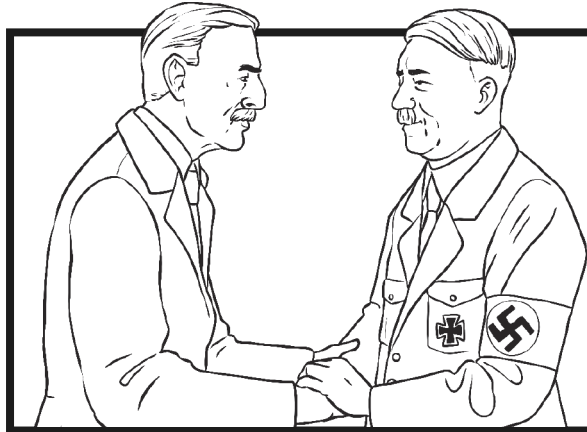




The Führer of Germany, Adolf Hitler, had plans to take over as many countries as he could in order to gain Lebensraum (living space) for the German people. In March 1938, Austria was invaded and annexed, which meant it officially became part of Germany. This was called the Anschluss.



Other countries, like Britain, were wary of what Hitler might do next. On 29th September 1938, the British, French, German and Italian leaders signed a treaty called the Munich Agreement. This allowed Hitler to annex the Sudetenland (an area of Czechoslovakia) if he promised not to invade anywhere else. The Sudetenland was annexed the next day.

However, Hitler was not to be trusted and in August 1939 he broke the terms of the Munich Agreement and invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. Then, on 1st September 1939, he sent his troops into Poland. Britain, France and Poland had made a pact to support each other and so on 3rd September 1939, Britain and France declared war on Germany.

For several months, not much seemed to happen on the western front and this part of the war was referred to as the 'Phoney War'. Then on 10th May 1940, the same day that Winston Churchill became the new Prime minister of Great Britain, Hitler launched a major attack into Western Europe and there was an explosion of fighting action. France was invaded on 12th May 1940, followed by Holland's surrender two days later. On 27th May, British and French soldiers were evacuated from the beach at Dunkirk when they were overpowered and trapped by Nazi troops. Belgium surrendered on the 28th May, followed by Norway on the 9th June and France on the 22nd June. In just a few short weeks, Hitler's Nazi troops had gained control over much of Western Europe.

