasement was a defeat for the British?

PRIMARY SOURCE B

We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude. . . . we have sustained a defeat without a war. . . . And do not suppose that this is the end. . . . This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless, by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigor, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden time.

WINSTON CHURCHILL, speech before the House of Commons, October 5, 1938

Less than six months after the Munich meeting, Hitler took Czechoslovakia. Soon after, Mussolini seized Albania. Then Hitler demanded that Poland return the former German port of Danzig. The Poles refused and turned to Britain and France for aid. But appeasement had convinced Hitler that neither nation would risk war.

Nazis and Soviets Sign Nonaggression Pact Britain and France asked the Soviet Union to join them in stopping Hitler's aggression. As Stalin talked with Britain and France, he also bargained with Hitler. The two dictators reached an agreement. Once bitter enemies, Fascist Germany and Communist Russia now publicly pledged never to attack one another. On August 23, 1939, their leaders signed a nonaggression pact. As the Axis Powers moved unchecked at the end of the decade, war appeared inevitable.

SECTION

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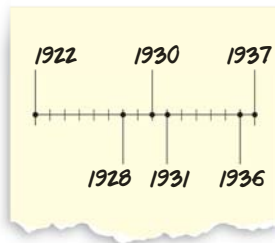
ASSESSMENT

TERMS & NAMES 1. For each term or name, write a sentence explaining its significance.

- appeasement
- Axis Powers
- Francisco Franco
- isolationism
- Third Reich
- Munich Conference

USING YOUR NOTES

2. What event was the most significant? Why?



MAIN IDEAS

3. Compare the militarists in Japan with the European Fascists.
4. Which countries formed the Axis Powers?
5. What were the effects of isolationism and appeasement?

CRITICAL THINKING & WRITING

6. **SYNTHESIZING** What similar goals did Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito share?
7. **FORMING OPINIONS** Do you think the Fascist nations of the Axis Powers could have been stopped? Explain.
8. **EVALUATING DECISIONS** Why weren't the Czechs invited to take part in the Munich Conference?
9. **WRITING ACTIVITY** **POWER AND AUTHORITY** Write a **letter to the editor** in which you voice your opinion about the U.S. policy of isolationism during the 1930s.

CONNECT TO TODAY **STAGING A DEBATE**

Established in 1945, the United Nations was intended to be an improvement on the League of Nations. Research to learn about the recent successes and failures of the UN. Then hold a **debate** in which you argue whether the institution should be preserved.