2.4: German Expansion, 1933-1938

I. Changing diplomatic alignments after 1933
   a. Britain
      i. Preoccupied with their own economic crisis
      ii. Far East concerns with Japan
      iii. Many in Britain considered the Treaty of Versailles to be unfair and supported a German redress of grievances
      iv. Right-wing politicians in Britain were afraid of Stalinist USSR and saw anti-communist Germany as a buffer to Soviet expansion
   b. France
      i. Concerned about a German threat but unable to act on its own (see Ruhr Crisis)
      ii. Also dealing with depression-related Economic problems
      iii. Fostered an alliance with "Little Entente"-Czechoslovakia, Romania and Yugoslavia to Germany's Eastern
   c. US
      i. In the midst of the Depression, the US focused on internal issues remaining isolationist with regard to foreign policy
   d. Other factors leading to German aggression
      i. Economic problems encouraged nations to look inward rather than focus energy and expense on collective security
      ii. WWI still fresh in peoples' minds
      iii. Britain and France were demilitarizing in the face of expenses and the promise of collective security/Kellogg-Briand
      iv. League of Nations appearing weak following Japanese actions in Manchuria
      v. Treaty of Versailles was already being challenged
         1. Occupation of the Rhineland ended in 1929
         2. Reparation payments largely canceled after 1932

II. Hitler's Actions 1933-38
   a. Withdrawal from the Geneva Disarmament Conference in 1933
      i. The League of Nations called for national armaments to be reduced to only defensive levels.
      ii. An international conference was organized in 1932 to implement this policy
         1. Held in Geneva to begin in 1933
      iii. France was unwilling to disarm with a growing Nazi threat on its border
      iv. Britain was ready to make concessions to Germany
      v. Germany requested that other nations reduce to Germany's levels
         1. When France refused, Hitler pulled out of the Conference and the League of Nations
            a. Accused both of being French ploys to keep Germany weak
   b. Non-Aggression Pact with Poland
i. Poland, concerned with the apparent weakness of the LoN and Germany's rearmament entered a 10 year non-aggression pact with Germany in January 1934.
   1. This temporarily secured Hitler's Eastern border
   2. Weakened France's Eastern European security
   3. Appeared to others that this was a bold act of statesmanship by Hitler, thus encouraging other nations that Hitler could be worked with.
      a. Hitler approved bilateral agreements such as this as they could be more easily broken
         i. "All our agreements with Poland have a temporary significance"

   c. Mussolini and Austria
      i. Mussolini opposed Hitler's hopes of Anschluß with Austria
      ii. Hitler offered support to the Austrian Nazi Party
         1. Intimidation and terrorism in Austria led to the assassination of Engelbert Dollfuss
         2. Austrian Nazis hoped to topple the government and unite with Germany
      iii. Mussolini mobilized 100,000 troops to its northern border forcing Hitler to back down and disavow support for the Austrian nazis offering assurances to Mussolini that Austria would not be annexed.

   d. The Saar Plebiscite-January 1935
      i. Under French control since 1919, the people could vote as to which nation to ultimately be a part of.
         1. Over 90% chose Germany.
         2. A boon to Hitler and German propaganda

   e. Rearmament
      i. Germany had long violated the Treaty of Versailles with regards to its military; though hitler would greatly increase the pace of rearmament
         1. Justified after Britain and France refused to disarm AND to stop the threat of the USSR in the East
      ii. By 1935, the Army would increase from 7 to 21 divisions.
      iii. Conscription was introduced growing the army to 36 divisions
      iv. Hermann Göring revealed the existence and extent of the German Luftwaffe at 2,500 planes.

   f. Remilitarization of the Rhineland-7 March 1936
      i. With the world distracted by economic woes and the Abyssinian crisis, Hitler felt he could remilitarize the Rhineland region of Germany
      ii. Justified his actions following the Franco-Soviet Mutual Assistance Treaty of 1936 that threatened encirclement of Germany
      iii. Opposed by many of his General Staff as they felt a military response from France and/or Britain would be devastating, Hitler proceeded
         1. No opposition occurred

   g. The Spanish Civil War
i. Hitler and Mussolini grew closer in their mutual support of Spanish fascists in the Spanish Civil War
   1. Germany did not send ground troops, but the Luftwaffe and Germany Navy (Kriegsmarine) were important aspects to the Nationalist victory
      a. The Condor Legion of German Bombers targeted civilian centers including Guernica

ii. Rationale for Germany
   1. Friendly government in Spain to trade with and offer bases for German Submarines
   2. Test his new air force
   3. Suppress communist expansion in Europe

h. New diplomatic alignments
   i. The Rome-Berlin Axis-October 1936
      1. Established areas of mutual interest between the two nations
   ii. Anti-Comintern Pact 1936
      1. Oppose international communism
      2. Mutual defense should the USSR attack

i. The Hossbach Memorandum
   i. Notes from a meeting on 5 November 1937 between Hitler his top Generals and war ministers.
      1. Acquisition of lebensraum and preservation of the German racial community to be acquired through force
   ii. Some Generals felt this was too aggressive a plan and Germany was not prepared for such actions
      1. February 1938, hitler made himself Supreme Commander of the German Army and sacked those generals that opposed him