

## The Re-militarisation of the Rhineland - 1936

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On March 7th 1936 a small force of German troops marched across the Rhine bridges into the demilitarised areas of Germany towards Aachen, Trier and Saarbruecken. Once again neither the French nor British made any move to counter the flagrant breach of the Locarno Pact of 1925, which had been signed willingly by Germany and was supposed to keep these areas west of the Rhine free from German military units. The lack of French reaction was in spite of the fact that the small German force was vastly outnumbered by the French army near the border.

Immediately following the re-militarisation of the Rhineland areas, Hitler once again preached in public his desire for peace throughout Europe and offered to negotiate new non-aggression pacts with several countries including France and Belgium. At the same time rapid construction of German defensive fortifications began along the French and Belgian frontiers. Meanwhile Hitler's popularity within Germany was boosted, his position as leader was strengthened and his control over the army generals was secured.