

Why did war break out in 1939?

KS3 History- Lesson 4 of 4

Enquiry: Why did the League of Nations fail?

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What was the situation in 1939?

By the summer of 1939, Germany had taken over Austria and Czechoslovakia. Hitler wanted to keep **expanding** Germany to get more living space for the German people. Poland was the next country on his list. This was because Hitler felt that land had been taken from Germany unfairly at the end of the **First World War**. He wanted to get it back and he also wanted land to protect Germany from their enemy on the other side of Poland; the USSR.



What was the situation in 1939?

Stalin was the leader of the USSR. Germany and the USSR were enemies. They both wanted to expand their countries by taking over smaller, weaker countries and they absolutely disagreed on how to rule their nations. Hitler and Stalin both saw each other as a threat.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact.

Both Germany and the USSR wanted to take over Poland, so to try and protect themselves from each-other, and also to get the land that they wanted, they signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact. This was a **non-aggression pact**; it meant that Germany and the USSR were agreeing not to go to war with each other. Secretly they agreed to split Poland between them.



How did the Second World War break out?

Britain tried to persuade Poland to **negotiate** with Germany, but Poland did not want to. This is because Poland had seen what had happened to Czechoslovakia in 1938; To try and stop Hitler from taking over the whole country, it had been agreed that he could have a small part of it. This had not worked and he went on to take over the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Britain and France realised that they needed to act to stop Hitler from taking over the whole of Europe. Both countries agreed to an **alliance** with Poland, saying that, if Poland was invaded, Britain would act to protect her.

On 1st September 1939, Germany **invaded** Poland. Britain issued an **ultimatum**: Germany had to leave Poland or Britain would **declare war**. Hitler did not take German troops out of Poland, so war was declared on 3rd September 1939.



Glossary

Alliance: A friendship between countries.

Declare war: One country going to war with another.

Expanding: Getting bigger.

First World War: 1914-1918, known as 'the Great War'.

Invaded: An army going into another country with the aim of taking over.

Non-aggression pact: Agreement not to fight each other.



Comprehension Questions

1. Why did Hitler want to take over Poland?
2. What was the Nazi-Soviet pact?
3. Why was Poland unwilling to negotiate with Germany?
4. What was Britain's reaction to the Nazi Soviet pact?
5. Explain why the Nazi Soviet pact caused the outbreak of war in 1939.

