

UNIT 8 : THE INTERWAR PERIOD

LESSON PLAN

- 1.- GENERAL OVERVIEW
- 2.-THE INTER-WAR **ECONOMY**
 - 1.1.- The post-war crisis
 - 1.2.- The Roaring s 20s
 - 1.2.- The Great Depression.
- Consequences
- 3.-**POLITICAL OVERVIEW.**
- 4.- **Authoritarianism &totalitarianism**
 - 4.1.- Stalinism
 - 4.2.- Italian fascism
 - 4.3.- German Nazism
- 5.- **SPAIN: (SEE UNIT 9)**
 - 5.1.- Primo de Rivera dictatorship
 - 5.2.- Second Republic
 - 5.3.- Civil War
- CONCLUSION: ORIGINS OF WW2**

1.- GENERAL OVERVIEW: POLITICAL & ECONOMIC SITUATION OF THE INTERWAR PERIOD

The end of WWI led to a deep economic crisis in most of the European countries due to material and demographic losses, debt and war reparations . USA became the main world´s supplier and experienced a great period of prosperity (the Roaring Twenties). But this prosperity came to an end in 1929 after the stock market collapse. The crisis soon spread to the rest of the world, bringing about the rise of dictatorships in many European countries.

In fact, despite the victory of democratic powers in WWI, **democracy experienced a big crisis** due to the challenges it had to face. Among these **challenges**, there were:

- the **fear to the spread of Communism** since USSR had organised the III International;
- the feeling of **humiliation among the Germans** which led to the rise of nationalism and the rejection, in Germany, of the treaty of Versailles (so called “Diktat”); **problems in the borders** of many European countries, as there were important minorities as a result of the territorial changes: Italians in the Adriatic coast, Germans in Tchekoslovakia and Poland... → <http://historiacontemporanea-tomperez.blogspot.com.es/2014/03/el-comentario-de-un-mapa-historico-la.html>
- **USA isolationism**, which limited its involvement in foreign affairs;
- the **weakness of the League of Nations**, as USA´s senate rejected to join it, the defeated countries were not allowed to join it and USSR didn´t join it either.

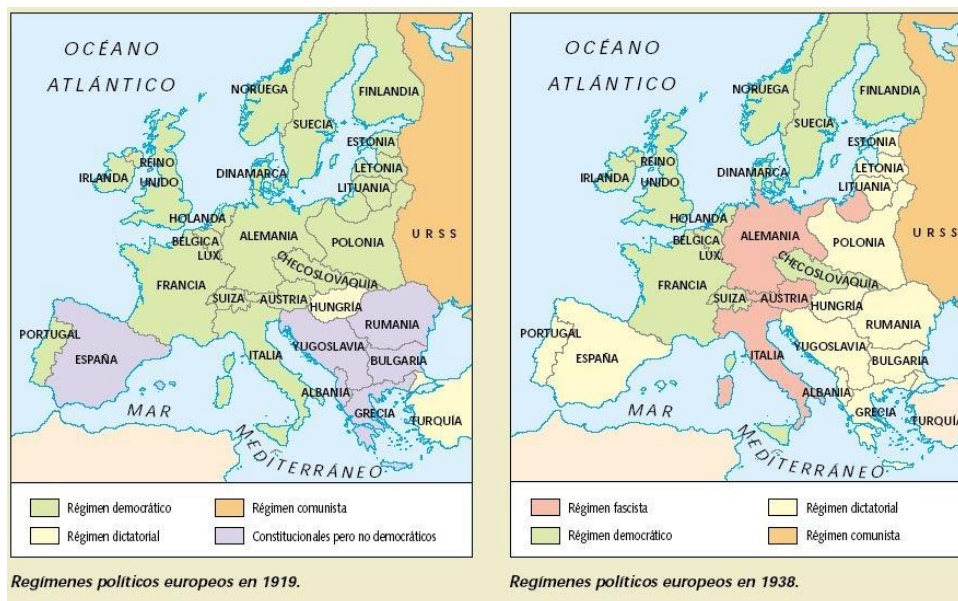
Hence, many authoritarian systems were established in Europe during the 20´s (one example is the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera in Spain in 1923) considering that democracy had failed and was unable to solve the problems.

After 1929, Communism rose among the working class, and new totalitarian ideologies appeared as a solution to the problem, as in Italy or Germany. The desire of expansionism of Nazi Germany, among other reasons, led the world to WW2.

This maps show the political evolution of Europe. Compare both maps and notice the decrease in the number of countries with democratic regimes (coloured in green) in the second map.

During this period the countries that took part in WWI developed in two ways:
a) **Democracies**. France, Great Britain, and the USA continued their democratic political systems.

Germany proclaimed the so-called Weimar Republic which was the first democratic experience in that country until the arrival of Hitler.



b) **Authoritarian regimes**. Many countries established dictatorships where everything was controlled by the State. It happened in the USSR with Stalin, in Italy with Mussolini or in Spain by Miguel Primo de Rivera. Germany also established a totalitarian regime after the victory of the Nazis in the elections of 1932.

2.- THE INTERWAR ECONOMY

2.1.- The post-war crisis

WWI caused **huge negative consequences to world's economy**: material destruction of European productive system (almost 10% ruined), huge demographic losses (both workers and consumers), inflation (rise of prices) due to the lack of goods and the low value of currencies, huge indebtedness by victorious countries with the USA (debts between allies), problem of payment for war reparations by the defeated countries (Germany).

2.2- The Roaring s 20s

By the mid twenties the European economy had recovered and was growing rapidly. The Roaring Twenties is the way this decade is known since many economic and political changes were accomplished. USA experienced a great period of **prosperity**: new forms of entertainment (cinema, cabaret) appeared characterised by extravagant fashion, new forms of music (jazz) and dance (charleston), **consumerism** increased thanks to advertising & credit payment, many people enjoyed a high standard of living with readily available goods and services and investments in stocks and shares (*acciones*) rose leading to **speculation**, as shares prices went up continuously.

32.- The Great Depression. Consequences

This prosperity came to an end in 1929. There are several **causes** that explain the Crash of 1929:

- **OVERPRODUCTION**, as more goods were produced than needed. Europe had imported goods during WWI, but Europe's demand reduced as their economies recovered. Companies couldn't sell their production, creating an accumulation of stock in agricultural products and industrial goods that were not sold. Many companies started to close.
- **FALLING CONSUMPTION Unemployment** led to less demand and consequently, less consumption. Companies went **bankrupt**
- **THE WALL STREET CRASH**. Many people bought shares since it could not be invested in industry anymore. In fact, there was an imbalance between the shares high value and companies income, resulting in a growing distrust. On *Black Thursday* (24 October) shares were massively sold in that marketplace. On *Black Tuesday* (29 October) the sale of shares was complete and economy collapsed.

Economic consequences: in the USA, the stock market crash sparked a widespread depression: banks, factories and farmers were bankrupt, unemployment rose and foreign trade was paralysed due to protective measures (protectionism). The effects of the crash soon reached Europe and other parts of the world as USA asked the other countries to repay their loans, received after WWI. Consumption decreased in Europe as well, wages fell and unemployment increased. In many countries, there were protest against the government and against the capitalist system that had produced the crisis. Some countries will advocate for autarchy or self-sufficient economy, limiting imports as much as possible.

Political consequences: the criticism against the liberal system and free market economy will help new ideologies as answers of the problem, such as communism among the working class or fascism among the middle class. The political effect of the 1929 Depression will be specially significant in Germany.

In USA, the democrats LEAD BY PRESIDENT Franklin D. ROOSEVELT implemented a new economic policy to stimulate economy know as the **NEW DEAL**. It was based the ideas of the British economist J. M. KEYNES, who defended the state intervention in the economy to stimulate consumption, employment and investment. Hence, subsidies were given to farmers, public works were promoted to reduce unemployment, working hours were reduced, a social insurance system was established...leading to an economic recovery.

3.- POLITICAL OVERVIEW (map page 2)

USA : Two-party political system, with the REPUBLICAN PARTY (supported free market, against any government intervention in economy, hostile to trade unions, represented the interests of the wealthiest Americans) and the DEMOCRATIC PARTY,(also liberals, but defended some state intervention in the economy , supported policies aimed at reducing social inequalities, generally represented by middle and working classes).

EUROPE: Countries with democratic systems (France, Britain) and countries which evolved from weak democracies to dictatorships (Italy, Germany).

4.- AUTHORITARIANISM & TOTALITARIANISM

During the 20's and the 30's , authoritarian dictatorships will emerge in Europe, evolving in some cases to totalitarian regimes (USSR in 1917; Italy in 1922, Germany in 1933). Both authoritarian and totalitarian regimes rejected democracy and political pluralism, and developed an economic intervention. Totalitarianism is understood as an extreme form of authoritarianism, as the

State controls everything and there are no economic or social institutions outside the control of the government, as it happens under an authoritarian regime (Primo de Rivera dictatorship in Spain 1923-31).

In a totalitarian regime, the power concentrated in the hands of the leader (*Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler*), there is one ruling political party (*SUCP in USSR, National fascist Party in Italy, NSGWP in Germany*); opposition is eliminated and political parties are prohibited. There are no free elections and the opposition is eliminated through violence and repression by paramilitary forces or political police (*Tcheka in USSR, Gestapo or SS in Germany, OVRA in Italy*); the use of propaganda to glorify the leader is constant.

Other characteristics are planned economy (Five-Year Plans in USSR), fanaticism in the glorification of the leader (“*Duce*”, “*Fuhrer*”), ultra nationalism and militarism, leading to expansionism (*Italian invasion of Abyssinia 1935; Hitler’s foreign policy is central Europe, Stalin invasion of Poland in 1939*); and social inequality, leading in Germany to a strong racism.

4.1.- Stalinism (UNIT 7)

4.2.- Italian Fascism.

ITALIAN FASCISM

Italian Fascism (in Italian, *fascismo*) was the political movement which ruled [Italy](#) from 1922 to 1943 under the leadership of Benito Mussolini **Mussolini** (1870-1945). German Nazism, under Adolf Hitler, was inspired by Italian Fascism but only came to power ten years later in 1933. Similar movements appeared throughout the world including Europe, Japan, and Latin America between World War I and World War II. Although Fascism, strictly speaking, refers only to Italian fascism, the word is often used to describe similar ideologies and movement. The main features of the fascist ideology are an extreme nationalism, militarism, anti-liberalism and [anti-Communism](#). It defended a strong centralized State and the glorification of its leader, Mussolini. This ideology became very popular and gained a huge social support due to the situation of Italy after WW1.

In spite of being among the winners, Italy was unsatisfied with the results of the Conference in Paris, as it didn’t receive what was expected (Corsica, Malta, regions in the Adriatic coast...). There was a general feeling of “mutilated victory”. Besides, as many European countries, Italy was experiencing a huge economic crisis after the war, the situation was chaotic in 1919. There was a **climate of social instability and violence, with workers taking control of the factories**. 1919-21 are known as the Two Red years. The socialist party was the most powerful one and fear to Communism spread among the middle class.

A) ORIGINS :

Mussolini was a former socialist who led its newspaper, *Avanti*. None the less, he was expelled from the Socialist Party in 1914 when he wanted to enter WWI. After the war, he took advantage of the social instability and created in 1919 an extreme right group, the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*. They had a paramilitary group, the *Blackshirts*, supported unofficially by the owners of the companies and the landowners. The *Blackshirts* intimidated workers and peasants using violence, and little by little increased its social support.

In 1921 he founded a new political party the **Fascist National Party** as well as a new newspaper: *Il Popolo di Italia*, where he published his political ideas: anti-communism, anti-liberalism, against democracy, the use of violence and the necessity to have a strong State. His defence of private

property gave him supporters among the bourgeoisie, his strong anti-communism attracted Catholics as well.

B) THE MARCH ON ROME

In 1922 the March on Rome took place, resulting in Mussolini appointed prime minister by the king.

The March on Rome was a mass demonstration the 28th October of 1922 in Rome where 30,000 black shirts showed Fascists strength by marching all together. They were determined to seize the power if the government resisted. (Mussolini did not participate in the march, waiting in Milan to the outcome). Fascists took control of telegraphs, post offices, governmental buildings...all over Italy. Although they were outnumbered by the army, the king Victor Emmanuelle III wanted to conserve his throne and avoid a civil war, so he gave up to fascist intimidation. : Mussolini was named prime minister by the King Victor Emmanuel III 2 days after the March .

C) MUSSOLINI IN POWER: DOMESTIC POLICY, ECONOMIC POLICY, FOREIGN POLICY

Once in power he increased his power through violence until he was free to establish a dictatorship. His first government only included 3 fascist ministers. By April 1924, the fascist Party won the elections using intimidation and violence. The main opponent to the fascist, a socialist deputy called Matteotti, was kidnapped and killed. In response, the opposition left the Parliament, trying to overthrow Mussolini with this attitude. However, they helped him to give his final coup to the remains of Italian democracy: Mussolini didn't fall supported by the king, closed the Parliament and turned Italy into a dictatorship: powers were concentrated, freedoms suppressed, political parties and trade unions prohibited, opposition repressed. A Political police was created to repress opponents (OVRA). Opposition leaders were imprisoned and other had to exile. Italy had become a TOTALITARIAN STATE: "All within the State, none outside the State, none against the State: one-single party system, all the institutions were controlled by the fascist party, repression and censorship, glorification of the leader through propaganda (Mussolini was now called "The Duce")

Regarding **economic policy**, Mussolini wanted to modernize Italy, so he carried out economic plans to improve Italian prosperity and achieve **self-sufficiency (autarky)**. The **intervention in economy** was completed with plans of rearmament or massive public works to reduce unemployment increasing his supporters in the working class. He settled some specific targets: increase the arable land (*"the battle for Land"*); to strengthen the value of the lira (*"the Battle of the Lira"*) or to increase agrarian production (*"Battle of the Grain"*).

Although Italy resisted the Great Depression better than other countries, it remained an agricultural nation and will show its economic weakness during the Second World War.

Mussolini foreign policy was inspired in an extreme nationalism and expansionism. He wanted to restore the glory of the Roman Empire. But before undertaking expansionist adventures he signed with the pope the **Treaty of Lateran (1929)**, solving the conflict between the Vatican and Italy since the Italian unification. The treaty acknowledged the independence of the Vatican and established Christianity as the main religion that could be taught at schools; in exchange the papacy recognized the State of Italy, with Rome as its capital, and Mussolini got Catholics support. There were also economic compensations to the Vatican. It was considered the most important achievement of Mussolini.

His aggressive foreign policy was developed in the 30's:

- He extended his colonial empire **invading Abyssinia (1935)** , Africa last independence nation: reports of brutality and slaughter state that more than 250,000 civilians were killed, Red Cross hospitals were bombed... this event proved the complete failure of the League of Nations. Ironically, Ethiopia will be the first nation liberated from Axis power in World War II.
- Intervention in **Spanish Civil War 1936**, supporting Franco with artillery, troops (70,000 men), The Italian intervention was significant in the fighting around Madrid in 1936 and the campaign in the North in 1937.
- March **1939, Pact of Steel** with Germany, as a defensive and offensive alliance with the strongest nation (Nazi Germany) against Western democracies. It required the 2 countries to come in the rescue of each other in case of war. The collaboration with Germany had started before (Hitler support in the Abyssinia campaign, intervention in Spain...). One month after the Pact of Steel was signed, Mussolini invaded Albania.

D) END OF MUSSOLINI: Italy joined the war as one of the Axis Powers in 1940, as the French Third Republic surrendered. After many military failures, Hitler had to assist Italy .By the end of 1941 Italy was totally dependent on Nazi Germany.

In July 1943, the Allies occupied Sicily , an operation led by the American general Eisenhower.). After the fall of Sicily, Mussolini was removed from office and placed under arrest by Victor Emmanuel III, king of Italy. A new Italian government offered to surrender to the Allied forces. However, Mussolini was liberated by the Germans in a daring raid and then set up as the head of a puppet German state in northern Italy (Republic of Salò), until the republic final collapse in April 1945. When he was trying to flee with his mistress Petacci to Switzerland, Mussolini was captured and executed near Lake Como by communist partisans.

4.3.- NAZISM IN GERMANY.

A) THE PROBLEMS OF THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

In Germany, the **Weimar Republic** established a democratic regime in a humiliated and defeated country affected by post-war situation (economic crisis, unemployment, reparations). The new democratic regime had to restore order and law, but he faced a number of **challenges**:

- **Anger at the Treaty of Versailles**: Most Germans were furious at the Weimar Republic leaders for accepting the harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles, that was seen as a “**Diktat**”, an imposed peace. Since the beginning, many Germans disliked the democratic regime, since the new leaders had signed a treaty that was considered unfair. They felt that the army had been betrayed by politicians (“stab in the back”).

- **Fear to communism** was strong in Germany as revolutionary movements had emerged inspired by 1917 revolution in Russia, such as the spartakist revolution in Berlin 1918, that was repressed and whose leaders were executed (Rose Luxembourg). They were crushed by the Freikorps, ex-soldiers extremely nationalist and anti-communist. This showed the weakness of the new government as it had to rely on military groups outside its control.

- **The Kapp coup**: The Weimar Republic was also challenged by extreme nationalist groups. In March 1920, Wolfgang Kapp, an extreme nationalist, together with some Freikorps units, seized power in Berlin, but failed due to the lack of support among the working class, who went on strike, refusing to cooperate. Kapp and his supporters finally fled Berlin.

- **The occupation of the Rhur and hyperinflation**..Reparations were so huge that Germany asked for more time to pay them, but the French refused. France and Belgium decided then (January 1923) to occupy the Rhur and seize coal and iron as reparations. German workers went on strike, refusing to work in the mines, and the French repressed them harshly. To help the workers the German government promised to pay their wages anyway, so decided to print off paper money and gave it to the strikers. This caused prices to rise out of control and resulted in hyperinflation. Consequently, the German mark was worthless.

French occupation of the Rhur → production stopped → paper money printed → fall German currency value → hyperinflation

The effects were devastating, people could not afford food and heating, pensioners suffered as they were on fixed incomes. The country collapsed into chaos. There were Communist rebellions. In Munich a small right-wing terrorist group called the Nazis mounted an unsuccessful rebellion. It seemed as though Germany was falling apart.

B) THE RECOVERY UNDER STRESSESMANN

But Germany did not disintegrate. In August 1923 Stressemann became chancellor, and in the next six years he introduced some reforms that led to an economic recovery. Stressemann started paying reparations again, persuaded the French to leave the Ruhr. Germany was allowed to join the League of Nations in 1926.

Some of Stressemann achievements were:

- He called off the strike and started paying reparations, stopped the printing of money and created a new temporary currency (the ‘**rentenmark**’). When the economy started to recover this temporary currency was replaced by the permanent Reichmark.

-In 1924 he arranged the **Dawes Plan** with USA (Dawes was the American vice-president), this linked reparations with economic performance and additionally, USA provided a \$200 million loan that got German industry going

- Locarno treaty signed with France in 1925 leading to a reconciliation between France and Germany. Reparations were reduced, French troops left the Saar (an industrial German region occupied since 1923); Germany was allowed **to join the League of Nations** (what happened in 1926). This treaty started a hopeful period, it seemed that the Treaty of Versailles had been forgotten.

Stresemann became hugely popular, and the 'roaring twenties' came to Germany. There was a cultural revival, specially in Berlin. Censorship was lifted, encouraging artists, writers, film and theatre directors. These were the days of great creativity in Architecture (Walter Gropius and the Bauhaus school of architecture), art (Paul Klee and Otto Dix), literature (Erich Maria Remarque, Hermann Hesse, Thomas Mann, Bertold Brecht) and Films and Cabaret (Marlene Dietrich).But although it LOOKED as though Germany had become strong, that strength rested on shaky foundations. Germany's economy depended on American loans. And many right-wing extremists hated Stresemann for paying reparations, waiting their chance to get revenge for the Treaty of Versailles. One of these parties was the Nazi Party, led by Adolf Hitler. The effects of 1929 crisis will bring Germany to a new economic collapse. The middle class, devastated by 1929 crisis will soon support Hitler, seen as an alternative to both communism and capitalism.

c) ORIGIN OF NAZISM.

Adolf Hitler was born in Austria, he founded the Nazi Party (National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) in 1921. . The Nazis had typical right-wing beliefs – they wanted to set up a dictatorship with tough laws, overturn the Treaty of Versailles and unite all the German-speaking peoples. They also believed in the superiority of the 'Aryan master race' (racism), and said they had the right to persecute the Jews and conquer *lebensraum* ('living space') in eastern Europe. They hated the Communists. Like many extremist political parties of these times, they had a paramilitary wing (called the SA) who attacked other parties and assassinated rival politicians. The SA (Sturmabteilung; German: "Assault Division" or Nazi Storm Troopers). The SA or Brownshirts leader was Ernst Röhm, and were strongly an ultranationalist and anti-communist. There were also the SS (Schutzstaffel), which were the Protection Corps or personal guard.

In 1923 he tried to seize power in a failed coup d'état (**Munich putsch**) after which he is arrested. Also known as The **Beer Hall Putsch**, it was an attempt to seize power by Hitler and other members of the Nazi Party in 8-9-November 1923. About two thousand Nazis marched to the centre of Munich, where they confronted the police, which resulted in the death of 16 Nazis and four police officers. Hitler escaped but was arrested two days later, and accused of treason. He was sent to jail, after a trial which gave him a big popularity. He was sentenced to 8 years, although he was released 9 months later. During his imprisonment, he wrote the *Mein Kampf*, which presented his nationalist and anti semitic ideology.

Unlike the March on Rome with Mussolini, the Munich putsch didn't succeed because people were happy with the economic, political and international improvement of the Weimar Republic. Additionally, the working class was supporting Social Democrats (SPD) or communists. Hitler realised that power could not be achieved by the use of violence.

After 1923, the Nazi party did not win many Reichstag seats, but during this time they managed to get huge funding from rich businessmen (German steel bosses Krupp and Thyssen, the German car firms Opel and Skoda, and the American businessmen Henry Ford) who thought the Nazis would stop Communism. They were brilliant at propaganda (organised by Josef Goebbels) and used the most modern technology (radio, newspapers and airplanes) to get their ideas across. They used some communist ideas (state intervention in economy, better pensions...) to gain the support of the working classes. They set up a fun youth club which began

indoctrinating young people to believe the Nazi message. Adolf Hitler was a brilliant speaker, and his book – *Mein Kampf* – became a best seller. One-by-one, the Nazis began to take over other right-wing parties.

D) THE EFFECTS OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION

In October 1929 Stressmann died. The same month the New York Crash started the Great Depression. The 1929 crisis had a huge effect in Germany. Germany economy depended on American loans, and soon after the Crash US banks started to recall their loans back. German companies started to close. By 1930, unemployment had reached 1 million.



In 1932, unemployed were 6 million. The middle class was devastated by unemployment and economic collapse. Hitler promised work and food and the support to the Nazi increased among the working class. Fear of a Communist revolution helped Hitler to gain the support of farmers and industrialist

The extreme parties gained supporters: both Communists and Nazis rose from 13% in 1928, to 52% in 1932, being the the most voted party with 230 seats. It did not, however, have an overall majority .However, president Hindenburg refused to name Hitler chancellor and named Von Papen instead. In **January 1933** Hitler was finally appointed **Chancellor** by the President **Hindenburg**. Within 18 months, Hitler had made himself the dictator of Germany.

E) THE III REICH is the name given to Nazi Germany, from January 1933 to May 1945,

Once Hitler got the government in January 1933 he eliminated the rest of the political parties, suppressed individual freedoms and rights and established a totalitarian state.

- February 1933: Hitler eliminated the Communist, in The *Reichstag Fire* . The Reichstag (German Parliament) was burnt and Hitler blamed Anarchists and Socialists for that fire in order to persecute them. The communist were then expelled from the parliament , and SA continued their intimidations of the opposition. New elections were held, this time without communist opponents. Nazis won 288 seats. . This still didn't give the Nazis a majority, but Hitler was able to arrest the Communists and intimidate the other deputies.
- March 1933: *The Enabling Act* was passed, that gave him power to pass laws without consulting the Reichstag. He was able to ban all political parties (which he did in July 1933). **Germany was now a one-party state.** The Nazis took over local government and the police, sacked anti-Nazi teachers and professors, and set up the Gestapo, who sent to concentration camps opponents, Jews, Communists, gypsies, homosexuals, alcoholics and prostitutes. Trade unions were abolished, strike action was made illegal. The civil service excluded all Jews. The democratic republic of Weimar had been destroyed. Hitler was now a legal dictator.
- June 1934: *The Night of the Long Knives* against the S.A : Conservative members of the army were against the idea of including the S.A in the army. Hitler himself was threaten by the strength of Rhöm, who was seen as a real rival within the Nazi party. Fearing that the

paramilitary SA had become too powerful, Hitler ordered his elite SS guards to murder the organization's leaders, including Ernst Röhm, accused of a plot against Hitler.

Hitler took the opportunity to purge anyone whom he disliked or had crossed him in the past, including the last Chancellor of the Weimar Republic, Kurt von Schleicher. The Night of the Long Knives claimed over 200 lives. The SA were not eliminated, but brought under Hitler's control. The army believed now that Hitler favoured them in preference to the SA.

- **August 1934:** When President Hindenburg died in August 1934, **Hitler proclaimed himself president**, he held then two positions: chancellor and President, head of the State and Commander of the Army. Hitler had achieved total power.

The main features of totalitarian dictatorship in Nazi Germany were:

-Total control of the society: The whole **society and economy** was controlled by the Nazi Party, Hitler was praised through propaganda and censorship, educational system and art. Goebbels, the minister of Propaganda and Enlightenment, arranged mass rallies, the most spectacular was the annual rally at Nuremberg. All areas of culture were nazified, public books burnings occurred to destroy unacceptable views and the work of Jews. Courts and judges had to swear an oath of loyalty to Hitler. All newspapers and radio stations were put under Nazi control, as well as schools. Jewish teachers were sacked and the curriculum was changed to ensure the Nazi ideas, and racial beliefs reflected in the teaching of biology, history or mathematics.

-Antisemitism: Jews were blamed for everything: losing WW1, the signing of the treaty of Versailles... From 1933 Jews were banned from the professions and government employment. Persecution of the Jews became legal after the **Nuremberg Acts 1935** (Jews not considered citizens; marriage and sexual relations between Jewish and Germans were banned; political and civil rights of Jews were removed...) During the *kristalnacht* July 1938 or *Night of Broken Glass*, 8,000 Jewish homes, businesses, synagogues were attacked, more than 90 Jews were killed, 20,000 were sent to prison camps. Violence against Jews will be followed by the **Final Solution** during WW2: the systematic extermination of 6 million European Jewish in concentration camps through gassing, shooting, working to death and starvation. The death camps were equipped with gas chambers and crematoria.

-Meanwhile black people, the mentally ill, the disabled and the deaf were sterilized or killed; beggars, homosexuals, prostitutes, alcoholics, pacifists and hooligans were put in concentration camps.

-Planned economy and rearmament: Hitler developed the **Four-Year Plans** in order to fight crisis and unemployment (salaries were regulated, weapon industry was promoted, prices were controlled by the government, imports were reduced) By 1938 there was almost no unemployment, it was reduced thanks to rearmament and the introduction of conscription to the armed forces since 1935.

-Aggressive foreign policy & expansionism: Nazi foreign policy was based on the rejection to the treaty of Versailles, rearmament and expansionism. Some important German actions during this period are:

- 1935. Germany regained the **Saar** by peaceful means, as a plebiscite was held: 90% were in favour of a return to Germany. It was a tremendous propaganda success for Hitler.

- 1936: **intervention in the Spanish Civil War** supporting Franco (*bombing of Guernica in 1937 by the Condor Legion*). UK and France decided not to support the republic government against Franco. Germany succeeded as well establishing Fascist Italy as an ally., forming the Rome-Berlin Axis.
- Additionally and as a rejection of the terms of the treaty of Versailles, in 1936 Germany started the **remilitarisation of the Rhineland**. UK and France did nothing to stop them.
- March 1938: Germany occupied first and annexed then Austria, creating the **Anchluss** (which had been forbidden in the Treaty of Versailles), now a province of Germany. After the occupation a plebiscite was held, under the watchful eye of the Nazis: 99% of Austrians voted for Anschluss. Britain and France took no action. Chamberlain, UK's prime minister, thought that Austrians and Germans had a right to be united.
- September 1938: Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia populated with 3,5 million German people, is given to Germany after the **Munich Conference**. This meeting was attended by Chamberlain (UK), Hitler, Mussolini and Daladier (France), Czechoslovakia and USSR were not invited. The Czech were forced to accept the agreement or face the consequences. Chamberlain also signed a declaration promising that their countries would never go to war. He was received as a hero in Britain. This conference is the expression of the **appeasement policy** led by Neville Chamberlain, UK Prime Minister), who wanted to avoid war and was more concerned about the spread of Communism than about Hitler's expansionism.
- March 1939: Soon after the Munich conference, Germany will control the whole Czech territory (not populated by Germans), creating a protectorat. There was no resistance from the Czechs. France and UK did not help. Appeasement policy was a failure. Poland would be Hitler next target.

Stalin concerns increased after the Munich conference, concluding that France and UK were happy to allow Hitler to take land in the east.

- 1939: Hitler reinforced his alliance with Mussolini (Pact of Steel, May 1939) and signed a secret pact with Stalin (August) to invade Poland (The **Nazi-soviet Pact**). It was a 10-year non-aggression pact: Hitler wanted to avoid a war on two fronts and was confident that France and UK would not go to war over Poland. Stalin was interested in gaining territories from Poland and the Baltic States, that had once been part of Russia. The pact also gave Stalin time to rebuild his armed forces, as he realised Hitler would break the pact and attack the Soviet Union.

REARMEMENT → APPEASEMENT POLICY → WW2

On 1 September, ignoring Britain's warnings, Hitler invaded Poland. On 3 September Britain declared war on Germany. On 17 September, Soviet forces invaded from the east, occupying the Baltic states. Within 3 weeks Poland had been defeated. The Second World War had started.