

6.1 Lead Up to War

The start of the Second World War really comes out of the Treaty of Versailles, the agreement that ended the First World War.

- The greater powers of the world (Britain, Germany, Italy, America, France, Japan...) were all still involved in Imperialism/Colonialism, causing the same conflicts that caused the WWI
- There were still systems of alliances between the major countries in the world, creating a separation between two sides – the Axis and the Allies.
- There was a great deal of resentment in Germany after their ‘punishments’ at the end of the First World War. They had been stripped of their power in the world and humiliated by being forced to give up their armed forces. Germany had always been a very proud country and this was very hard for them to live with.
- There were a lot of disowned and angry people in Europe who had been affected by the change in borders after World War I.

Basically, the world’s powers were continuing on with practices that they had done before the war. They were still involved with the things that caused the outbreak of the first war.

- The League of Nations had been created in 1919 at the Versailles talks. The League of Nations was supposed to be an organization that all nations would cooperate in and use for dealing with world problems. It was supposed to promote peace by settling disputes and avoid wars.
- A requirement of the League of Nations was that if a nation broke international law then the members of the League would be required to step in and fight them.
- The League of Nations was the idea of American President Woodrow Wilson. He convinced the world’s nations to create and join this organization and then returned home to find that his own country would not agree to be a member. This weakened the League of Nations a lot because the most powerful nation in the world would not support it.
- The League of Nations had a serious problem: they did not control any troops or forces of their own. This meant that they had to rely on the member powers to volunteer troops to take part in any actions that the League decided were needed. Because of this lack of power, when aggressive countries refused to obey the League there was no way to force them to listen.

By the late 1930's Canada was pushing for **isolationism**; they wanted to focus on home and deal with their own problems. They resented the troubles of the first world war that they many felt were caused by European governments, so didn't want to get involved in the troubles of Europe again.

Canada did become a member of the League of Nations, but only after a provision was put in place that could exempt them from being automatically drawn into a European war.

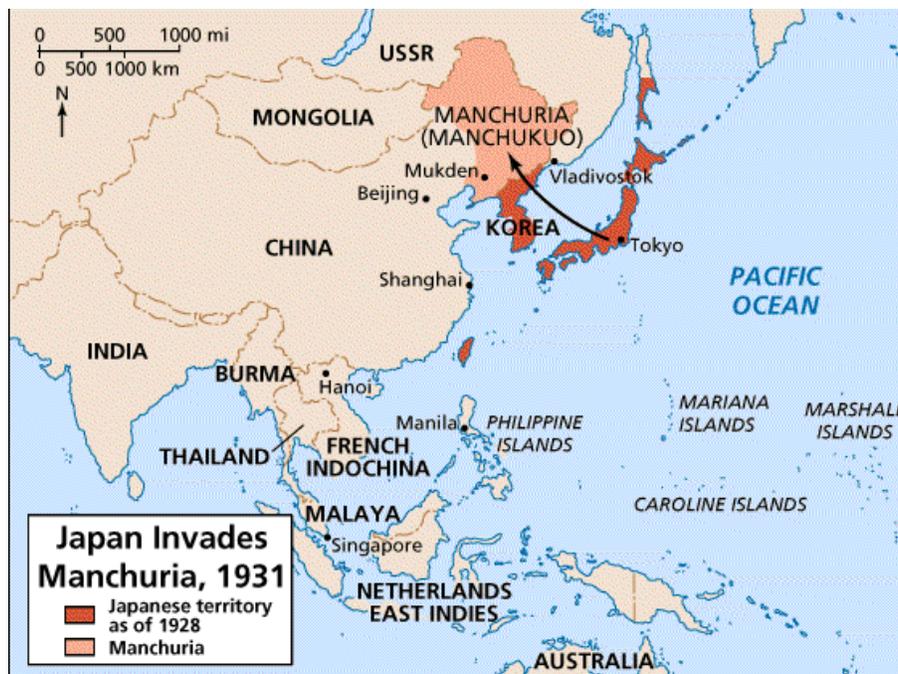
There were a number of incidents that showed the failures of the League of Nations

Manchuria, September 1931

Japan was a small island country, rich in manpower but weak in resources. They wanted the lands in China to provide them resources and invaded the Manchurian province.

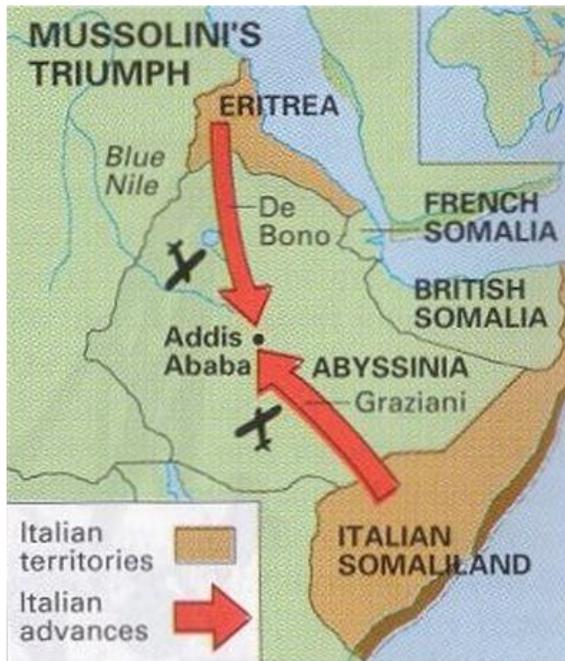
China brought the problem to the League of Nations and the League requested Japan to withdraw, but no countries wanted to go to war with Japan at the time.

Japan's refused to obey the League's request and resigned their membership in the League.



Abyssinia, October 1935

Benito Mussolini, Italy's dictator leader, wanted to take over the lands in Africa between Italy's colonies of Italian Somaliland and Eritrea. Seeing the failure of the League to stop Japan, they attacked Abyssinia.



Abyssinia is on the East Coast of Africa, and is now called Etheopia

The League's members imposed economic sanctions against Italy for the invasion, but didn't include the stopping of trade in oil, which would stop Italy's ability to fight. Italy was able to take over Abyssinia by May of 1936.

** Canada's representative to the League, W.A. Riddell, had argued for stronger sanctions against Italy for their attack, but the members of the League (including the Canadian government) refused to act. Many Canadians sympathized with Italy because they were the home of the Catholic church.

Hitler, who took control of Germany by 1933, recognized Italy's control of Abyssinia. Italy then joined the already formed treaty between Germany and Japan creating a **Rome-Berlin-Tokyo** axis which would be known as the **Axis Powers**

6.2 Causes of the War

The Spanish Civil War 1936-1939

- Spain had been neutral during the First World War
- During the Depression Spain suffered economically and under threat of a Communistic revolt, so the monarchy opened the government to elections. A **left-wing** communist/socialist coalition won the election and created a government, set up as a democratic republic.
- **Right-wing** forces in Spain (the wealthy class, the Catholic Church and fascists) and among the Spanish colonies were very upset about the left-wing government and planned how to overthrow the government.
- With their support, Francisco Franco, the general in charge of the Spanish army in Morocco, led his forces back to Spain and started a **Civil War**.



- The Allied powers, including Canada, Britain and France, all followed the policy of non-interference; not getting involved in problems outside their own countries. Canada even made it illegal for their citizens to go and join a foreign army. Even so, many Canadians snuck out of Canada and made their way to fight in Spain.
- Other communists from around the world went to Spain also, forming battalions to fight Franco. About 1200 Canadians formed the Mackenzie-Papineau Battalion named after William Lion Mackenzie and Louis Papineau, two men who fought for responsible government in Canada.
- The fascist led governments of Germany and Italy had no problems with getting involved. They sent in troops and their air force to help Franco get control of the country.
- With only volunteer support, the Spanish Republic forces could not defend against the regular army forces support from Germany. After 3 years Franco's fascists won control.
- The Spanish Civil War demonstrated to Germany that the Allied forces were not willing to get involved in international affairs. This only made Hitler braver.

A Canadian Hero

- Norman Bethune was a Canadian doctor from Montreal who felt strongly about the fight for democracy in Spain and went to join the volunteers there.
- He saved many wounded by developing the first mobile blood transfusions.
- In 1938, Bethune went to China to help the Chinese as they fought against the Japanese invasion. He became a hero in China for saving so many people and is still respected and remembered there.



Hitler's Third Reich

- In 1932, the Nazi Party won many seats in the election in Germany. The leading party needed the Nazis to work with them to rule and so in 1933 the Prime Minister made Adolf Hitler the chancellor of Germany. When the Prime Minister died in office, Hitler took over full control of the government.
- Hitler pushed to take more and more control and soon created a fascist dictatorship in the country. Fascism is a dictatorship type government where the people have very little say in their government and the government controls most aspects of people's lives and businesses.
- Hitler had gained popularity in Germany by promising to correct the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles.
- This poster shows many of the most important propaganda ideas that the Nazis used to gain support, including the ideal of Lebensraum: the Germans needed 'living space'.
- Hitler promoted the ideas that the Germans were a genetically superior race, and that they deserved to be united as one nation.

Lebensraum
the need for 'living space' for the German nation to expand.

A strong Germany
the Treaty of Versailles should be abolished and all German-speaking people united in one country.

Führer the idea that there should be a single leader with complete power rather than a democracy.

Social Darwinism
the idea that the Aryan race was superior and Jews were 'subhuman'.

Autarky the idea that Germany should be economically self-sufficient.

Germany was in danger from Communists and Jews, who had to be destroyed.

- Hitler disobeyed the Treaty of Versailles and began building up Germany's armed forces. This was also how Hitler dealt with the depression problems of too many young unemployed men – get them in the army.

- Then Hitler starts expanding Germany's borders by taking land
 - 1935 – the Saar Valley votes to rejoin Germany from France (gained after WWI)
 - March 1938 – Germany annexes Austria
 - Sept. 1938 - Major powers meet with Germany and agree to let him take parts of Czechoslovakia that were German speaking as an attempt at appeasement.
 - March 1939 – Germany invades the rest of Czechoslovakia
 - September 1, 1939 – Germany invades Poland in all out **Blitzkrieg attack**

- Most world leaders had been willing to let Hitler take over lands that were populated by mainly German people as a way of appeasing them for the harsh treatment after WWI. They thought that Hitler was reasonable and would be happy with a little expansion. But when Hitler's forces invaded Poland everyone realized they went too far and the policy of appeasement had failed. On September 3, 1939 Britain and France declared war.