**Spanish Civil War**

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. 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.