

## HITLER AND THE MUNICH AGREEMENT

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Czechoslovakia was created after the First World War in 1918. Just under half the population were Czechs, 20% were Slovaks and 23% were German. The Germans mostly lived in the west of the country in the Sudetenland.

The Anschluss between Germany and Austria in March 1938 caused great excitement among the Germans in the Sudetenland. The majority of them wanted to be incorporated within Germany and Hitler encouraged them to demand this.

It was soon clear that a dispute over Czechoslovakia could drag Europe into war. France was bound by treaty to support Czechoslovakia but France would not act without British support. On 12 September Hitler made a speech demanding self-determination for the Sudetenland Germans.

Chamberlain made three visits to Germany to try and preserve peace. In the final meeting in Munich on 29 September Chamberlain, Hitler, Daladier and Mussolini agreed that the Sudetenland should be handed over to Germany. This seemed to be a triumph for Hitler, but was it?

### SOURCE A

The Czechs were left to choose between signing the Munich Agreement or fighting the Germans alone. Benes signed: what else could he have done?

Now that the Sudeten problem had been solved in such a shabby way, Chamberlain felt he had to show proof that he had removed the threat of European war, that in Munich he had brought about peace 'with honour'. Hitler, of course, had no objection to putting his name to a document, drawn up by the British Prime Minister, which cost the Germans no more than a few vague promises.

*From a history book published in 1979.*

### SOURCE B

We have suffered a total defeat. All is over. I think that in a period of time Czechoslovakia will be overrun by the Nazis. We have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole balance of power in Europe has been upset. And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning.

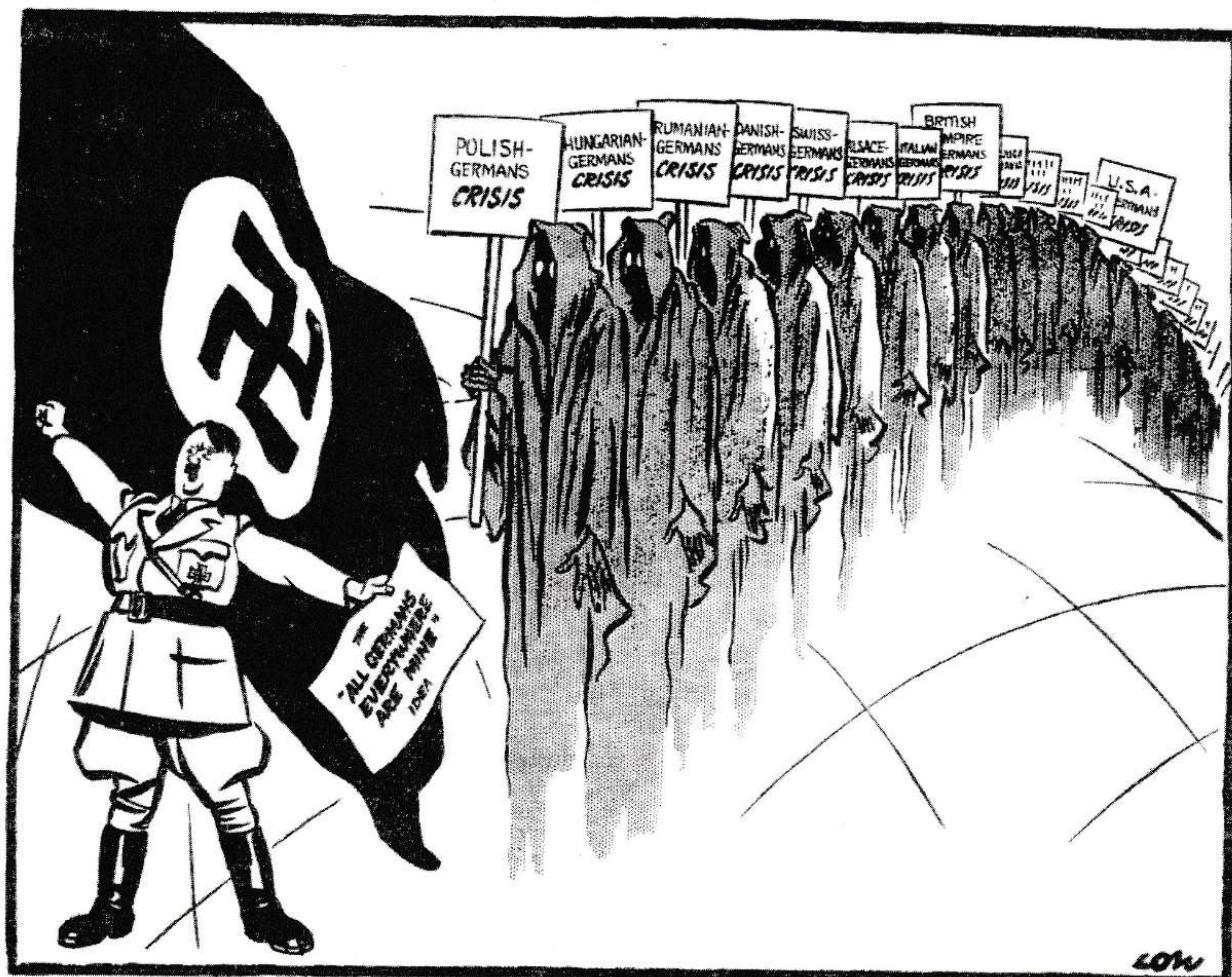
*From a speech by Winston Churchill to the British Parliament in 1938 shortly after the Munich Agreement.  
Churchill became British Prime Minister in 1940 following the resignation of Chamberlain.*

### SOURCE C

The humiliation of the Czechs was a tragedy, but it was solely thanks to Mr Chamberlain's courage that a senseless war was averted. As I wrote to him when all was over: 'Millions of mothers will be blessing your name tonight for having saved their sons from the horrors of war.' The verdict of history will be that the course which the Prime Minister took was the only right one in the circumstances. As I wrote at the time, 'The day may come when we may be forced to fight Germany. If we have to do so, I trust that the cause may be one in which the honour and vital interests of Britain are clearly at stake.' This was not the case in September 1938.

*From Sir Neville Henderson's account of his time as British Ambassador to Germany, 1937–39. He published his account in 1940. Henderson was a strong supporter of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement.*

### SOURCE D



A cartoon from an English newspaper, 9 September 1938, during the crisis over Czechoslovakia.

## SOURCE E



*A cartoon from Soviet Russia, 1938. The Englishman is telling the Czech not to let himself be shot by the German. Instead he should put his head in the noose.*

## SOURCE F

Hitler was shouting and shrieking in the worst state of excitement I've seen him in. He stated in the Sportplatz tonight that he would have his Sudetenland by 1st October. If Benes doesn't hand it over to him he will go to war, this Saturday. Twice Hitler screamed that this is absolutely his last territorial demand in Europe. Speaking of his assurances to Chamberlain, he said: 'I further assured him that when the Sudetenland issue is settled, the Czech state will no longer interest me.'

*An account of a speech by Hitler on 26 September 1938 by an American journalist who was in Berlin at the time.*

## SOURCE G

We turn our eyes towards the lands of the east. When we speak of new territory in Europe today, we must think of Russia and the border states subject to her. Colonisation of the eastern frontiers is of extreme importance. It will be the duty of Germany's foreign policy to provide large spaces for the nourishment and settlement of the growing population of Germany.

*From 'Mein Kampf', written by Hitler in 1924.*

SOURCE H



*A photograph of German troops arriving in the Sudetenland in October 1938. The banner offers thanks to Hitler.*

SOURCE I



*A photograph of German troops arriving in Prague, Czechoslovakia, in March 1939.*

## SOURCE J

It is too simple to call Munich a triumph for Hitler. He, it is true, secured the Sudetenland, but he had been cheated of his real aim, the destruction of Czechoslovakia, which apparently was now about to be protected by an international guarantee. Germany seemed to be in danger of being trapped in just the sort of international agreement Hitler had always hoped to avoid. However, it is difficult to call Munich a great victory for Chamberlain. But he probably did about as well as anyone could have done.

*From a history book published in 1994.*

## SOURCE K

We ought to have gone to war in 1938. Although we were not fully prepared, we were better prepared than the enemy. September 1938 would have been the favourable date.

*Hitler speaking to one of his close advisers, February 1945.*

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions. You may use any of the sources to help you answer the questions, in addition to those sources which you are told to use. In answering the questions you should use your knowledge of the topic to help you interpret and evaluate the sources.

1. Study source B and source C. Do these 2 sources show similar opinions about the Munich Agreement? Explain your answer, referring to details in the two sources. (6)
2. Study source F and source G. Does source G prove that Hitler was lying in source F? Explain your answer. (8)
3. Study source A and source E. Do you think the author of source A would have agreed with the cartoonist in source E? Explain your answer. (8)
4. Study source D. Why was this cartoon published in Britain in 1938? Refer to details in the cartoon and to your own knowledge to explain your answer. (8)
5. Study source H and source I. How reliable are these photographs as evidence about reactions of people in Czechoslovakia to the arrival of German troops? Explain your answer. (8)
6. Study all the sources. Source J and source K suggest that the Munich Agreement was a setback for Hitler. How far do the other sources support this idea? Explain your answer. (12)