

**INTERWAR EUROPE
(1919-1939) - MUNICH
ACCORDS OF 1938**



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Description

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the Munich Accords of 1938, what issues were inherent with the "Czechoslovakian Question" and how Chamberlain's policy of appeasing Hitler at Munich ultimately emboldened the German chancellor to go after even more territory.

Subjects

European History
World History

Grade Level

11-12

Duration

90 minutes

Tour Links

- Prague, Czech Republic
- Pinkas Synagogue, Prague
- Univ of Music and Arts, Munich
- Westminster Abbey, London

Essential Questions

- What was the Munich Accords of 1938? What events precipitated the Accords?
- Who were the major participants to the Munich Conference in 1938?
- What were the details of the Accords?
- Why is the term "appeasement" associated with the Munich Accords?

Academic Summary

Primary Sources

Agreement Concluded at Munich, 29 Sep 1938

GERMANY, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, taking into consideration the agreement, which has been already reached in principle for the cession to Germany of the Sudeten German territory, have agreed on the following terms and conditions governing the said cession and the measures consequent thereon, and by this agreement they each hold themselves responsible for the steps necessary to secure its fulfilment:

- (1) The evacuation will begin on 1st October.
- (2) The United Kingdom, France and Italy agree that the evacuation of the territory shall be completed by the 10th October, without any existing installations having been destroyed, and that the Czechoslovak Government will be held responsible for carrying out the evacuation without damage to the said installations.
- (3) The conditions governing the evacuation will be laid down in detail by an international commission composed of representatives of Germany, the United Kingdom, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia.
- (4) The occupation by stages of the predominantly German territory by German troops will begin on 1st October. The four territories marked on the attached map will be occupied by German troops in the following order:
The territory marked No. I on the 1st and 2nd of October; the territory marked No. II on the 2nd and 3rd of October; the territory marked No. III on the 3rd, 4th and 5th of October; the territory marked No. IV on the 6th and 7th of October. The remaining territory of preponderantly German character will be ascertained by the aforesaid international commission forthwith and be occupied by German troops by the 10th of October.
- (5) The international commission referred to in paragraph 3 will determine the territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. These territories will be occupied by international bodies until the plebiscite has been completed. The same commission will fix the conditions in which the plebiscite is to be held, taking as a basis the conditions of the Saar plebiscite. The commission will also fix a date, not later than the end of November, on which the plebiscite will be held.
- (6) The final determination of the frontiers will be carried out by the international commission. The commission will also be entitled to recommend to the four Powers, Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy, in certain exceptional cases, minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite.
- (7) There will be a right of option into and out of the transferred territories, the option to be exercised within six months from the date of this agreement. A German-Czechoslovak commission shall determine the details of the option, consider ways of facilitating the transfer of population and settle questions of principle arising out of the said transfer.
- (8) The Czechoslovak Government will within a period of four weeks from the date of this agreement release from their military and police forces any Sudeten Germans who may wish to be released, and the Czechoslovak Government will within the same period release Sudeten German prisoners who are serving terms of imprisonment for political offences.

Munich, September 29, 1938.

ADOLF HITLER,
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN,
EDOUARD DALADIER,
BENITO MUSSOLINI.

Speech Given by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain when he arrived in London, 30 Sep 1938

We, the German Führer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for two countries and for Europe. We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.

From the Speech Given by PM Chamberlain in front of 10 Downing Street, 30 Sep 1938

My good friends this is the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace in our time.

From a Speech before Parliament by PM Churchill after Chamberlain died, Nov 1940

Whatever else history may or may not say about these terrible, tremendous years, we can be sure that Neville Chamberlain acted with perfect sincerity according to his lights and strove to the utmost of his capacity and authority, which were powerful, to save the world from the awful, devastating struggle in which we are now engaged. This alone will stand him in good stead as far as what is called the verdict of history is concerned.

Secondary Summary

In early October 1938, only a few months after Hitler and the Nazis had annexed Austria, thousands of German Wehrmacht troops crossed the Reich's southeastern border with Czechoslovakia and began the annexation of the Sudetenland. Like what happened the previous spring in Austria, thousands of people took to the streets in towns and cities throughout the region as the German troops rolled in, not in protest, but rather in joy and excitement. Adolph Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, had done what previous leaders had failed to do a generation earlier. He had defied the Western powers. He had thrown out the treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. He had created a true German Reich, one that would last forever. One where Germans could stand together tall and proud. The idea of Greater Germany (Grossdeutschland) had been a dream for over 1000 years, going back to the earliest days of the Holy Roman Empire. Religious and political differences among the Germans themselves, had ultimately led to a "Little Germany" (Kleindeutschland), created under Prussian leadership in 1871. The problem had always been Austria. Although most of the people living in the Sudetenland were German, until 1918 they lived within the Hapsburg Lands, an old multi-national empire going back to the medieval period. When the Hapsburg Empire crumbled in 1918, however, Sudeten Germans wanted to join their brothers and sisters in the new Weimar Republic. Above all, they did not want to join the newly forming Czechoslovak state. With images of the Western Front still fresh on their minds, allied leaders would have none of it, and they refused to allow any union between Germany and the Sudetenland. The fact that the region was heavily involved in mining and industrial operations might have had something to do with it. The last thing France wanted in 1919 was a Germany that was potentially stronger coming out of the war than it had been going in. In the Versailles treaty, Germany was forced to respect and acknowledge Czechoslovakia's independence and its borders.

Like many other provisions in the Versailles Treaty, Adolph Hitler would exploit these clauses to rally the people on both sides of the border, saying that they had been betrayed by their leaders in 1919. When the Nazi party formed in the days following the war, it published a 25-point platform stating its beliefs and plans. Point #1 called for all Germans to live together in one nation. Hitler's book, *Mein Kampf*, published a few years later in 1925, began with a chapter on his Austro-German heritage and called on all Germans to unify under one flag.

Meanwhile, in the Sudetenland, ethnic Germans, who made up over 90% of the region's population, kept clamoring for union with Germany. The problem was that Germans made up only 23% of Czechoslovakia's overall population. Czech politicians tried in vain to acquiesce to the region's demands without giving up their sovereignty, but by the late 1920s, the Sudetenland had a strong Nazi presence. Looking back, it was probably only a matter of time before Germany came to claim the region.

Unlike Austria, however, the French and British had signed treaties with the Czechoslovakian government guaranteeing their protection. An invasion by Germany, then, had the real possibility of sparking a new European war. Weimar officials, no matter their sympathies for Sudeten Germans, were unprepared for such a move.

By 1938, however, things were very different. In October 1935, Italian forces invaded Ethiopia, an affair that caused a serious split with the western powers. On 01 November 1936, Mussolini announced from Milan that Italy and Germany had entered into an informal military "axis". Eighteen months later, the union with Austria was complete and Hitler turned his eyes towards the Sudetenland. Hitler gambled that the French and the British didn't want war. In late September 1938, Mussolini, ever trying to be the diplomat in European politics, called for a meeting in Munich to settle the Sudeten Question. The French, British, German and Italian governments sent representatives. The Czechoslovakian government was not invited.

The Munich Agreement (also called the Munich Accords) laid out a plan and timetable for Germany to take the Sudetenland. The rest of the Czechoslovakian state was to remain independent. All sides praised the agreement. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, believed that he had averted war by appeasing Hitler. Hitler, for his part, promised that he didn't want non-German lands incorporated into the Reich. The Sudetenland, therefore would be the final piece. The German chancellor promised peace. The British bought it.

Days later, German troops crossed the border to the cheers of countless Germans. Many ethnic Czechs and a small percentage of ethnic Germans fled the new German province for other provinces still under Czech control as Nazi troops advanced. Hitler was still not satisfied. On 15 March 1939, after Hitler threatened to bomb Prague, the Czech government capitulated and German troops took over the rest of the country. This time, there was no cheering. The British and the French did nothing.

In an ominous foreshadowing of what would be the horrors to come, Nazi soldiers took over the fortress of Terezin in the Sudetenland shortly after their occupation

under the Munich Accords. An old fort that dated back to the time of Austrian Emperor Joseph II (1780s), by the late 19th century it was functioning as a prison for military and political prisoners. Before the Nazi takeover, Terezin was famous for housing Gavrilo Princip, the Slav national who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, from 1914 until he died in 1918. By Jun 1940, the Gestapo had turned the prison into a labor / concentration camp (although not a "death camp" like Auschwitz). During the war, approximately 144,000 Jews were resettled at Theresienstadt (as the prison was renamed). Statistics show that at least 33,000 died there. Another 100,000 were deported to Auschwitz late in the war.

In retrospect, the Munich Accords were a farce. Hitler used Czechoslovakia as a stepping stone to continue his unabated expansion to the east. The French retreated behind the Maginot Line, determined to be ready when the Germans finally struck west across the Rhine (a plan that didn't work so well). Wildly heralded as a peace maker after the Munich Agreements, British Prime Minister Chamberlain looked like a fool when Hitler took the rest of Czechoslovakia. He was succeeded by Winston Churchill in May 1940.

Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, students in this lesson will identify, understand and be able to explain the Munich Accords of 1938, what issues were inherent with the "Czechoslovakian Question" and how Chamberlain's policy of appeasing Hitler at Munich ultimately emboldened the German chancellor to go after even more territory.

Objectives

1. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain the points of the Munich Accords of 1938.
2. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain what issues were inherent with the "Czechoslovakian Question."
3. Students will identify, understand and be able to explain how Chamberlain's policy of appeasing Hitler at Munich ultimately emboldened the German chancellor to go after even more territory.

Procedures

I. Anticipatory Set

- Writing / Question: Can appeasement work as a foreign policy? (5 min)
- Handouts – Copies of documents and readings from the websites listed. (5 min)

II. Body of Lesson

- Lecture / PPT – Appeasement (20 min)
- Video – Munich Agreement (10 min)
- Independent Activity – Students read the articles and sources on the Munich Agreement, taking notes as appropriate. (20 min)
- Suggestion: Have the students read some of these articles and sources for homework.
- Suggestion: AP / Advanced students should focus on primary sources.
- Group Activity – Socratic Seminar: Discussion on the Munich Agreement and Appeasement. (20 min)

III. Closure

- Assessment – Essay: Explain in detail the Munich Accords of 1938, what issues were inherent with the "Czechoslovakian Question" and how Chamberlain's policy of appeasing Hitler at Munich ultimately emboldened the German chancellor to go after even more territory.
- Alternate Assessment – Compare and contrast the takeover of Czechoslovakia by Germany in 1938-39 with the events unfolding in the Crimea between Russia and the Ukraine. Are Russia's moves in the Black Sea region similar to German moves in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in 1938-39?

Extension

On tour: Pinkas Synagogue, Prague, Czech Republic

While on tour, students in Prague can visit the Pinkas Synagogue, where they can see for themselves a memorial to 80,000 Jewish victims of the Holocaust from Bohemia and Moravia (part of the Czech Republic). After the Nazis took over Czechoslovakia in 1938-39, thousands of Jews and other "undesirables" were deported to labor concentration camps. The synagogue features the names of people whose last address prior to deportation was in Prague; the rest of the interior space commemorates victims from towns and villages outside Prague. On both sides are recorded the names of some of the ghettos and camps where Bohemian and Moravian Jews were deported and, in most cases, exterminated. This memorial is a long epitaph commemorating the names of those for whom a tombstone could not be erected. The memorial was completed in the 1950s, but closed after the 1968 Prague Spring, only to be renovated and reopened in 1996.

Web Links

Lesson Plan Websites

- <http://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/munich1.asp>
Munich Pact September 29, 1938 (primary source) – from the Avalon Project at Yale University
- http://avalon.law.yale.edu/subject_menus/munmenu.asp
The Munich Agreements - Documents (primary sources) – from the Avalon Project at Yale University, this site contains links to the minutes of different meetings from the Munich Conference. Highly recommended for AP / Advanced students.
- www.fordham.edu/Halsall/mod/1938PEACE.asp
Neville Chamberlain: "Peace in Our Time" (primary source) – from the Internet History Sourcebook at Fordham University
- www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-czech.htm
The Triumph of Hitler: Nazis take Czechoslovakia (website) – from the History Place (UK)
- www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/media_fi.php?MediaId=1840
Munich Conference (website) – from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
- www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWmunich.htm
Munich Agreement (website) – from Spartacus Educational (UK)
- www.mariacarrillohighschool.com/Teachers/TrevorBrady/AcWorldHistory/ClassDocuments/PowerPoint%20Presentations/Unit%207%20WWII/Appeasment.ppt
Appeasement (PowerPoint) – from Trevor Brady, History Teacher at Maria Carrillo High School (CA)
- www.teachingchannel.org/videos/choosing-primary-source-documents?fd=1
Reading Like a Historian: Primary Source Documents (video). Great 2-minute video on how to incorporate primary sources into the Common Core and history classes. From Shilpa Duvoor of Summit Preparatory Charter High School in Redwood City, CA. Highly recommended for teachers.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=wKA-lhWFbsE
The Munich Agreement – History Lessons (video). 6-minute video from the Council on Foreign Relations is appropriate for all classes.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=BFIsYffrTF0
Hitler and Chamberlain: The Munich Crisis 1938 (video). This 90-minute video, produced for the BBC, is too long for most classes, but it is well worth it. Highly recommended for all AP / Advanced Students, especially as an out-of-class assignment.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=FO725Hbzfls
Neville Chamberlain (video) – Primary source video (2 minutes) of PM Chamberlain after the Munich Conference of 1938.

Background Information

- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich_Agreement
Munich Agreement – Wikipedia article
- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heim_ins_Reich
Heim ins Reich (Home to the Reich) – Wikipedia article on Hitler's foreign policy designed to create a Greater Germany for all Germans.
- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sudetenland
Sudetenland – Wikipedia article
- www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neville_Chamberlain
Neville Chamberlain – Wikipedia article

Other Relevant Passports Lesson Plans

- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/austria/interwar-europe-anschluss-of-1938
Interwar Europe – Austro-German Anschluss
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/france/interwar-france-magnot-line
Interwar France – The Maginot Line
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/poland/interwar-europe-nazi-soviet-pact-of-1939
Interwar Europe – NAZI-Soviet Pact of 1939
- www.passports.com/lesson_plans/italy/interwar-europe-rome-berlin-pact-of-steel-1939
Interwar Europe – Pact of Steel 1939: Rome-Berlin Axis

Key Terms

- Appeasement
- Chancellor
- Czechoslovakia
- Germany
- Hitler
- Mussolini
- Nazi
- Reich
- Sudetenland

