

## WHAT WAS THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES FAIR

### WHAT WERE THE MOTIVES AND AIMS OF THE BIG THREE AT VERSAILLES? WHO ATTENDED THE PEACE CONFERENCE?

Leaders and delegations from 32 countries, which made up ¾ of the world's populations, came to France to decide what to do now after the war has ended. Two countries were absent:

- **RUSSIA:** After the Bolshevik government stopped the fighting in 1917, making several secret Allied agreements public and refusing to pay back large sums of loans.
- **GERMANY:** Was widely seen to be responsible for the casualties and destruction of the war, meaning it had no representative in Paris.

The most important attendees were:

- Woodrow Wilson, President of the USA
- Georges Clemenceau, PM of France
- David Lloyd George, PM of Britain

### WHAT DID WOODROW WILSON WANT FROM THE PEACE TREATIES?

When Wilson joined the war, he announced he was joining the Allies not as an Allied Power, but as an Associated Power, stressing the USA's motives were different than those of the Allies. He believed the Allies and Italy were only interested in strengthening their empire and increasing their influence. He claimed that the USA's involvement was to establish world peace.

He believed Germany deserved some punishment after they introduced unrestricted submarine warfare which was what brought the USA into the war. However, he was an idealist and believed that world peace could be established if all nations worked together. He developed his Fourteen Points to do so, which were as follows:

His points were very popular in Europe and he was seen as somewhat of a savior. These points gave the people of Germany the impression that the USA was acting as an intermediate between Germany and the punitive demands of Britain and France.

However, Wilson's authority had lost the elections and the Republicans won control of both Houses of Congress. Due to the congress having to ratify any peace treaty, Wilson was put in a difficult situation as the US politicians and public would consider his points too idealistic. With this knowledge, Clemenceau and Lloyd George used this as an advantage with their dealings.

### SELF-DETERMINATION AND THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS:

Wilson believed that the principle of self-determination was vital to European stability. This could be seen in points 9, 10, 12 and 13 of Wilson's ideas. The establishment of the League of Nations was the most important to Wilson, as he wanted to create an international organization with every country in the world to negotiate and prevent disputes.

### WHAT DID GEORGES CLEMENCEAU WANT FROM THE PEACE TREATIES?

He took the toughest approach towards Germany after their invasion in 1870, where they took Alsace and Lorraine, and in 1914, which is when the First World War happened. Regaining Alsace and Lorraine was important for French Pride. Clemenceau's main aim was to ensure Germany would not dare threaten France again. This could only be established by weakening Germany to the point it no longer becomes a threat. He wanted reparations to be paid for reconstruction, and on-time. His aims were:

- Disarmament of Germany's army, navy and air force.
- High reparations.
- Return of Alsace and Lorraine.
- Saarland to be given to France.
- Independence of the Rhineland.
- Some overseas colonies to be given to France.

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### WHAT DID DAVID LLOYD GEORGE WANT FROM THE PEACE TREATIES?

David went to France knowing that the British people were in no mood for a moderate peace as they wanted to prevent such a war from happening again. He divided his terms into two sets:

#### MAKING GERMANY PAY:

British people wanted to make Germany pay. Newspapers called for the Kaiser to be tried in court for his crimes. The First Lord of Admiralty said "Squeeze the German lemon until the pips squeak". Many of those that died during the war were from Britain and its Empire. The war cost the Allies \$147 billion, and they had to swap their economies from making goods to making military materials, which lost them out on valuable overseas markets. He promised to make Germany pay during the election campaign of 1918. However, his interests changed to one of national self-interest and not revenge when he arrived in Paris. His key aims were:

- A balanced distribution of power so that no single power could dominate the continent.
- Return to the trading partners pre-war to make Britain wealthy again.
- Preserve British naval supremacy to guard the Empire and shipping lanes.

#### ENSURING ECONOMIC RECOVERY:

These aims stated that Germany must be allowed to recover some of its pre-war economic strength. If reparation bills were too high, she would have to take money out of its economy which was to be put to use for rebuilding and recovery. He recognized that a weakened Germany would never allow Britain to return to pre-war trading patterns.

The First World War lost Britain's place as the world's financial center to the USA. It owed huge sums of debts, most of them to the USA. Nevertheless, some things were in his hands which included the German High Seas Fleet and her overseas colonies.

#### WHY DID THE VICTORS NOT GET EVERYTHING THEY WANTED?

Issues were caused from the start due to the numerous countries attending and various complex issues to be

discussed. There were six plenary sessions which focused on creating an international organization, the League of Nations. Other decisions made were handled by the Great Powers that won the war.

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### HOW WERE DECISIONS MADE?

The Council of Four was set up by the Great Powers, which included Britain, France, Italy and the USA. Japan did not want to be involved in European matters but focused on issues concerning Asia. The Council of Four was inefficient and meetings took place without any agenda. Later on, the system became more organized, as some of the detailed work was handed to special commissions. None of the Great Powers were satisfied with the terms handed, and they disagreed on what should happen to two important Germany regions which were:

#### THE RHINELAND:

The French wanted to control this region as it would give them a natural border to protect against future invasion. However, according to Wilson's principle of self-determination, most of the population was German and hence it could not be handed to France. The British were also against this move as they believed France would have too much power in Europe.

In the end, it became a demilitarized zone which remained a part of Germany. Fortifications were destroyed and no German troops were permitted. Britain and USA gave grants to France that they would aid her if Germany were to attack France in the future. This calmed France down but after the Congress refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, the guarantee given by the USA ended.

#### THE SAARLAND:

The French claimed this coal-rich land as compensation due to their mines being deliberately flooded by the Germans as they retreated in the final year of the war. Lloyd George supported this, but Wilson was against this. He pointed that this region was entirely German and could not be handed to the French. As a compromise, the Saarland would be given to the French for 15 years and then the people of the Saar would vote on their future. A plebiscite was held in 1935 and the Saar was awarded to Germany.

### WHAT WERE THE KEY TERMS OF THE TREATY

The final treaty was signed at the Hall of Mirrors at the Palace of Versailles on 28 June 1919. It was a diktat, which meant the defeated country had no control or input. The terms were as follows:

**WAR GUILT:** This was under Article 231 which stated that Germany and other Central Powers had to accept full responsibility for causing the war. This was the worst part for many Germans.

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**REPARATIONS:** Germany would have to pay money and goods to the Allies. The amount was not agreed at the Paris Peace Conference but rather by the Reparations Commission which was set up. In May 1921, the total was set to \$33 billion. This was paid in money and resources such as coal, livestock, timber, bricks, glass and other. Germany had to borrow money and the final loan was not paid until October 2010.

#### REDUCTION OF MILITARY POWER:

- Germany had to:
- Limit its forces to 100,000 soldiers. Restrictions were also placed on how many weapons it could maintain such as machine guns.
  - Dismantle all defenses in the West.
  - Excluded from arms trade.
  - Limited in the type and quantity of weapons it could own.
  - Could not make or stockpile chemical weapons such as poison gas.
  - Give up its air force.
  - Limited to six battleships.

#### TERRITORIAL CHANGES:

- Despite keeping the demilitarized Rhineland, it lost territories such as:
- Its overseas colonies were divided between the Allied Powers.
  - Return of Alsace and Lorraine.
  - Anschluss was forbidden.
  - The Brest-Litovsk treaty with Russia. The territory gained from that treaty was made into three new independent states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania.
  - East Prussia was cut off from Germany in what became known as the Polish Corridor, which gave Poland access to the sea.

Other changes came about due to plebiscites such as:

- North Schleswig was awarded to Denmark in 1920.
- One third of Silesia was awarded to Poland in 1921.
- Allenstein and Marienwerder, two parts of East Prussia, were awarded to Germany.
- The Saarland was awarded to Germany in 1935.

With Germany's border being redrawn several times, millions of Germans found that they were no longer living in Germany.

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### WHAT HAPPENED TO GERMANY'S COLONIES?

Wilson was strongly against the Allied Powers sharing the German colonies between them. All German colonies were to be administered by the League's members as a mandate. Countries would report on their management of the former colony annually. The following mandates were made:

- Britain received German East Africa.
- Belgium took control of Ruanda-Urundi.

- Japan took control of the German island's north of equator and the German concession on mainland China, Shantung.

● Britain and France were to share the mandate for Camerouns and Togoland. **TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE UNITED STATES SATISFIED WITH THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES?** SATISFIED:

- All parties had agreed that the covenant League of Nations should be included in all 5 peace treaties, with Wilson laying the groundwork for the League.
- He got his wish for disarmament of the Central Powers.
- The Rhineland was demilitarized but still remained a part of Germany, which was in line with his principle of self-determination. This meant that Germany would become an important trading partner with the USA.
- The collapse of the Central Empire gave rise to successor states such as Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia.

**DISSATISFIED:**

- Point 2 in this Fourteen Points was not put into place due to Britain not accepting as her navy was vital to protecting her empire.
- British and French empires increased in size after running some of Germany's former colonies as mandates, which was not in line with Wilson's principle of self-determination.
- Wilson's dream of running the League of Nations with the USA leading it in a new world order was shattered after he did not win majority of the votes in the US Congress.

**TO WHAT EXTENT WAS FRANCE SATISFIED WITH THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES?**

**SATISFIED:**

- The return of Alsace and Lorraine which was lost in 1897 to Germany. ● Most of the reparations would go to France to rebuild its country and pay off debts it owed to Britain and the USA.

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- French security became stronger after the Rhineland became a buffer zone. The articles of the Treaty ensure that Germany would never be strong enough to ignite another war. ● The Anglo-American treaty was established to protect France with the aid of Britain and USA. However, it was later lapsed when the US Congress refused to ratify the treaty and Britain dropped out without the USA's involvement.

**DISSATISFIED:**

- The French did not trust the League of Nations to stop a German attack on their land. ● France was still not secure, which was Clemenceau's biggest disappointment. The French were driven to secure their border during the 1920s and 1930s.

**TO WHAT EXTENT WAS BRITAIN SATISFIED WITH THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES?**

**SATISFIED:**

- Britain maintained her economic trading with Germany.
- Her empire grew thanks to the mandates which allowed her to control former German colonies.
- Her navy increased in strength when the Germans scuttled their fleet at Scotland so Britain would not use them.
- London gave him the title of "the man who won the war". He returned to an enthusiastic reception.

**WHO ELSE LOST OUT?**

**RUSSIA:** She was not included in talks due to signing a peace treaty with Germany which withdrew her from the war. Her Bolshevik government was not recognized by the Allies. She and Germany began to share interests and worked militarily and diplomatically together after the war.

**ITALY:** She felt betrayed as she did not receive all the territories promised in the Treaty of London. This resulted her from forming a close relationship with Britain and France.

**CHINA:** After the Japanese captured Shantung, which housed 30 million Chinese, she argued at the conference that it should be returned back to her. However, Japan was allowed to keep the region which left the Chinese delegation to not sign the Treaty of Versailles.

**JAPAN:** Although she gained territory, she was still disappointed due to her "race equality" clause being rejected, which stated she and other countries would be treated on par with the Western Allies. Wilson did this as he believed the idea of equal treatment for different ethnic groups would be rejected by the US Congress.

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**WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE TREATY ON GERMAN UP TO THE END OF 1923?**

The Kaiser had fled to Holland and the Weimar Republic came to power. The British blockade was still in place and Germany was suffering from severe food and fuel shortages. Uprising and mutinies became common and the government had to leave Berlin after it had been seized by communists.

**THE SOCIAL IMPACT OF THE TREATY IN GERMANY:**

The German army had never been invaded or lost any major battle for the duration of the war. Throughout the war, German newspapers had not informed the public about the setbacks. Instead, they had been fed a diet of propaganda victories. Four main features of the Treaty of Versailles caused the most anger:

- It was a diktat, meaning no negotiations took place and German politicians had to sign it otherwise the British blockade would continue.
- War Guilt clause bittered the Germans as they were held responsible for causing the war. They were fed propaganda that the Allies were responsible for the war, which could be supported by Russia and France encircling her during the Schlieffen Plan in 1914.
- The reparations caused great concern and resentment, as after the Saar region was lost with its valuable coal

mines, the Germans were stressed on how they would afford to pay them.

- Finally, the small army of only 100,000 soldiers meant it was unable to defend against much stronger neighbors, Poland and France. This caused fear and anger.

Hatred was particularly common in parts of the county that were awarded to new countries. The new boundaries forced different ethnic groups to live together, causing social issues. Allied troops were called in to maintain the peace between Poles and Germans in Silesia.

The Germans did not respect the Weimar constitution as they did not believe in the government to correct the wrongs forced on Germany by the treaty. When the reparation bill was accepted, the humiliation was complete. The people began to look for a political party to eradicate the shame felt by the Treaty of Versailles.

**THE POLITICAL IMPACT OF THE TREATY IN GERMANY:**

Many soldiers found themselves jobless due to the downsizing in the army, and joined a group of ex-servicemen that worked as small private armies called the Freikorps. These unofficial militia groups attempted several coups. The Kapp Putsch, under the command of Wolfgang Putsch, took place in Berlin on March 1920. It aimed to install a right-wing government that would overturn the Treaty of Versailles. However, the coup collapsed after Berlin workers went on

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strike and public services halted. The Weimar republic survived. Other attempts included a right-wing takeover in the Bavarian Republic known as the Munich Putsch in May 1919.

**POLITICAL MURDERS:**

Hundreds of politicians and political activists were killed. In 1921, a right-wing gang called Organization Consul murdered Matthias Erzberger, the finance minister. In June 1922, the same group assassinated the foreign minister, Walther Rathenau, as he was involved in arranging the Armistice and appending the Treaty of Versailles to make it better.

**DOLCHSTOSS:**

Stands for "stab in the back". The Weimar politicians signed both the Armistice and Treaty of Versailles. Mistakenly, the Germans began to believe in a powerful myth – The politicians and army generals were to be blamed for the country's humiliation and downfall. They believed the Weimar government was made up of cowards who instead of resisting, signed the Treaty of Versailles which betrayed Germany. Many returning soldiers believed this myth which had impact on future German politics. The myth showcased armed forces as honorable and trustworthy, while politicians as unpatriotic liars who were untrustworthy.

**POLITICAL STRUCTURES IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC:**

Many would have been glad to see the return of the Kaisers after the war. The new constitution established a voting system that did not produce clear winners. The Weimar government was divided into coalitions, which caused in-fighting, and decision making was slow. This was not common under the Kaiser's rule.

**THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE TREATY IN GERMANY:**

After the Treaty was signed, the exact amount for the reparations was not yet decided. However, Germany started paying immediately. However, she lost all her colonies; 13% of its land, 26% of its coal deposits and 75% of its iron deposits. The German authorities said they could not pay the reparations bill. Her economy was struggling, as government expenditures were high but income from taxes were low. This caused a budget deficit which could be solved by borrowing or printing money, which led to inflation. The bill made matters worse but prices in Germany were already increasing.

**INVASION OF RUHR:**

Germany failed to deliver its quota of timber and coal in December 1922 and January 1923 respectively. The prime minister of France sent troops into the Ruhr region to make sure

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deliveries were on time. The Ruhr region was rich in coal and iron, but was seized by 60,000 French and Belgian troops due to reparations being overdue. Non-violent opposition was called by the Weimar government but the event of "Bloody Easter on the Ruhr" resulted in the death of 13 Germans. In total, more than 140 Germans were killed.

**HYPERINFLATION:**

Civil servants, miners and others went on strike after German industries stopped in the Ruhr region. People were using money that was quickly losing its value. Prices were not printed on menus as they were constantly changing while people were sitting down.

The Ruhr region prevented exports such as steel, iron and coal. This reduced government income. A passive resistance was introduced where the government gave money to strikers to stop, which was done by printing more money.

300 paper mills and 2000 printing businesses were working around the clock to keep up with demand. The value of the German currency dropped and strikes were eventually called off by a new coalition government led by Gustav Stresemann as economic collapse was around the corner. More attempts happened to overthrow the Weimar Republic. Hitler tried to seize power in the Munich Putsch and a separatist Rhenish Republic was announced at Aachen. Both coups were stopped by Stresemann's government. All the old currency was collected and destroyed, and the Rentenmark was issued in November.

**REDUCING REPARATIONS:**

Many people in Europe and the USA felt sympathy for the Germans after the French swift and illiterate action of occupying the Ruhr. With pressure from the USA, the French agreed to the Dawes Plan in April 1924, which substantially lowered German reparations payment. It also allowed US Banks to loan \$200 million to the German government. France withdrew from the Ruhr region and German industry resumed.

**COULD THE TREATY BE JUSTIFIED AT THE TIME?**

Countries that suffered from the Treaty of Versailles and the treaties with other Central Powers felt the terms were too harsh. People in the victorious nations felt the terms were fair.

However, many politicians and people realized the extremely harsh terms that brought suffering were not justified, but other writers think otherwise. Here are some points made:

- Germany only accepted the Fourteen Points when it was clear they were losing in autumn 1918.

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- In the treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918, Germans took 34% of Russia's population and 50% of its industry. The reparations bill was 300 million gold roubles, Russian currency.
- Clemenceau wanted the treaty to be harsher and Germany to be broken up, which was rejected by Wilson and Lloyd George.
- The reparations bill cost Germany only 2% of its annual production.
- Germany's main economic problem in the 1920s was war debt and no reparations. It had planned to pay them by winning the war and make other countries pay reparations.
- Germany received a huge loan in 1924 from the USA for economic recovery.
- In 1924-1929, Germany produced twice as much steel as Britain. It was a period of success for her.

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#### TO WHAT EXTENT WAS THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS A SUCCESS? WHAT WERE THE MAIN AIMS

##### OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS?

- Maintain world peace through collective security by solving disputes.
- Encourage international cooperation to solve economic and social problems which would improve living and working conditions for all.

##### THE COVENANT LEAGUE OF NATIONS:

Article of the Covenant	Action
Articles 8 and 9	Disarmament must be promoted to the point just enough military is required for defense.
Articles 10	The League will support any member attacked.
Articles 11	Help can be asked if attacks are susceptible.
Articles 12-15	War is not allowed until three months have passed from the date the dispute was brought up to the League. Members have to pledge to this. Disputes will be settled by a process; investigation, discussion then the international court or arbitrations to be provided.
Article 16	Prompt action must be agreed against anyone who waged war. Economic sanctions and military action is to be placed when done.

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##### HOW FAR DID WEAKNESSES IN THE LEAGUE'S ORGANIZATION AND MEMBERSHIP MAKE FAILURE INEVITABLE?

SECRETARIAT	ASSEMBLY	COUNCIL
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The administration of the League, with over 700 officials which carried the Council's decisions. It included experts to offer advice on disputes and managed financial and administrative work, organized meetings and circulated reports. Met once a year. Every member

had one vote, and decisions had to be reached unanimously. Admitted new members. Elected non-permanent members of the council. Words spoken in the Assembly were reported to a global audience, which aimed to pressure governments to correct their actions.

Met four times a year, and in times of crisis. It is the decision-making part of the League. Included permanent and non-permanent members. Initially, the permanent members were Britain, France, Italy and Japan.

##### WHAT WERE THE LEAGUE'S WEAKNESSES?

##### FAILURE OF COLLECTIVE SECURITY:

Members would act together to place economic and military sanctions on aggressors. This was done in three processes:

- **Moral Disapproval:** The council would condemn the action, and the aggressor would cease its actions knowing the whole world was against it.
- **Economic Sanctions:** If Moral Disapproval failed, economic sanctions would be placed such as trade boycott and refusing credit.
- **Military Sanctions:** If Economic Sanctions failed, military sanctions would be placed which involved sending a military to help the victim.

Collective security was restricted for three reasons:

- The USA was not a member.
- All decisions were unanimous, meaning one veto would ensure nothing got done. Even if the majority agreed, it was not enough to act.
- The League did not have its own army, meaning military sanctions were difficult. Soldiers and resources had to be sent, which takes time and it was not guaranteed all members would do so.

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Collective security relied on countries to go to war even if it did not involve them. It demanded countries to have significant military forces that would turn local affairs into global ones. This was particularly important when the Abyssinian crisis and Manchurian incident took place.

##### ORGANIZATIONAL ISSUES:

- Dislike towards the Treaty of Versailles was felt by Japan, Italy and Germany. With this, the League was not fully supported to implement the terms of the treaty.
- Even after decisions were made, there was no army to enforce them. Moral condemnation and economic sanctions were not effective punishments for the aggressors.
- Membership issues did not include powerful countries that would potentially cause trouble.
- The Great Powers were not willing to give up national self-interests for the sake of peace, even after sanctions were placed. The French and British government did not want to use force as it was against public opinions. Without the USA's membership, Britain and France were not interested in being peace-keepers.

##### FINANCIAL ISSUES:

It ran on little money which restricted its potential. Between 1921 and 1927, it cost only \$4 million to run the league annually. Britain was the biggest contributor, with \$550,000 yearly, while the others gave what they can. The League had to often ask members for money during crises. If response time was long, the League would turn to charities like the American Red Cross or Save the Children for humanitarian disasters.

##### WHO JOINED AND LEFT THE LEAGUE?

**THE USA:** Although Wilson supported the League, the US Congress voted 3 times not to join. They feared they would involve themselves in future wars. 116,516 US Soldiers died in the First World War and no one wanted more blood to be shed.

**GERMANY:** He was refused entry during the Paris Peace Conference as it had not demonstrated peaceful intentions. After they joined in 1926 as a permanent member of the Council, Adolf Hitler took him out in 1933 as he saw the League as a victor's club.

**THE USSR:** She was a communist state which was despised in the League as it stood against capitalism. She was not interested to join a capitalist run club by powers that had invaded her during her civil war of 1918-1920. It was later admitted but was kicked after its invasion of Finland during the Second World War.

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**JAPAN:** It was a permanent member of the Council but left after the critical Lytton report over its invasion on Manchuria.

**ITALY:** It was a member but left after the economic sanctions placed on her invasion of Abyssinia.

**BRITAIN AND FRANCE:** They were most responsible for making the League work. Britain was worried about its empire, while France was worried about its border with Germany. Instead of using new mechanisms for resolving disputes, they relied on traditional methods of bilateral talks.

##### HOW SUCCESSFUL WERE THE LEAGUE'S ATTEMPTS AT PEACEKEEPING IN THE 1920S?

The League dealt with 30 disputes in the first ten years. Here are some of them: **VILNA, 1920**  
 Its population included Poles, Jews and Lithuanians. The city was recognized as a part of Lithuania. The border with Poland was left unclear, so Poland brought up the issue to the League. The League sent a commission to investigate, with the decision being awarded to Lithuania. Both states signed the agreement on 30 September 1920.

Shortly after this, the Polish General and his soldiers marched into Vilna. There are rumors he was secretly supported by the Polish government. Despite not being a member, Lithuania raised the matter to the Assembly, which ordered Poland to withdraw. Despite saying they would, Poland sent more troops.

The League initially wanted to host a plebiscite policed by an international force, but it was rejected by Poland and Lithuania. Instead, it sent a Belgian representative, Paul Hymans, to investigate the situation and report to the League.

The Hymans Report, published in September 1921, came with the following:

- Both the Polish and Lithuanian languages to be granted official status.
- All minority groups in Lithuania to have equal rights to education, religion, language and association.
- Steps to be taken to align the two countries' economic and foreign policies.

The report was a delicate balancing act but was rejected by both sides. The League published a public statement saying it had exhausted all possibilities. This allowed the occupation of Vilna to continue and the Conference of Ambassadors recognized Vilna as Polish territory. These were the results of the League.

SUCCESSSES	CONCERNS
An innovative proposal to a difficult issue left by the Paris peacemakers was made, despite being rejected.	The League should have invoked Article 16 and outrage was towards Polish takeover. The League failed to deal with its first invasion.
No war was made and the issue made headlines worldwide.	Poland had a strong relationship with France, allowing it to benefit from the aggression.

#### THE ALAND ISLANDS, 1920-21:☞

Located between Sweden and Finland, which both countries claimed. Despite the population being 95% Swedish, they belonged to Finland. In June 1920, the dispute was referred to the Council of the League of Nations. The League concluded the island should remain under Finland's rule. They felt that awarding the islands to Sweden would set a dangerous precedent, encouraging Swedish communities in Finland to make similar claims. Other minority groups in Europe might want to do the same.

The League also decided to provide Sweden more autonomy, to help preserve their traditions and customs. This included teaching the Swedish language in schools.

The decision meant Finland maintained its borders with the Swedes there keeping their customs. The settlement was a success and the first European international agreement conducted directly through the League.

SUCCESSSES	CONCERNS
The development of autonomy was important which allowed Swedish customs to be preserved.	The dispute raised the question on how far should Wilson's principle of self-determination be applied?
Finland maintained its borders which avoided a precedent which may lead to other ethnic claims, destroying the Paris Peace Settlement.	Disputes over islands were resolved by granting them to the country which they were once apart. Japan used this principle to justify its invasion on Manchuria.

#### THE CORFU INCIDENT, 1923:

In August 1923, an Italian general, Enrico Tellini, was murdered in Greece along with four of his assistants. The men were working on a border dispute between Greece and Albania, and were part of the Conference of Ambassadors. Greek authorities failed to locate the culprits and Mussolini ordered Italian troops to occupy Corfu, a Greek Island. He hoped this would give him compensation for the deaths.

Greece appealed to the Council and Italy argued that the occupation was not an act of war. British representative, Robert Cecil, disagreed and wanted to impose sanctions by sending © r/IGCSE Resources 2024 some ships from the British navy to Corfu as a warning. However, he didn't want to damage trade relations with Italy. Instead, the Council sent a commission to Tellini's death site, where no evidence was found that Greece had failed to investigate the murder properly. The Conference of Ambassadors met on the 25<sup>th</sup> of September, and because of Italian pressure, Greece was ordered to pay 50 million liras in compensation with the Italians evacuating Corfu two days later.

SUCCESSSES	CONCERNS
Greece appealed to the League when it felt it was treated unfairly.	Italy committed an act of war, but was not punished by the other Great Powers. The League failed to stop the invasion despite Greece asking for help.
War was not waged and Italian forces did not stay in Greek territory for long.	It appeared the Conference of Ambassadors were more in charge than the League itself.
-----	The incident showed powerful nations could bully less powerful ones (Greece was weak and had no friends on the Council).

#### GREEK-BULGARIAN CONFRONTATION, 1925:

It is unclear what started the confrontation in 1923, but whatever happened, the Bulgarian government appealed to

the League for intervention.

The League ordered an end to the fighting and withdrawal of troops. The Greek government was ordered to pay \$218,250 in compensation, with both countries accepting this decision. British, French and Italian officials arrived on site to confirm the Council's instructions had been followed. The confrontation was over.

SUCCESSSES	CONCERNS
Moral disapproval by the Council was obeyed immediately.	Greece thought it was being treated unfairly, due to the Corfu incident. It felt like there was one rule for powers like Italy and one for smaller countries like Greece.
The Council had investigated and reported the incident. It was usually border disputes like this that caused wars.	-----

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The only major concern was the unequal treatment of smaller powers. However, the League's actions should be considered. It may have looked like war was possible, but neither country had the military for that. They both had their difficulties:

- Greece suffered with millions of refugees from Turkey.
- Bulgaria was mostly demilitarized.
- They were both not allied to a Great Power for assistance.

This prospect of war between neighbors was always a great fear for any diplomat who remembered the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914.

#### HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE LEAGUE'S HUMANITARIAN WORK?

The League's agencies and commissions addressed humanitarian issues such as disease, poverty, exploitation, prisoners of war and refugees.

#### THE COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES:

Prisoners of the First World War included 2-3 million individuals from various nations in Russia. It was established in 1921 and led by Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen. The commission included returning the prisoners of war back home or resettlement when necessary. 425,000 were returned home during two years. In 1922, camps were set up in Turkey to help it during its refugee crisis to reduce risk of disease and hunger. Nansen and his workers worked with little money and difficult circumstances, but were able to use their imaginative methods to look after these people. Camps were set up and skills were taught to the refugees. Identity papers, such as the Nansen passport, allowed displaced individuals to move around easier.

However, the commission was not always successful. It made limited attempts to help the Jews flee from Nazi Germany in the 1930s. Despite this, their work showed that collective action can be taken to help those forced to leave their homes and countries. Their work was important in the beginning as it helped organize international relief efforts. Many of its international rules for care and protection of refugees exists till this day.

#### THE HEALTH ORGANIZATION:

One of the most successful bodies under the leadership of Ludwig Rajchman. It established links with non-members of the League such as the USA and USSR to provide information service, technical assistance and advice on public health matters. It helped prevent a typhus epidemic in the USSR in the early 1920s by organizing campaigns about health and sanitation, with the worst of the epidemic being over in 1923.

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The Organization reduced cases of leprosy and began an international campaign for the extermination of mosquitoes which reduced the spread of malaria and yellow fever. The death rate of workers on the Tanganyika fell from 50% to 4%. Research institutes in major cities and countries such as London and Singapore developed vaccines for diphtheria, tuberculosis and tetanus. The WHO remains a part of the UN today.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION:

Created in 1919, it fought for social justice in the form of safe, healthy and fair working conditions. The ILO made recommendations to national governments in the form of conventions agreed by the ILO conference about labor matters. If the conventions were accepted, they would be presented by the League within a year to national parliaments. The ILO adopted conventions which focused on maternity protection, night work for women, unemployment, working hours and minimum age. The League could not force but would hold countries accountable for not making progress in these areas.

As time went on, an international network of laws and regulations began to develop. In 1939, the ILO had agreed to 67 conventions. One of these was to make children work eight-hours in the Persian carpet industry and their rooms to be properly ventilated. The ILO prevented lead to be added to paint, and convinced several countries to adopt eight-hour working days and 48-hour working weeks. Working hours were the main concern for the ILO throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The

organization was the main factor for international debate and adoption of international labor standards, which was the most important achievement for the League.

The joining of the USA to the ILO in August 1934 widened its impact. During the Great Depression, the ILO worked to address social distress caused. It called for major international action on finance and trade to overcome the depression. The ILO became an agency of the UN after the League ended.

#### **THE SLAVERY COMMISION**

Its work included supporting those forced to become sex workers. Its main success was ending the enslavements in the mandates established by the Treaty of Versailles. It secured commitment from Abyssinia to end slavery in exchange for membership. It worked with Liberia to abolish forced labor and enslavement between tribes. It kept records to control enslavement, sex work and trafficking of women and children.

Partly because of pressure, slavery was abolished by Afghanistan, Iraq, Nepal, Persia, Transjordan, Bahrain and Abyssinia. Overall, 200,000 slaves were freed. The League's humanitarian work made the issues a priority for non-members as well. The League itself could not abolish slavery but it kept the issue in the public eye by reports and photographs.

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#### **HOW FAR DID THE DEPRESSION MAKE THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE MORE DIFFICULT IN THE 1930S?**

##### **WHAT WAS THE GREAT DEPRESSION?**

Began in the USA, but countries in Europe suffered similar issues. It affected the world in 1929 but lasted well into the 1930s. Demand dropped, and cuts in production and trade soon followed. Factories closed and millions lost their jobs and joined long lines of unemployment. The banking system failed and people lost their money.

All countries were tested by the impact of the Great Depression. Politicians prioritized dealing with unemployment, suffering and poverty. This act was called economic nationalism. Two members were affected the most, Japan and Germany, which are the same two who were most disruptive to international relations in the 1930s.

##### **THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE IN THE 1930S**

Much of the League's humanitarian work carried its effectiveness in the 1930s. However, Depressions created new problems to solve: peace-keeping issues as domestic problems overcame foreign ones. The League could not prevent a second world war from starting and in this sense it failed its purpose. After Germany's invasion of Poland in 1939, the League met again in April 1946. It shut down and transferred its assets to the UN, based in NYC.

Depression meant countries were less concerned with justice and peace. Collective security could not be utilized due to not enough support gathered, making the League powerless. Two issues based on national rather than international interest showed the League's ineffectiveness. They were as follows:

##### **THE MANCHURIAN CRISIS, 1931:**

The invasion was the first time the League dealt with an issue from one of the Great Powers. If the League had met the challenge and stopped the invasion, it would've stopped countries like Italy and Germany from extending their power. Hitler and Mussolini showed the League's weakness which was it was not able to prevent territorial gains by the aggressor.

The population of Japan was increasing rapidly. It had no natural resources and relied heavily on imports such as iron and steel to support its industry and military. Exporting its own products was difficult as Depression increased tariffs worldwide to protect their industries.

The weakness of Japan's economy could only be addressed by an aggressive foreign policy. She looked at China which was an ideal market to exploit. China was vulnerable to both military and economic invasion in the 1930s as it lacked a strong central government which was fought

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over by the Nationalists, Communists and provincial warlords. Manchuria was most suitable as it bordered Japanese territory, Korea, and the USSR, while being rich in lumber, rubber and oil.

##### **SHORT-TERM CAUSES OF THE CRISIS IN MANCHURIA**

18 September 1931, an explosion damaged a section of railway track near Mukden in Manchuria. Japan owned the railway and blamed Chinese nationalists for the incident. However, the bomb was planted by Japanese military officers as an excuse to invade Manchuria. The Japanese government was shocked as they were not aware of the incident. Nevertheless, the Japanese army won many victories and the government was powerless to stop it as under her constitution, the government had to include representatives from the army and navy otherwise it would collapse. The Japanese army had taken over 300km and were fighting against untrained Chinese soldiers who offered little resistance. Japan renamed the colony to Manchukuo in February 1932. The Japanese installed Puyi, the nephew of the Chinese Emperor, as the puppet ruler. The Nationalist leader reported the incident to the League.

##### **THE LYTTON REPORT:**

The League sent a commission led by Lord Lytton to China to investigate. This was months before the Lytton Report was issued in October 1932, which gave the Japanese time to strengthen their security of Manchukuo. The report concluded Japan as the aggressor and it had no right to invade Manchuria. It advised the region to be returned back and the puppet state to not be internationally recognized. The League accepted the report's findings. In response, Japan left the League and continued with its nationalist policies, kept Manchukuo and launched a full scale invasion on China in 1937.

##### **THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE INVASION:**

The crisis damaged the moral strength and influence of the League. It was powerless if a strong nation pursued national interests against another nation. The League showed the world it was incapable of enforcing world peace. International relations were tipping towards conflict, in favor of those dictators who wanted empires and had the military strength to do so.

#### **THE ABYSSINIAN CRISIS, 1935-36:**

Italy also had ambitions to increase its territory. The fascist leader, Mussolini, wanted to create a new Roman Empire and make Italy 'great, respected and feared'.

##### **CAUSES OF THE ABYSSINIAN CRISIS:**

Italy had been interested in Abyssinia after its failed invasion in 1896. After Mussolini came to power, invading Abyssinia was up on his agenda. Italian colony of Somaliland was very close to Abyssinia and in 1932, Mussolini had completed his invasion plans. The crisis began in early December of 1934, where a border incident was staged at Wal-Wal. 30 Italians and 3 times as many Abyssinians lost their lives.

Mussolini demanded compensation for the losses, and other Great Powers like Britain and France got involved due to increasing tensions. They did so without following the procedures of the League. Selfish motives drove the leaders as they wanted to maintain positive relations with Mussolini, to isolate Hitler's Germany which left the League and began rearming.

##### **WHAT HAPPENED?**

The League immediately condemned the unprovoked Italian aggression and began economic sanctions. These included banning the sale of armaments and other supplies as well as ending credit to the Italian government and firms.

However, these sanctions were not effective as oil and coal, essential for running a war, were removed from the list of banned trade. Additionally, the British kept the Suez Canal open, which was the main supply route for the Italian army, as they feared her colonies such as Malta and Gibraltar would be attacked by Italian navy.

Given these circumstances, the Hoare-Laval pact was secretly made between Britain, France and Mussolini. It stated Italy would receive two-thirds of Abyssinia, 155,000 square kilometers, for ending the war. Abyssinia would be given 8000 square kilometers of Somaliland to have access to the sea. However, the pact got leaked and Hoare resigned as British foreign secretary and Laval resigned as French prime minister.

Mussolini appointed a new commander who launched a fresh attack. More progress was made due to utilization of mustard gas. The League considered imposing an embargo on oil which was rejected by France. By this time, Europe was concerned on Hitler's actions, who remilitarized the Rhineland. This left the Italians alone and overran Abyssinia, with the capital captured on the 5<sup>th</sup> of May.

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Halle Selassie, the Emperor of Abyssinia, gave an emotional speech to the Assembly at Geneva. His outrage could be heard around the world, but the League removed sanctions in July as the war was nearly over. In December 1937, Italy withdrew from the League.

##### **THE CONSEQUENCES:**

No one believed the League could stop wars. Nevertheless, this was the only occasion when the League launched a full-scale security action. The problem for Britain and France was their increasing concern about Germany meant their relations with Mussolini had to be maintained. Unfortunately, they did not pursue a consistent policy as they wavered between working within the League and acting outside it, confusing Mussolini and making them look weak.

It became harder for Britain and France to keep Italy on their side. In September 1937, Mussolini visited Berlin and two months later, Italy signed the Anti-Comintern pact with Germany and Japan to form a united front against a hated ideology – Soviet communism.

After Abyssinia, the League and collective security were abandoned. Instead, most countries acted in their own interests.

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#### **HOW FAR WAS HITLER'S FOREIGN POLICY TO BLAME FOR THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN EUROPE IN 1939?**

##### **WHAT WERE THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES? GERMAN MINORITIES IN OTHER COUNTRIES:**

The redrawn borders displaced many German minorities, with one million being in Poland. The new states in the East were weak and had poor defenses. The successor states, Poland, Hungary, Austria and Czechoslovakia, were located between two strong friends – Germany and the USSR. These minority groups campaigned to be returned back to Germany, which grew stronger and louder after the Nazis came to power in 1933. The bitterness of the Treaty was useful for nationalist politicians, as they sent the message of the peace being unfair and must be changed, or even destroyed.

##### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GERMANY AND THE USSR:**

They signed the Treaty of Rapallo in 1922, which opened diplomatic relations and ended all territorial and financial claims. Both claimed Poland as she was bordering them, and they were moving closer economically. The USSR needed German skilled workers, engineers and their advanced industrial methods. A market was provided for German products and raw materials.

##### **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FRANCE AND BRITAIN**

Disagreements over the Treaty worsened their relationship. France wanted every feature to be implemented fully to provide a secure front against Germany, while Britain wanted a more flexible one to maintain trade, healthy for the British economy. This caused difficulties when maintaining peace against Hitler's foreign policy.

##### **HITLER'S FOREIGN POLICY AIMS:**

There are opinions on whether Hitler had a long-standing plan to go to war or used opportunities to his advantage. However, he had several clear foreign policy aims.

##### **TEARING UP THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES:**

Resentment lasted long for the Treaty in Germany. Reversing the terms was one of Hitler's aims, which played a big part

in his demands and actions he took in 1935-1939. These steps he took to achieve were:

- Rearmament.
- Remilitarizing the Rhineland.
- The Sudetenland to belong to him.

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- Prague invasion.
- Seizure of Memel.
- Claiming the Danzig and Polish corridor.

#### CREATING LEBENSRAUM ('LIVING SPACE'):

This was driven by limited food and raw materials. This convinced him that Lebensraum was crucial and it could only be found eastwards. Lebensraum partly shaped his foreign policy after he became chancellor in 1933.

#### ESTABLISHING A NEW REICH ('EMPIRE'):

This was to unite all German-speaking people into one Reich. Hitler believed that history and issues were caused between races. To grow, develop and expand, the Nazis believed having all Germans maintain their biological purity and a pure population at home would achieve this. This meant anyone who was not German had no right to live there. The Nazis considered the Jews a parasitic race that plotted to enslave the Germanic (Aryan) master race. The Russians were considered Slavs, who were considered inferior, meaning taking Russian land for Lebensraum was ideal.

#### WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FAILURES OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS IN THE 1930S?

The failure of the League had significant effects on Hitler's plan for Germany and Mussolini's plan for Italy.

#### THE DISARMAMENT CONFERENCE:

It was only the losers that were made to disarm. The League organized a conference to meet in Geneva between 1932 and 1934 to discuss broader objectives for disarmament. Nevertheless, it failed to reduce weapons in land, air and sea. France was willing to disarm if the USA and Britain did so, which neither agreed on. Hitler was able to exploit these fears by stating the French were not serious and left the League in 1933. This damaged the League's reputation and countries like Germany, Italy and Japan began rearming.

#### MANCHURIA:

If the League was able to stop the Japanese, it would have acted as a deterrent to other Great Powers. With the world looking on, the failure of the League to stop Japan, Mussolini and Hitler showed its incapacities to stop territorial gain from an aggressive country. Japan rejected the findings of the Lytton Report and withdrew from the League.

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#### ABYSSINIA:

Both Hitler and Mussolini were delighted with the outcome in the Far East. It showed the League could not make effective decisions and international interests could not overcome national ones. This meant Italy would be more aggressive and Hitler would soon start implying his policy. The Abyssinian conquest was humiliating for France and Britain as they were pursuing two objectives, placing economic sanctions and negotiating secretly in the form of the Hoare-Laval pact, which resulted in nothing but Italy leaving the League in 1937. The Anti-Comintern Pact was signed by Germany, Italy and Japan against Soviet communism – an ideology hated by all.

#### WHAT WERE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE LEAGUE'S FAILURE?

These three failures were covered in newspapers worldwide, which exposed its flaws and ended collective security. This gave Hitler confidence and realized the League could not stop European war. Public opinion was against rearmament and citizens had more faith in the League than politicians did, leaving Britain and France in a Catch-22.

#### WAS THE POLICY OF APPEASEMENT JUSTIFIED?

Britain and France decided on a policy of appeasement in the mid-1930s to deal with Germany, which was criticized for not opposing Hitler after the Second World War. However, it was developed by intelligent leaders which was sensible to all, due to a series of aggressive actions taken by Hitler from 1935 onwards, which led to nations to find methods to stop the situation from getting worse.

#### REARMAMENT, 1935:

Hitler publicly announced his first strike of the Versailles Treaty, which was rearmament by introducing conscription. This was happening secretly, and he told the world he had peaceful intentions and his actions were defensive.

#### THE SAAR PLEBISCITE, 1935:

In 1935, the 15 year control of the Saar by the League ended and a plebiscite was held, whether to join France, become independent under the League or rejoin Germany. The result of the plebiscite was crucial due to it being rich in coalfields, factories and railway stations. The Nazi supporters fought a campaign and opponents were intimidated, causing violence. However, the League confirmed the voting was fair and 90.3% voted to join Germany, 9% wanted a separate status and 0.4% wanted to remain a part of France. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, the Saar was returned and the first stage of Hitler's Reich was completed.

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The result was victorious for the Nazi regime, as it gave Hitler authority to push on with his demands to reunite Austria and Sudetenland with Germany. The result made it difficult for democratic government to oppose Hitler's claims, which is why a policy of appeasement was adopted.

#### THE RHINELAND, 1936:

This was still a part of Germany but had been demilitarized and occupied by foreign troops for 15 years. In March 1936, 22,000 German troops marched into the Rhineland. Hitler correctly predicted that France and Britain would not do anything as neither wanted to risk war due to them realizing the Rhineland was an actual part of Germany. Hitler made promises of continued peace and even suggested a non-aggression pact with the Entente Cordiale.

The German generals opposed the move as they feared their poorly trained and equipped army would be defeated

within hours of the French. In France, the public was worried about starting another war and that the German forces were much stronger. In England, the public were unconcerned about the German occupation, making it difficult for the British leaders to resist. Appeasement seemed the best policy.

#### THE ROME-BERLIN AXIS AND THE ANTI-COMINTERN PACT, 1936-37:

The division in Europe's Great Powers were taking shape. Britain and France remained allied and Germany and Italy grew closer. Italy's friendship was due to it falling out of favor with European countries after its invasion of Abyssinia. Her and Germany shared a common ideology, fascist dictatorship. Their alliance was confirmed by the signing of the Rome-Berlin axis in October 1936. From now on, they would be referred as the Axis Powers. Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact in November of 1936, which opposed communist spread. Japan was looking for someone to aid her if a Soviet attack happened, which was a secret clause where both countries would aid each other if an attack by the Soviet Union occurred. Italy joined a year later, with Hungary and Spain joining in 1939.

#### ANSCHLUSCH WITH AUSTRIA, 1938:

This was banned according to the Treaty of Versailles. However, under Wilson's Fourteen Points, most Austrians spoke German which would fall under self-determination. Anschluss was regarded as an invasion to unite Austrians seven million German-speaking people into his Reich by Hitler. His opponents considered it an annexation/forced takeover.

Anschluss was an excellent representation of Hitler's patience, timing and achievement of aims. Hitler already spoke about creating a Third Reich to unify all Germans, including Austrians. He © r/IGCSE Resources 2024 was patient as in 1934 he was warned by Mussolini, until 4 years later he carried his plans out. During this time, the Austrian Nazis undermined the government and Mussolini decided to give Hitler whatever he wanted in Austria.

#### FROM GRADUAL TAKEOVER TO INVASION:

The timing was not of Hitler's choosing, but he seized the opportunity when it arose. Chancellor Kurt Schuschnigg wanted Austria to remain independent, and tried to limit Austrian Nazis from persuading his people to unite with Germany. Hitler made a series of demands that would make Austria a German satellite. On 9 March 1938, Schuschnigg tried to renege the initiative from Hitler by organizing a referendum. Hitler was furious at this and demanded that he called for Schuschnigg resignation and changed his policy from one of gradual takeover to one of immediate invasion. He had originally planned to place Austrian Nazi Arthur Seyss-Inquart as chancellor. But the situation changed, and Hitler decided to incorporate Austria into his Reich by force.

Anschluss happened in days and most Austrians welcomed it, which was shown by a plebiscite held early in April by Hitler showing the majority of the Austrians wanted to join the Third Reich. Anschluss was the first time German forces stepped outside German territories. Hitler was popular as he increased territory, population and resources. The Führer's (Hitler's) confidence reached an all time high and he perceived his opponents as weak individuals.

#### THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR, 1936-39:

Was a battlefield of ideologies, fascism versus communism. General Francisco Franco led the Nationalists rebels against the Republican government in Spain. Hitler and Mussolini saw the fighting as an opportunity to test military equipment that were used during training. They sided with the Nationalists led by Franco.

Hitler was quick to send aid to Francisco's forces after war broke out, with a total of \$2.15 million aided by the time the conflict ended in 1939. Germany transferred 13,523 troops and 270, 100 kilograms of war supplies from North Africa to Andalusia between July and October 1936, which proved decisive in Franco's victory. Italy also aided Franco, sending 80,000 men, 1,800 cannons, 3400 machine guns and 157 tanks.

The USSR, however, supported the Republicans. Britain and France did not involve themselves as they didn't want the matter to spill beyond Spanish borders. They banned volunteers and war supplies going to Spain. Joseph Stalin wondered whether Britain and France would be trustworthy if war with Germany occurred as they did not provide aid.

The war was advantageous to Hitler as it helped gain resources from Spain for his weapon industries. The Luftwaffe practiced dive-bombing techniques in towns such as Guernica. These © r/IGCSE Resources 2024 techniques built the base for the strategy of Blitzkrieg, which was widely used in the Second World War. The Nationalists victory boosted Hitler's confidence for his rearmament programme. Hitler was able to use the Spanish Civil War as a smokescreen for his action on Austria and Czechoslovakia, without starting a war which was beneficial to Hitler as Germany was not ready for such fights.

#### HOW DID BRITAIN AND FRANCE REACT?

The League's failure to preserve international peace meant other ways had to be found to stop German aggression. The problem with this was public and political opinions in Britain and France that were against a policy that risked war. Both countries were still recovering from the economic effects of the Depression, and wanted to maintain their empires. They feared their colonies in the Far East would be targeted by the Japanese who wanted to expand their influence, which would cause a war on two fronts. With this, the policy of appeasement was developed and mostly driven by British prime minister, Neville Chamberlain, but the French adopted this approach as well.

Britain and France protested to Hitler after Anschluss but realized little could be done after Italy switched sides after the signing of the Rome-Berlin Axis. Appeasing Hitler in the case of Austria maintained European peace but boosted Hitler's confidence. Britain and France both began rearming but knew it would take time to be ready for a major war. The policy seemed the best approach but faced its toughest test in September 1938, when Hitler had his eyes on Czechoslovakia.

#### THE CRISIS OVER CZECHOSLOVAKIA, 1938:

Hitler wanted his demands to seem reasonable, and the 3.5 million Germans living in the Sudetenland were complained about by Hitler. They claimed they suffered discrimination at the hands of the Czech government in the capital Prague. Hitler hated Czechoslovakia for several reasons:

- It was newly created as a part of the Paris Peace Settlement.
- She had an alliance with both France and the USSR to secure its frontiers.
- She was a democracy,

something Hitler hated as much as the Versailles Treaty.

#### UNREST IN THE SUDETENLAND, 1938:

Hitler had no immediate plan to invade Czechoslovakia. However, on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, he told Konrad Henlein (Leader of the Sudeten Germans) to make demands for home rule for the Sudeten Germans. This would obviously be rejected by Czech leader Edvard Benes as it would

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break up his country. Hitler was surprised to see the Czechs had partially mobilized in response to untrue rumors of a German invasion. Instead of denying them, Hitler was now determined to smash Czechoslovakia. He knew he needed to be careful to avoid world opinion turning against him, and so continued to encourage the Sudeten Germans to campaign for home rule. By early September, Hitler had secretly finalized his invasion plans.

Hitler made a speech bitterly attacking the Czech government on the 12<sup>th</sup> of September, stating they had displaced 600,000 Sudeten Germans from their homes. His words caused an uprising in Sudetenland. Neville Chamberlain believed was coming and flew to meet Hitler at Berchtesgaden on 15 September. Hitler emphasized his wish for friendship and cooperation between Germany and Britain, but threatened war if the Sudeten issue was not resolved. Chamberlain said he was ready to hand Sudetenland over if the French and Czech government agreed.

A second meeting on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September gave Hitler the green flag. However, Hitler made additional demands that he wanted the Sudetenland to be occupied by German troops immediately. This horrified Chamberlain as there was no mention of troops or an invasion in their previous meeting. Chamberlain returned to London and announced to the British navy and French army to mobilize, preparing for war.

#### THE MUNICH AGREEMENT, 1938:

Hitler realized he was about to start war when he was not ready. With this, he agreed to Chamberlain's and Mussolini's plan for an international conference in Munich. Chamberlain, the French prime minister Daladier, Mussolini and Hitler met on 29 September and agreed on the following:

- The Sudetenland would be handed to Germany over a ten-day period.
- If any part contained a mixed population, plebiscites would be held.
- The four leaders would guarantee the remaining Czech territory after satisfying Polish and Hungarian claims.

When Benes was presented with the terms, he had no other choice but to agree otherwise he would face a total blow by strong German forces. Chamberlain asked Hitler secretly to sign a separate document to promote peace and resolve any differences in peaceful means. With Hitler's signature and his own piece of paper, Chamberlain returned to London stating he had saved Europe from war.

#### WAS THE MUNICH AGREEMENT JUSTIFIED?

FOR APEASEMENT	AGAINST APEASEMENT
It gave Britain time to rearm as their air force was vulnerable to a total knockout by the Luftwaffe.	If war were to be broken out, The USSR might have supported the Entente Cordiale against Germany.
A war against the Sudetenland would've been against the principle of national self-determination.	If war started, Britain and France would be backed by 36 Czech divisions fighting behind their strong defenses on the frontier.
The British Empire was not in favor of fighting a war. Canada and South Africa were not willing to support a European war.	The USSR no longer trusted Britain or France as Munich became the worst example of the policy of appeasement.
Hitler claimed to be helping Britain and France by standing up to communism and that the USSR was more of a threat than Germany.	Czechoslovakia was abandoned by two great powers which was seen as disrespectful.
European war would have been fought without the strong backing of the USA as they were unlikely to join.	Hitlers previous actions proved his claims were not trustworthy.
-----	Appeasement was not preventing Germany from dominating Europe.

#### THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, MARCH 1939:

On the morning of 15 March 1939, German troops entered Prague and Czech territory, seizing gold reserves and hard currency. They also took over weapon factories and mines, crucial for rearmament plans as they provided raw materials. They picked up a substantial number of weapons, 500 tanks and nearly 1600 aircrafts.

#### THE IMPACT OF GERMAN INVASION:

Beside breaking the Munich Agreement, the invasion of Czechoslovakia stood out from his other acts and was not justified. Hitler conquered seven million Czech people. His territorial ambitions had been exposed. Public opinion in Britain and France changed drastically, and Chamberlain claimed Hitler was attempting to dominate the world by force.

Appeasement ended after the invasion. It proved Hitler was a lying and untrusted individual. Britain and France gave Poland guarantees to protect it from German invasion. For Hitler, the Czech takeover increased his strength in Central Europe and helped his preparations for war. Airfields and Czech weapons that attacked German cities were in his hand.

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#### HOW IMPORTANT WAS THE NAZI-SOVIET PACT?

In February 1939, Chamberlain publicly announced he would defend French security, and they both began a joint military planning. In March, they offered security guarantees to Poland, Romania and Greece. Rearmament was rapidly increasing.

#### RELATIONS WITH THE USSR:

The Munich Agreement came with many consequences, but few were important as they damaged relations between Britain and France with the USSR. Stalin was not invited and was not part of the agreement, concluding he could no longer trust the western powers and needed to make his own deal with Germany.

Hitler planned his next move against Poland, and it was important that Soviet intervention would not occur. Stalin wanted to ensure his frontier was secure. After one day of negotiations, on 23 August 1939, the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed.

Part of the agreement was a ten-year non-aggression pact. It also contained guarantees of economic cooperations and that neither country would make agreements with other countries. Secret protocols were included that would divide German and Soviet sphere of influence between the territories lying between them. The rest of Poland and the Baltic region would fall into Soviet sphere. Stalin regained lost territory from the First World War, and even gained some which was needed for military preparations.

#### THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE PACT:

Some historians believe if the USSR and the Entente Cordiale allied against Hitler, war would be avoided as Hitler did not want to fight a war on two fronts, but this alliance was prevented due to trust issues. Britain and France believed Stalin was supporting communist groups in other countries, while Stalin believed that Britain and France wanted a war that would cause fighting between the Nazis and communists.

For both leaders, the pact was a deal of convenience rather than friendship. Stalin did not trust Hitler much but the fact that he would be given eastern Poland pleased him. British, French and Soviet leaders believed war was certain, but wanted to avoid it to prepare. However, Hitler was quick and invaded Poland on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September.