**Invasion of Albania, 1939**

Balkan nation that was invaded and conquered by fascist Italy in 1939. In 1926, the Italian government, in agreement with Albanian authorities, sent 300 Italian colonists to Kamez, near Tirana, to promote agricultural development.

**Germany’s *Anschluss* with Austria, March 1938**

By 1938, Hitler felt strong enough to plan a union or Anschluss with Austria. This was part of his aim to unite all German-speaking people in one country. It was forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles so Hitler had to plan very carefully.

Hitler began by ordering the Austrian Nazi Party to make as much trouble as it could. The Austrian Nazis held parades and marches, set buildings on fire, let off bombs and organised fights. When the Austrian government banned them, Hitler held a meeting with the Austrian leader Kurt Schuschnigg. Hitler threatened to invade Austria unless Schuschnigg gave all important jobs in his government to Nazis. Schuschnigg compromised by appointing the Nazi Seyss-Inquart as Minister of the Interior.

France, and Britain both refused to help Austria so on March 9th 1938 Schuschnigg announced his intention to hold a plebiscite to allow the Austrian people to decide for themselves whether to join with Germany or not. Hitler moved troops to the Austrian border and demanded that Schuschnigg call off the plebiscite. Schuschnigg had no choice but to comply and resign.

Seyss-Inquart, Nazi Minister of the Interior took his place and immediately asked Hitler to send the German army into Austria to help restore order. Hitler was now able to enter Austria on 13th March by ‘invitation’. Along with the army came the Gestapo and the SS to deal with opponents of the Nazis. Schuschnigg found himself cleaning public toilets while Austria’s Jews were made to get down and scrub streets on their hands and knees. Before long they would find themselves in concentration camps while the Austrian people lived under a Nazi regime of terror.

Having succeeded in gaining Austria, Hitler then used similar tactics to gain the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia that contained over three million Germans.

**Corfu Incident, 1923**

The Dispute:

An Italian general was killed while he was doing some work for the League in Greece. The Italian leader Mussolini was angry with the Greeks. He invaded the Greek island of Corfu.

The Greeks asked the League to help.

What the League did:

The Council of the League met. It condemned Mussolini, and told him to leave Corfu.

It told the Greeks to give some money to the League.

What happened:

Mussolini refused to accept its decision. He refused to leave Corfu.

The League changed its decision. It told Greece to apologise to Mussolini, and to pay the money to Italy.

The Greeks did as the League said. Then Mussolini gave Corfu back to Greece.

**Fiume, 1919**

A port on Adriatic sea. The first crisis the League had to face was in north Italy In 1919, Italian nationalists, angered that the "Big Three" had, in their opinion, broken promises to Italy at the Treaty of Versailles, captured the small port of Fiume. The Treaty of Versailles had given this port to Yugoslavia. For 15 months, an Italian nationalist called d'Annunzio governed Fiume. The newly created League did nothing. The situation was solved by the Italian government who could not accept that d'Annunzio was seemingly more popular than they were - so they bombarded the port of Fiume and enforced a surrender. In all this the League played no part despite the fact that it had just been set up with the specific task of maintaining peace.

**Four Power Pact 1933**

1933 Benito Mussolini called for the creation of the Four-Power Pact as a better means of insuring international security. Under this plan, smaller nations would have less of a voice in Great Power politics. Representatives of Britain, France, Germany, and Italy signed a diluted version of Premier Benito Mussolini's Four-Power Pact proposal. Mussolini's chief motive in suggesting the pact was the wish for closer Franco-Italian relations. If Mussolini's purpose of the pact was to calm Europe's nerves, he achieved the opposite result. The treaty reaffirmed each country's adherence to the Covenant of the League of Nations, the Locarno Treaties, and the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The Pact was intended to be the solution to the issue of how sovereign powers could come together and operate in an orderly way. Premier Mussolini's goal was to reduce the power of the small states in the League of Nations with a block of major powers. The Four-Power Pact had little significance but is not completely devoid of merit. Mussolini's Four-Power Pact was supposed to be a solution. The pact soon failed.

**Invasion of Abyssinia, 1935**

The crisis in Abyssinia from 1935 to 1936 brought international tension nearer to Europe - it also drove Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy together for the first time. The affair once again highlighted the weakness of the League of Nations.

Like Britain and France, Italy had joined in the so-called "Scramble for Africa" in the C19. However, the prize territories had been conquered by others and Italy was left with unimportant areas such as Eritrea and Somaliland. The Italians had attempted to expand in eastern Africa by joining Abyssinia to her conquests, but in 1896, the Italians were heavily defeated by the Abyssinians at the Battle of Adowa.

This defeat had an enormous impact on Italian pride. The loss of 6000 men against a backward army from Abyssinia was difficult for the Italian people to comprehend. However, this defeat did not stop politicians in Italy planning for a new attempt to take over Abyssinia.

The desire to show the world how powerful Italy was became the prime motivation of Mussolini. He saw himself as a modern day Julius Caesar who would one day be in charge of a vast Italian empire as had existed in the days of Caesar. In 1928, Italy signed a treaty of friendship with Haile Selassie, the leader of Abyssinia but an invasion of the country was already being planned.

**Locarno Pact, 1925**

In 1925 the leaders of Europe signed a number of agreements at Locarno, Switzerland. Germany and France pledged to accept their common border, and Britain and Italy agreed to fight either France or Germany if either one invaded the other. Other boundary disputes were also settled. Success for LoN, started an era of the 'Locarno Spring', but this optimism was dashed by the Great Depression in 1929.

**Italy Enters WWII, June 1940**

Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, marked the beginning of World War II. Despite being an Axis power, Italy remained a non-belligerent until June 1940. The participation of Italy in the Second World War was characterized by a complex framework of ideology, politics, and diplomacy, in which its military history took place often heavily influenced by external factors. The imperial ambitions of the Fascist regime, which aspired to restore a "Roman Empire" in the Mediterranean (their Mare Nostrum), collapsed due to defeats in Greece and East and North Africa. In 1943 Benito Mussolini was ousted and arrested by order of King Victor Emmanuel III, provoking a civil war. The northern half of the country was occupied by Germans and made a collaborationist puppet state (with more than 600,000 soldiers), while the south was governed by monarchist and liberal forces, which fought for the Allied cause in the Italian Co-Belligerent Army (at its height numbering more than 50,000 men), helped by circa 350,000 partisans of disparate political ideologies that operated all over occupied Italy.

**Munich Conference, September 1938**

The Munich Agreement was a settlement permitting Nazi Germany's annexation of portions of Czechoslovakia along the country's borders mainly inhabited by German speakers, for which a new territorial designation "Sudetenland" was coined. The agreement was negotiated at a conference held in Munich, Germany, among the major powers of Europe, without the presence of Czechoslovakia. Today, it is widely regarded as a failed act of appeasement toward Germany. The agreement was signed in the early hours of 30 September 1938 (but dated 29 September). The purpose of the conference was to discuss the future of the Sudetenland in the face of ethnic demands made by Adolf Hitler. The agreement was signed by Germany, France, the United Kingdom, and Italy. Sudetenland was of immense strategic importance to Czechoslovakia, as most of its border defenses were situated there, and many of its banks[citation needed] and heavy industries were located there as well.

**Mussolini stops *Anschluss,* 1934**

In 1934, Italy had an agreement with Austria that it would protect Austria from outside aggression. The Italian dictator, Mussolini, honoured the agreement and moved Italian troops to the Austrian border to deter Hitler from invading.

**Pact of Steel, May 1939**

In May 1939, the Germans and Italians cemented their friendship with the Pact of Steel. This pact committed both countries to support the other if one of them became involved in a war. The Italian Foreign Minister, Galleazo Ciano, Mussolini’s son-in-law, realised that this pact was potentially very damaging for Italy but Mussolini was more concerned with the prestige of allying with Europe’s most potent power rather than the politics of it.

**Rome-Berlin Axis, 1936**

Rome-Berlin Axis, Coalition formed in 1936 between Italy and Germany. An agreement formulated by Italy’s foreign minister Galeazzo Ciano informally linking the two fascist countries was reached on October 25, 1936. It was formalized by the Pact of Steel in 1939. The term Axis Powers came to include Japan as well.

**Spanish Civil War 1936-39**

The Spanish Civil War (1936-9) was a very important event during the tense1930s in Europe. Although it did not make World War II inevitable, it increased the likelihood of a general war a great deal. The war had a tremendous impact on Spain itself, leaving much of the state's economic and social infrastructure in ruins and leaving thousands dead. But the war also saw involvement from other European states as both sides of the conflict - the Right-wing Nationalists and the Left-wing Republicans (a.k.a. Loyalists) - requested and received foreign aid not only in terms of financial assets, but also in terms of war material and troops. Adolf Hitler's Germany was one of the foreign countries most involved in the conflict, contributing economic loans as well as several thousand troops to the Nationalist cause. Mussolini joined him in sending troops, weapons, and economic aid to Franco’s fascist forces (Nationalists). Hitler's involvement in the Spanish war was consistent with a larger Nazi foreign policy aimed at diverting British and French attention from Central and Eastern Europe so that he would be unhindered in his plans for eastern expansion.

However, the ramifications of the Spanish war for the rest of Europe were great in other ways. The Spanish Civil War was a major contributor to the hardening of the division between the democracies (Britain and France) and the dictatorships (Italy and Germany). Germany also gained the valuable raw materials from Spain that it needed for eastern expansion and the accompanying possibility of war. The Spanish Civil War also undermined British and French credibility to Hitler, emboldening him to make more dramatic eastern expansion moves. Furthermore, the war helped drive the USSR away from Britain and France and was one of the reasons why Stalin reluctantly concluded that an accommodation with Hitler was necessary. In all these ways then, the Spanish Civil War was a major step toward World War II.

**Stresa Front, April 1935**

Stresa Front, coalition of France, Britain, and Italy formed in April 1935 at Stresa, Italy, to oppose Adolf Hitler’s announced intention to rearm Germany, which violated terms of the Treaty of Versailles. When Italy invaded Ethiopia later that year, France and Britain tried to reconcile the action with the need to remain united against Germany, but the coalition soon dissolved.