

Option B: 20th Century topic

COLLAPSE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE

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

You know, of course, what we are going to do. First we shall overrun Czechoslovakia, and then Danzig, and then we shall fight the Russians. What I can't understand is why you British should object to this.

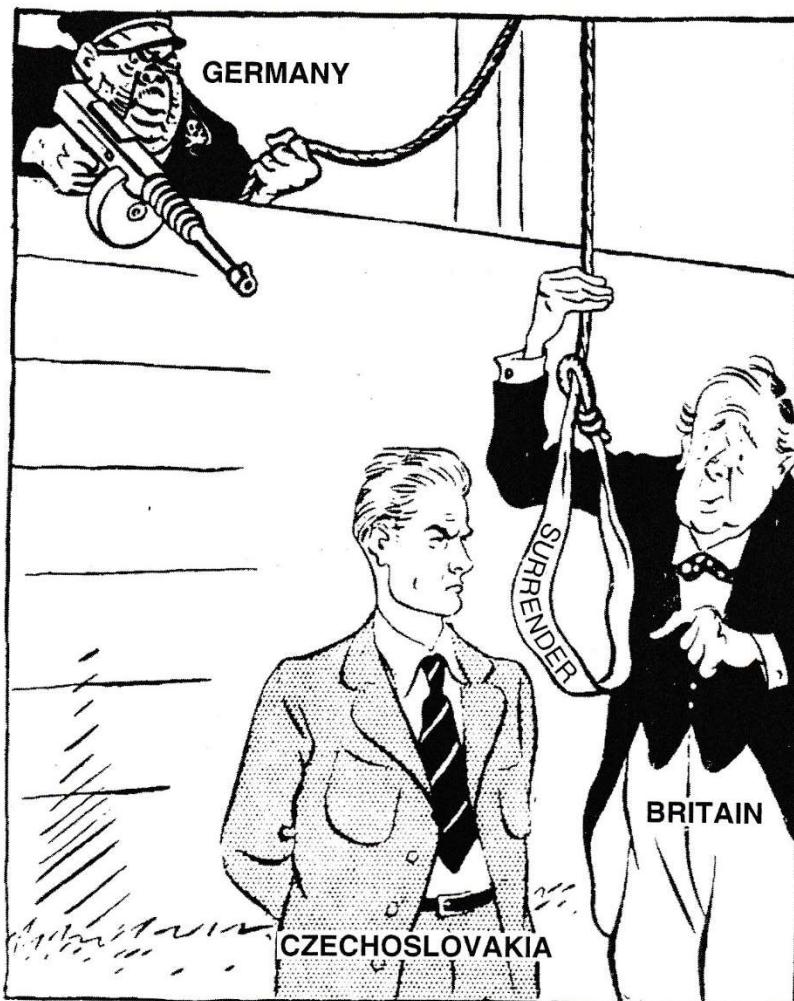
Göring, head of the German airforce, speaking to a British visitor to Germany, November 1937.

SOURCE B

The Pact of Munich is signed. Czechoslovakia as a power is finished. The genius of the Führer, and his willingness to risk even a world war, have again won the victory without the use of force.

*From the diary of a German general on the night the Munich agreement was signed,
September 1938.*

SOURCE C



A cartoon about the Munich Crisis.

0470/1 W98

SOURCE D

While the French obviously had to keep on saying to us, 'Well, don't forget we have our alliance with Czechoslovakia', they were really rather pleased that a strong-minded Chamberlain, who did not have any alliance with Czechoslovakia, was finding ways by which the French would not be required to honour their alliance. The French Prime Minister has been reported as saying, 'I shall do anything to avoid war because we will lose it.'

A British Foreign Ministry official, speaking in September 1938.

SOURCE E



Hitler inspecting German tanks, April 1938.

SOURCE F

October 1938:

Question: Hitler says he has 'No more territorial demands in Europe'. Do you believe him?
Yes 7%
No 93%

Question: In the present situation do you favour increased spending on armaments?
Yes 72%
No 18%
No opinion 10%

February 1939:

Question: Which of these statements about Mr Chamberlain's policy of appeasement do you agree with most?

- 1 It is a policy which will keep peace in Europe – 28%
- 2 It will keep us out of war until we have time to rearm – 46%
- 3 It is bringing war nearer by increasing the appetite of the dictators – 24%

Answers from British opinion polls, 1938–9.

SOURCE G

A long period of peace would not do us any good. The destruction of Poland is our main aim, even if war breaks out in the West. I shall give a propaganda reason for starting the war. When starting and fighting a war it is not who is right that matters, but who wins. The total destruction of Poland is the aim.

Hitler speaking to his generals, August 1939.

SOURCE H

The Polish State has refused the peaceful settlement and has decided to fight. Germans in Poland are persecuted with bloody terror and driven from their houses. In order to put an end to this I have no other choice but to meet force with force.

Hitler's proclamation to the German army, 1 September 1939.

SOURCE I

April 7 1938.

I do believe that, once the Sudeten question is satisfactorily settled, Hitler would be quite willing to talk seriously about disarmament.

July 22 1938.

It is easy to say, but impossible to prove, that Germany does not desire a settlement. It is also easy for Dr Benes (of Czechoslovakia) to blame all difficulties on Germans and Sudetens. However, I fancy that a fair judge would share the blame equally between Czechs, Germans and Sudetens.

From letters to the Foreign Office in London, written by Neville Henderson, the British Ambassador in Germany, 1937-39.

SOURCE J

Nothing that France or we could do could possibly save Czechoslovakia from being overrun by the Germans, if they wanted to do so. I have, therefore, abandoned any idea of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia.

From Chamberlain's diary, 20 March 1938. (Chamberlain was the British Prime Minister.)

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 C. Why was this cartoon published? Refer to details in the cartoon and to your own knowledge to explain your answer. (6)
2. Study source A, source G and source E. How far do these sources support the view that Hitler planned a major European war? Explain your answer. (8)
3. Study source B and source D. Is one of these sources more reliable than the other as evidence about the Munich Agreement? Explain your answer. (8)
4. Study source F. How useful is this source to historians studying the British attitude towards Hitler? Explain your answer. (8)
5. Study source I and source J. How far do these sources agree about Britain's attitude towards Germany and towards Czechoslovakia? Explain your answer. (8)
6. Study all the sources. "Britain and France had good reasons for following a policy of appeasement". How far do the sources on this paper support this statement? Explain your answer. (12)