

Appeasement

World War I caused the deaths of nearly nine million people and cost huge sums of money. Most countries in Europe were anxious to avoid another costly war - both in terms of money and lives.

The British Prime Minister from 1937, Neville Chamberlain, believed in appeasement. The major aim was to avoid another European war.

'Appease' literally means pacify, soothe or satisfy.



In 1938, Germany and Austria joined together - this was known as the Anschluss. Hitler claimed he was uniting all German speaking people in one 'greater Germany'.

Seeing this, German speaking people in the Czechoslovakia (mainly living in an area known as the Sudetenland - shaded on the map) began to demand they become part of Germany too. Hitler made sure these people received support from Germany. However, Hitler couldn't just take over the area. Czechoslovakia was a powerful new country and had the backing of the Soviet Union.



In September 1938, Hitler demanded that German speakers in Czechoslovakia should be allowed to join his 'greater Germany'. War between Germany and Czechoslovakia seemed likely!

Everything depended on the actions of Britain, France and the Soviet Union.

British and French foreign policy 1938

PM Chamberlain was determined to avoid war. He made many trips around Europe in September 1938 attempting to make agreements.

Chamberlain took the lead and the French followed. The French also wished to avoid war at all costs. If they didn't go to war, then neither would the Soviet Union.

As a final attempt to avoid war, a conference in Munich was organised.

THE MUNICH CONFERENCE

Chamberlain, Hitler, Daladier (French PM) and Mussolini (leader of Italy) all met in Munich to discuss Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovakian government was not invited.

It was decided that Germany would occupy the Sudetenland within 10 days and other parts of Czechoslovakia would go to Poland and Hungary.

The French and British governments agreed. The Czechoslovakian government was told to agree or face Germany alone.

Hitler promised not to take over any more land.
**IT WAS GENERALLY FELT GIVING HITLER THE SUDETENLAND WAS
A GOOD PRICE TO PAY FOR PEACE.**

Chamberlain was congratulated in Britain for avoiding war. Britain and France had given in to Hitler's demands, but in return Hitler had promised to not take over any more land.

Chamberlain was very pleased saying:

SOURCE A. Speech by Chamberlain, 3/10/1938

"..the Munich agreement has shown that four Great Powers can agree on a way of carrying out a difficult operation by discussion rather than force of arms."



"Peace in our time" - Chamberlain returning from Munich showing a piece of paper with Hitler's promise of peace.

However, not everyone was so pleased:

SOURCE B. Speech by Churchill, September 1938

"We have been defeated without a war. And do not suppose this is the end. This is only the first taste of a bitter drink which will be forced on us year by year. Unless we rise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden days."

SOURCE C. Speech by Churchill, October 1938

"We have been reduced from a position of safety and power to where we now stand."

Tasks

Complete in full sentences

1. Why were the countries of Europe so keen to avoid another war?
2. What did Hitler claim when he united Germany and Austria?
3. What was the part of Czechoslovakia where most German speakers lived called?
4. Give two reasons why Germany couldn't just take over Czechoslovakia.
5.
 - i) Which four countries were at the Munich conference?
 - ii) In your opinion, should any other countries have been invited? Why?
6. What was agreed at the Munich conference?
7. Why did many people feel giving in to Germany at Munich was a good idea?
8. Translate source A, Chamberlain's opinion of the Munich Agreement, into your own words.
9. Using sources B and C, explain what Churchill thought of the Munich Agreement.
10. In your opinion, how do you think the people of Czechoslovakia felt about the agreement?
[Remember the different areas of Czechoslovakia.]

In early 1939, Hitler ordered his armed forces to prepare to 'smash the remainder of the Czech state'. On 15 March 1939, German troops invaded the remaining part of Czechoslovakia.

BONUS QUESTION: WAS THE POLICY OF APPEASEMENT JUSTIFIED?