

Option B: 20th Century topic

WERE BRITAIN AND FRANCE TO BLAME FOR HITLER'S SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING ANSCHLUSS?

Study the Background Information and the sources carefully, and then answer **all** the questions.

Background Information

The Treaty of Versailles banned the union of Germany and Austria (Anschluss), and in 1936 Germany promised to respect Austrian independence. However, Schuschnigg, the Austrian Chancellor, came under increasing pressure from Hitler. In February 1938 the two men met and Schuschnigg agreed to closer ties with Germany. In March he called a plebiscite to allow the Austrian people to have their say. He hoped for popular support against Anschluss. Hitler was furious and forced him to cancel the plebiscite. On 12 March German troops entered Austria. Anschluss had been achieved. Britain and France stood by and watched. How far were they to blame for Hitler's success?

SOURCE A

The Anschluss seems to me to provide a good example of the combination of consistency in aim and patience in preparation, with hasty opportunism in action, which is typical of Hitler's policies. The aim in this case was never in doubt: the demand for the incorporation of Austria in the Reich appears on the first page of *Mein Kampf*. In all the major crises of Hitler's career there is the same impression of confusion at the top, springing from his own hesitations and indecision.

From a history book published in 1971.

SOURCE B

The invasion and annexation of Austria was an unexpected development. When Schuschnigg announced on 9 March the holding of a plebiscite to enable the Austrians to decide their own future, he forced Hitler to act. Because Anschluss was essential for eastwards expansion, Schuschnigg threatened to sabotage Hitler's whole programme. When Schuschnigg agreed to cancel the plebiscite, Hitler was easily persuaded by Goering to exploit the situation and remove Schuschnigg from power. But only after receiving an enthusiastic reception by the Austrians in Linz did Hitler decide on annexation of Austria.

From a history book published in 1972.

SOURCE C

You have done everything to avoid a friendly policy. The whole history of Austria is just one act of high treason. I am determined to put an end to all this.

I have an historic mission. Who is not with me will be crushed. I am telling you that I am going to solve the so-called Austrian problem one way or another. I have only to give the order and your ridiculous defences will be blown to bits.

Don't think for a moment that anybody is going to stop me. Italy? I see eye to eye with Italy. England? England will not move one finger for Austria. And France? France could have stopped Germany in the Rhineland, and we would have had to retreat. But now it is too late for France. Think it over, Herr Schuschnigg, think it over, I can only wait until this afternoon.

*Schuschnigg's account of what Hitler said to him when they met on 12 February 1938.
This account is from Schuschnigg's memoirs published in 1947.*

SOURCE D

What injustice have we done to any country when we agree with the desire of the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people to be Germans? These people are Germans. I assure you that, four days ago, I had no idea of any of what was to happen today or that Austria was to become a German land. I did this because I was deceived by Herr Schuschnigg, and deception is something I will not tolerate. When I shake hands and give my word on something, then I keep it.

Hitler in an interview with a British journalist, 12 March 1938.

SOURCE E

GOOD HUNTING

Mussolini, "All right, Adolf – I never heard a shot."

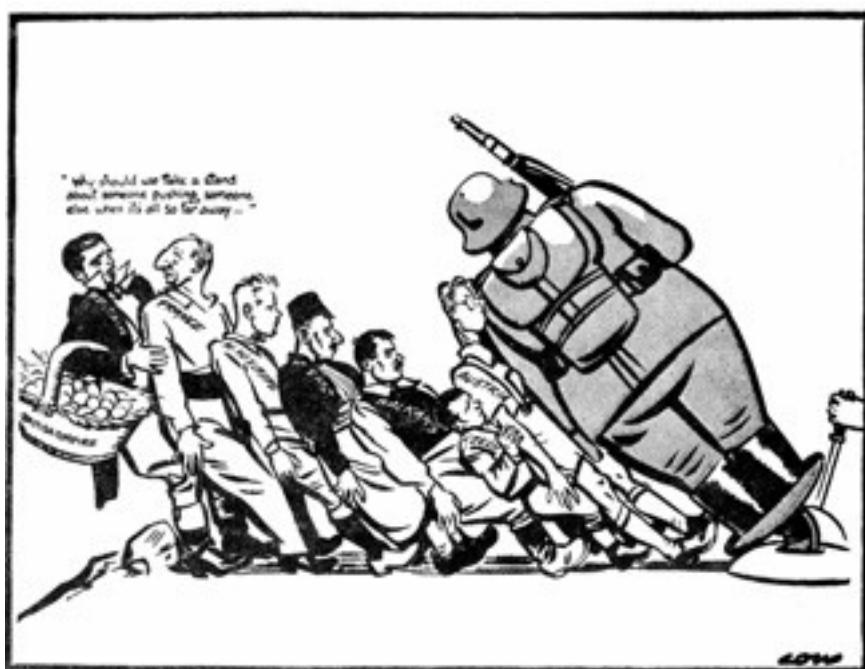
A cartoon published in a British magazine on 23 February 1938. The figure at the front is Hitler, and the person at the back is Mussolini.

SOURCE F



A Soviet cartoon published in an official government newspaper, 28 March 1938.
It shows Hitler and Mussolini fishing. Hitler has just caught Austria.

SOURCE G



INCREASING PRESSURE

A cartoon published in a British magazine, 18 February 1938.

SOURCE H

A drawing with the title 'The fulfillment', published in a German magazine, 3 April 1938. It shows German troops entering Austria. An Austrian is saying that he has waited for this since 1918, and now it has happened in one blow.

SOURCE I

The British government cannot take responsibility for advising the Chancellor to take any course of action which might expose Britain to dangers against which it is unable to provide protection.

The reply of the British government to Schuschnigg after he had asked for advice, 11 March 1938.

SOURCE J

Throughout these events the British government has remained in the closest contact with the French government, and the French government has also entered a strong protest in Berlin on similar lines to that lodged by Britain. It seems to us that the methods used by Germany call for the strongest condemnation. It follows that what has passed cannot fail to have weakened the hope of removing misunderstandings between nations.

From a public statement by the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, 15 March 1938.