

CAUSES OF WW2



4 Major Causes

- ④ Treaty of Versailles
- ④ Fascism
- ④ World wide depression
- ④ Policy of Appeasement

1. Treaty of Versailles

- ⦿ Antagonized German population
 - Caused lasting resentment
 - Caused economic hardship
- ⦿ Gave Hitler political ammunition
- ⦿ Added insult to injury
- ⦿ Split up German population
 - Territorial penalties

2. Fascism

- Originated in Italy (Mussolini)
- Typified by the actions of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi party of Germany
- Dependent on militarism
- Unquestioning acceptance of a dictator
- The use of aggression as foreign policy
- Ultra Nationalism
- Appeals to ideas of glory



Adolf Hitler



- After winning a democratic election he established a dictatorship
- Was very popular in Germany:
- Worked to end Humiliation of the Versailles Treaty
 - Rearmament
 - Direct violation of the ToV
 - Reduced unemployment
 - Rearmament helped with this
 - Public works: Autobahn

Adolf Hitler Con't

- ⦿ Worked to Restore German Pride
 - Military parades
 - Blamed WWI failures on Jews (racist scapegoating)
 - Called Germans “Aryan Master Race”
- ⦿ Anschluss
 - 1938 unification with Austria (German speaking)
 - Promised that Germany would become a huge empire: the Third Reich
- ⦿ Lebensraum = “living space”
 - He would take land from “inferior peoples” i.e. Russia to give **lebensraum** to the Aryans

Adolf Hitler Con't

- Hitler had very effective propaganda
 - Minister of propaganda and information: Josef Goebbels
- Hitler was an good speaker
 - Attracted people to his Nazi ideas
 - Cult of Personality
 - Used mass media



- Hitler established a legal dictatorship
 - Outlaws opposition
- personal body guard was the **SS**,
 - responsible for criminal police
 - political police (Gestapo),
- Opposition to government handled with terror/violence



3. World Wide Depression

- ⦿ Allies were busy trying to solve problems within their own borders
 - isolationist economic and foreign policies
 - inability to properly rearm
- ⦿ Economic stress leads people to drastic or extreme solutions

4. Appeasement

- Before WWII, appeasement was routinely used as a foreign policy in order to prevent war
 - involves giving in to the “reasonable demands” of a foreign power in order to prevent the outbreak of war.

Why Appeasement?

- four options available to world leaders to stop Hitler's growing militarism and aggression
 - a preventative war against Germany, strike first! (France and Poland perhaps?) But...
 - Massive rearmament as a deterrent, to prevent Hitler from acting aggressively. But...
Major Disarmament... of everyone, including Germany (attempted by the The World Disarmament Conference) But...
 - Maintain Collective Security through the League of Nations But ...(more on that later)

Why Appeasement?

- fear of repeat of WW I
- Britain:
 - Was recovering from WWI very slowly: rearmament
 - some guilt over harsh treatment of Germany after WWI
 - Unable to defend interests around the world
- Japan launched second invasion of China in 1937
 - Britain could do nothing without the help of the USA
 - USA was isolationist, no help was coming
- France:
 - Couldn't count on allies
 - Was concerned with defense rather than offence
 - Maginot Line

Maginot Line

- Make work project during depression
- Intended to combat trench warfare



Why Appeasement?

- League of Nations was ineffective
 - Collective security fails
 - Sanctions ineffective
 - Do nothing to deter Japanese
 - No troops
 - U.S. not a member

Failure of Appeasement

- Huge backfire
 - No penalties for breaking terms of ToV
 - Other nations afraid of war with modern technology (Spanish Civil War)
 - Appeasement allows for reasonable demands
 - Problem? Hitler was not reasonable – saw policy as a weakness and exploited it.



David Low's accurate depiction of the results of appeasement: Using the "spineless leaders of democracy" as stepping stones, a nose-thumbing Hitler marches towards his ultimate goal. [Source: *Lachen*, p. 280.]