

SOURCE 4

We demand equality of rights for the German people in its dealings with other nations, and abolition of the Peace Treaties of Versailles and St Germain.

From Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, 1923–24.

- 1 From the evidence of Sources 4 and 5, why might Czechoslovak leaders be concerned about Hitler's plans? You may need to refer to pages 94–95.

ACTIVITY

It is 1933. Write a briefing paper for the British government on Hitler's plans for Germany. Use Sources 4–6 to help you.

Conclude with your own assessment on whether the government should be worried about Hitler and his plans.

In your conclusion, remember these facts about the British government:

- Britain is a leading member of the League of Nations and is supposed to uphold the Treaty of Versailles, by force if necessary.
- The British government does not trust the Communists and thinks that a strong Germany could help to stop the Communist threat.

Hitler's plans

Hitler was never secretive about his plans for Germany. As early as 1924 he had laid out in his book *Mein Kampf* what he would do if the Nazis ever achieved power in Germany. His three main aims are described below.

Abolish the Treaty of Versailles!

Like many Germans, Hitler believed that the Treaty of Versailles was unjust.

He hated the Treaty and called the German leaders who had signed it 'The November Criminals'. The Treaty was a constant reminder to Germans of their defeat in the First World War and their humiliation by the Allies. Hitler promised that if he became leader of Germany he would reverse it.

By the time he came to power in Germany, some of the terms had already been changed. For example, Germany had stopped making reparations payments altogether. However, most points were still in place. The table in the Focus Task on page 257 shows the terms of the Treaty that most angered Hitler.

Expand German territory!

The Treaty of Versailles had taken away territory from Germany. Hitler wanted to get that territory back. He wanted Germany to unite with Austria. He wanted German minorities in other countries to become part of his vision of a greater Germany. But he also wanted to carve out an empire in eastern Europe to give extra *Lebensraum* or 'living space' for Germans.

SOURCE 5

We turn our eyes towards the lands of the east . . . When we speak of new territory in Europe today, we must principally think of Russia and the border states subject to her. Destiny itself seems to wish to point out the way for us here.

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 Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Defeat Communism!

A German empire carved out of the Soviet Union would also help Hitler in one of his other objectives – the defeat of Communism or Bolshevism. Hitler was anti-Communist. He believed that Bolsheviks had helped to bring about the defeat of Germany in the First World War. He also believed that the Bolsheviks wanted to take over Germany.

SOURCE 6

We must not forget that the Bolsheviks are blood-stained. That they overran a great state [Russia], and in a fury of massacre wiped out millions of their most intelligent fellow-countrymen and now for ten years have been conducting the most tyrannous regime of all time. We must not forget that many of them belong to a race which combines a rare mixture of bestial cruelty and vast skill in lies, and considers itself specially called now to gather the whole world under its bloody oppression.

The menace which Russia suffered under is one which perpetually hangs over Germany. Germany is the next great objective of Bolshevism. All our strength is needed to raise up our nation once more and rescue it from the embrace of the international python . . . The first essential is the expulsion of the Marxist poison from the body of our nation.

From Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler's actions

This timeline shows how, between 1933 and 1939, Hitler turned his plans into actions.

DATE	ACTION
1933	Took Germany out of the League of Nations Began rearming Germany
1934	Tried to take over Austria but was prevented by Mussolini
1935	Held massive rearmament rally in Germany
1936	Reintroduced conscription in Germany Sent German troops into the Rhineland Made an anti-Communist alliance with Japan
1937	Tried out Germany's new weapons in the Spanish Civil War Made an anti-Communist alliance with Italy
1938	Took over Austria Took over the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia
1939	Invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia Invaded Poland

War

When you see events leading up to the war laid out this way, it makes it seem as if Hitler planned it all step by step. In fact, this view of events was widely accepted by historians until the 1960s. In the 1960s, however, the British historian AJP Taylor came up with a new interpretation. His view was that Hitler was a gambler rather than a planner. Hitler simply took the logical next step to see what he could get away with. He was bold. He kept his nerve. As other countries gave into him and allowed him to get away with each gamble, so he became bolder and risked more. In Taylor's interpretation it is Britain, the Allies and the League of Nations who are to blame for letting Hitler get away with it – by not standing up to him. As you examine Hitler's actions in more detail, you will see that both interpretations are possible. You can make up your own mind which you agree with.

FOCUS TASK

Hitler and the Treaty of Versailles

- 1 Draw up a table like this one to show some of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that affected Germany.
- 2 As you work through this chapter, fill out the other columns of this 'Versailles chart'.

Terms of the Treaty of Versailles	What Hitler did and when	The reasons he gave for his action	The response from Britain and France
Germany's armed forces to be severely limited			
The Rhineland to be a demilitarised zone			
Germany forbidden to unite with Austria			
The Sudetenland taken into the new state of Czechoslovakia			
The Polish Corridor given to Poland			

SOURCE 7

I am convinced that Hitler does not want war . . . what the Germans are after is a strong army which will enable them to deal with Russia.

British politician Lord Lothian,
January 1935.

- 1 Design a Nazi poster to present the information in Source 10 to the German people.
- 2 Fill out the first row of your 'Versailles chart' on page 257.
- 3 What factors allowed Hitler to get away with rearming Germany?

Rearmament

Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. One of his first steps was to increase Germany's armed forces. Thousands of unemployed workers were drafted into the army. This helped him to reduce unemployment, which was one of the biggest problems he faced in Germany. But it also helped him to deliver on his promise to make Germany strong again and to challenge the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

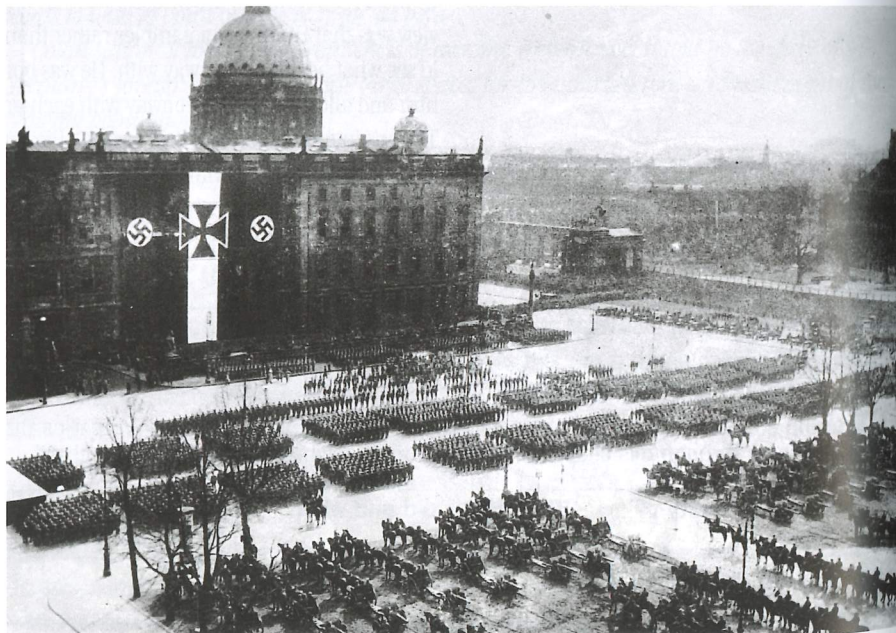
Hitler knew that German people supported rearmament. But he also knew it would cause alarm in other countries. He handled it cleverly. Rearmament began in secret at first. He made a great public display of his desire not to rearm Germany – that he was only doing it because other countries refused to disarm (see page 248). He then followed Japan's example and withdrew from the League of Nations.

In 1935 Hitler openly staged a massive military rally celebrating the German armed forces (see Source 8). He even reintroduced conscription to the army. He was breaking the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, but he guessed correctly that he would get away with rearmament. Many other countries were using rearmament as a way to fight unemployment. The collapse of the League of Nations Disarmament Conference in 1934 (see pages 248–49) had shown that other nations were not prepared to disarm.

Rearmament was a very popular move in Germany. It boosted Nazi support. Hitler also knew that Britain had some sympathy with Germany on this issue. Britain believed that the limits put on Germany's armed forces by the Treaty of Versailles were too tight. The permitted forces were not enough to defend Germany from attack. Britain also thought that a strong Germany would be a good buffer against Communism.

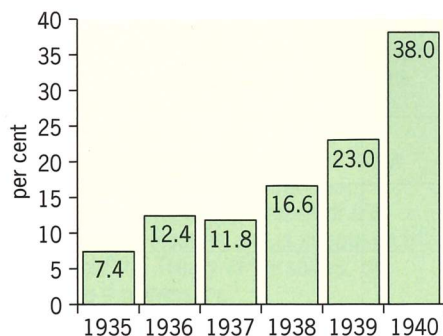
Britain had already helped to dismantle the Treaty by signing a naval agreement with Hitler in 1935, allowing Germany to increase its navy to up to 35 per cent of the size of the British navy. The French were angry with Britain about this, but there was little they could do.

SOURCE 8



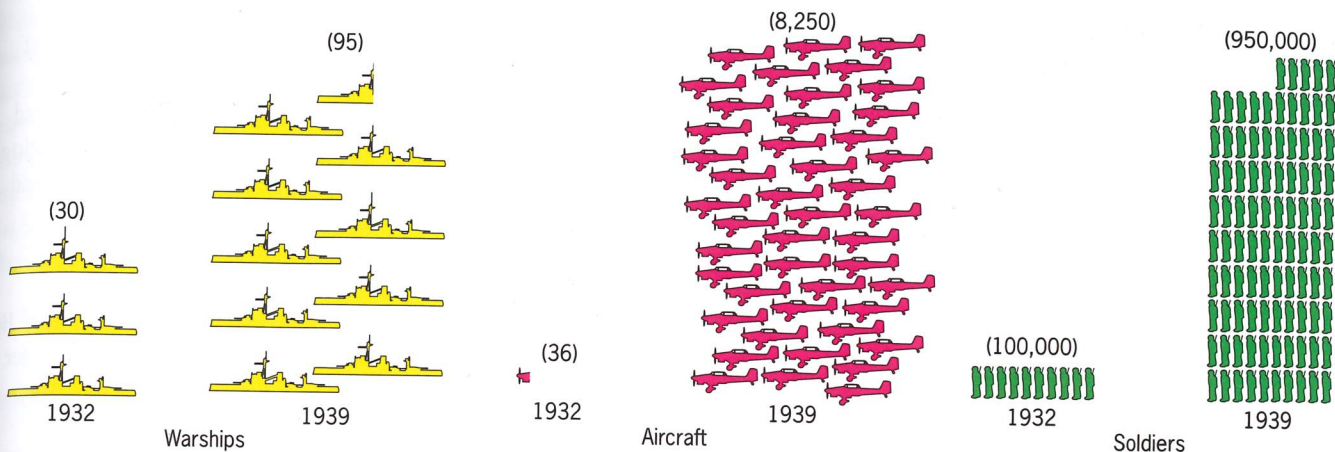
German soldiers and armaments on show at the Proclamation of Freedom to Rearm Rally in 1935.

SOURCE 9



The proportion of German spending that went into armaments, 1935–40.

SOURCE 10



German armed forces in 1932 and 1939.

The Saar plebiscite

The Saar region of Germany had been run by the League of Nations since 1919 (see page 236). In 1935 the League of Nations held the promised plebiscite for people to vote on whether their region should return to German rule. The vote was an overwhelming success for Hitler. Around 90 per cent of the population voted to return to German rule. This was entirely legal and within the terms of the Treaty. It was also a real morale booster for Hitler.

SOURCE 11



Following the plebiscite in 1935, people and police express their joy at returning to the German Reich by giving the Nazi salute.

SOURCE 12



The Rhineland.

1 Does Source 13 support or contradict Hitler's argument that Germany was under threat? Explain your answer.

SOURCE 13



An American cartoon published in March 1936 showing the encirclement of Germany by France and the USSR.

Remilitarisation of the Rhineland

In March 1936, Hitler took his first really big risk by moving troops into the Rhineland area of Germany.

The demilitarisation of the Rhineland was one of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles. It had also been accepted by Germany in the Locarno Treaties of 1925 (see page 240). Hitler was taking a huge gamble. If he had been forced to withdraw, he would have faced humiliation and would have lost the support of the German army (many of the generals were unsure about him, anyway). Hitler knew the risks, but he had chosen the time and place well.

France had just signed a treaty with the USSR to protect each other against attack from Germany (see Source 13). Hitler used the agreement to claim that Germany was under threat. He argued that in the face of such a threat he should be allowed to place troops on his own frontier.

Hitler knew that many people in Britain felt that he had a right to station his troops in the Rhineland and he was fairly confident that Britain would not intervene. His gamble was over France. Would France let him get away with it?

SOURCE 14



German troops marching through the city of Cologne in March 1936. This style of marching with high steps was known as goose-stepping.

SOURCE 15

At that time we had no army worth mentioning . . . If the French had taken any action we would have been easily defeated; our resistance would have been over in a few days. And the Air Force we had then was ridiculous – a few Junkers 52s from Lufthansa and not even enough bombs for them . . .

Hitler looks back on his gamble over the Rhineland some years after the event.

SOURCE 16

Hitler has got away with it. France is not marching. No wonder the faces of Göring and Blomberg [Nazi leaders] were all smiles.

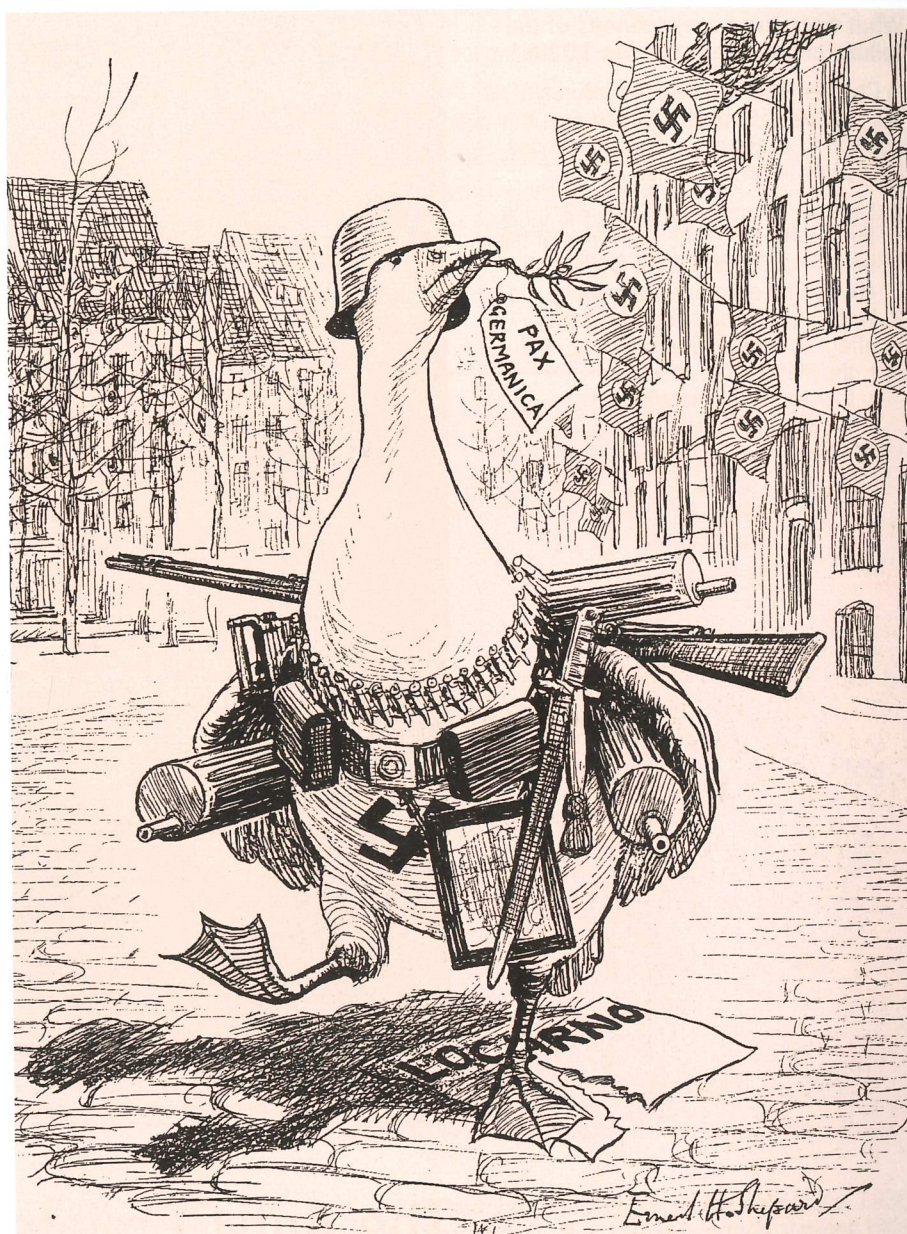
Oh, the stupidity (or is it the paralysis?) of the French. I learnt today that the German troops had orders to beat a hasty retreat if the French army opposed them in any way.

Written by William Shirer in 1936. He was an American journalist in Germany during the 1930s. He was a critic of the Nazi regime and had to flee from Germany in 1940.

As the troops moved into the Rhineland, Hitler and his generals sweated nervously. They had orders to pull out if the French acted against them. Despite the rearmament programme, Germany's army was no match for the French army. It lacked essential equipment and air support. In the end, however, Hitler's luck held.

The attention of the League of Nations was on the Abyssinian crisis which was happening at exactly the same time (see pages 250–53). The League condemned Hitler's action but had no power to do anything else. Even the French, who were most directly threatened by the move, were divided over what to do. They were about to hold an election and none of the French leaders was prepared to take responsibility for plunging France into a war. Of course, they did not know how weak the German army was. In the end, France refused to act without British support and so Hitler's big gamble paid off. Maybe next time he would risk more!

SOURCE 17



THE GOOSE-STEP.

“GOOSEY GOOSEY GANDER,
WHITHER DOST THOU WANDER?”
“ONLY THROUGH THE RHINELAND—
PRAY EXCUSE MY BLUNDER!”

A British cartoon about the reoccupation of the Rhineland, 1936. Pax Germanica is Latin and means ‘Peace, German style’.

- 2 What do Sources 15 and 16 disagree about? Why might they disagree about it?
- 3 Fill out row 2 of your ‘Versailles chart’ on page 257.
- 4 Would you regard reoccupation of the Rhineland as a success for Hitler or as a failure for the French and the British? Explain your answer by referring to the sources.
- 5 Why has the cartoonist in Source 17 shown Germany as a goose?
- 6 Look at the equipment being carried by the goose. What does this tell you about how the cartoonist saw the new Germany?

The Spanish Civil War

These early successes seemed to give Hitler confidence. In 1936 a civil war broke out in Spain between Communists, who were supporters of the Republican government, and right-wing rebels under General Franco. Hitler saw this as an opportunity to fight against Communism and at the same time to try out his new armed forces.

In 1937, as the League of Nations looked on helplessly, German aircraft made devastating bombing raids on civilian populations in various Spanish cities. The destruction at Guernica was terrible. The world looked on in horror at the suffering that modern weapons could cause.

SOURCE 18

FOCUS TASK

What were the consequences of the failure of the League in the 1930s?

In Chapter 8 you studied the failures of the League of Nations. You are now in a position to evaluate the impact of those failures on Hitler's actions.

- 1 Look back over pages 258–62. Look for evidence that the weakness of the League of Nations in the 1930s allowed Hitler to achieve what he did.
- 2 Write a paragraph describing the effect of each of the following:
 - the Manchurian crisis
 - the failure of disarmament
 - the Abyssinian crisis.



A postcard published in France to mark the bombing of Guernica in 1937. The text reads 'The Basque people murdered by German planes. Guernica martyred 26 April 1937'.

The Anti-Comintern Pact, 1936–7

The Italian leader Mussolini was also heavily involved in the Spanish Civil War. Hitler and Mussolini saw that they had much in common also with the military dictatorship in Japan. In 1936, Germany and Japan signed an Anti-Comintern Pact. In 1937, Italy also signed it. Anti-Comintern means 'Anti-Communist International'. The aim of the pact was to limit Communist influence around the world. It was particularly aimed at the USSR. The new alliance was called the Axis alliance.

Anschluss with Austria, 1938

With the successes of 1936 and 1937 to boost him, Hitler turned his attention to his homeland of Austria. The Austrian people were mainly German, and in *Mein Kampf* Hitler had made it clear that he felt that the two states belonged together as one German nation. Many in Austria supported the idea of union with Germany, since their country was so economically weak. Hitler was confident that he could bring them together into a 'greater Germany'. In fact, he had tried to take over Austria in 1934, but on that occasion Mussolini had stopped him. Four years later, in 1938, the situation was different. Hitler and Mussolini were now allies.

There was a strong Nazi Party in Austria. Hitler encouraged the Nazis to stir up trouble for the government. They staged demonstrations calling for union with Germany. They caused riots. Hitler then told the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg that only *Anschluss* (political union) could sort out these problems. He pressurised Schuschnigg to agree to *Anschluss*. Schuschnigg asked for help from France and Britain but was refused it. So he called a plebiscite (a referendum), to see what the Austrian people wanted. Hitler was not prepared to risk this – he might lose! He simply sent his troops into Austria in March 1938, supposedly to guarantee a trouble-free plebiscite. Under the watchful eye of the Nazi troops, 99.75 per cent voted for *Anschluss*. *Anschluss* was completed without any military confrontation with France and Britain. Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, felt that Austrians and Germans had a right to be united and that the Treaty of Versailles was wrong to separate them. Britain's Lord Halifax had even suggested to Hitler before the *Anschluss* that Britain would not resist Germany uniting with Austria.

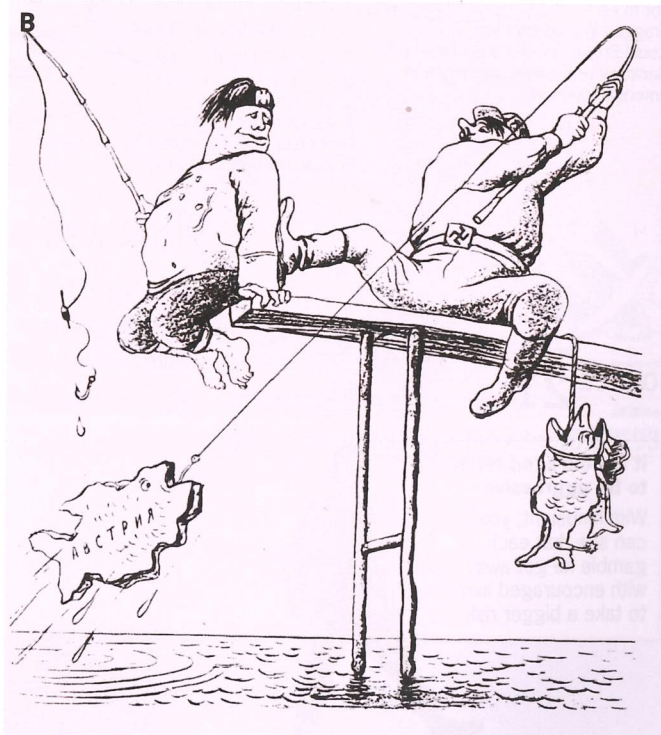
- 1 Explain what each of the cartoons in Source 19 is saying about the *Anschluss*.
- 2 Complete row 3 of your 'Versailles chart' on page 257.

SOURCE 19



GOOD HUNTING

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



Two cartoons commenting on the *Anschluss*, 1938. **A** is from *Punch*. **B** is a Soviet cartoon showing Hitler catching Austria.

Once again, Hitler's risky but decisive action had reaped a rich reward – Austria's soldiers, weapons and its rich deposits of gold and iron ore were added to Germany's increasingly strong army and industry. Hitler was breaking yet another condition of the Treaty of Versailles, but the pattern was becoming clear. The Treaty itself was seen as suspect. Britain and France were not prepared to go to war to defend a flawed treaty.

The Sudetenland, 1938

After the Austrian *Anschluss*, Hitler was beginning to feel that he could not put a foot wrong. But his growing confidence was putting the peace of Europe in increasing danger.

SOURCE 25



Central Europe after the *Anschluss*.

SOURCE 26

I give you my word of honour that Czechoslovakia has nothing to fear from the Reich.

Hitler speaking to Chamberlain in 1938.

Unlike the leaders of Britain and France, Edward Beneš, the leader of Czechoslovakia, was horrified by the *Anschluss*. He realised that Czechoslovakia would be the next country on Hitler's list for takeover. It seemed that Britain and France were not prepared to stand up to Hitler. Beneš sought guarantees from the British and French that they would honour their commitment to defend Czechoslovakia if Hitler invaded. The French were bound by a treaty and reluctantly said they would. The British felt bound to support the French. However, Chamberlain asked Hitler whether he had designs on Czechoslovakia and was reassured by Hitler's promise (Source 26).

Despite what he said to Chamberlain, Hitler did have designs on Czechoslovakia. This new state, created by the Treaty of Versailles, included a large number of Germans – former subjects of the Austria-Hungary Empire – in the Sudetenland area (see page 94). Henlein, who was the leader of the Nazis in the Sudetenland, stirred up trouble among the Sudetenland Germans and they demanded to be part of Germany. In May 1938, Hitler made it clear that he intended to fight Czechoslovakia if necessary. Historians disagree as to whether Hitler really meant what he said. There is considerable evidence that the German army was not at all ready for war. Even so the news put Europe on full war alert.

Unlike Austria, Czechoslovakia would be no walk-over for Hitler. Britain, France and the USSR had all promised to support Czechoslovakia if it came to war. The Czechs themselves had a modern army. The Czechoslovak leader, Beneš, was prepared to fight. He knew that without the Sudetenland and its forts, railways and industries, Czechoslovakia would be defenceless.

All through the summer the tension rose in Europe. If there was a war, people expected that it would bring heavy bombing of civilians as had happened in the Spanish Civil War, and in cities around Britain councils began digging air-raid shelters. Magazines carried advertisements for air-raid protection and gas masks.

horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that
 could be digging trenches and trying
 masks here because of a quarrel in
 away country between people of
 we know nothing. I am myself a
 of peace to the depths of my soul.

From a radio broadcast by Neville
 Chamberlain, September 1938.

PROFILE

Neville Chamberlain



Born 1869.
 He was the son of the famous radical
 politician Joseph Chamberlain.
 He was a successful businessman in
 the Midlands before entering politics.
 During the First World War he served
 in the Cabinet as Director General of
 National Service. During this time he
 saw the full horrors of war.
 After the war he was Health Minister
 and then Chancellor. He was noted for
 his careful work and his attention to
 detail. However, he was not good at
 listening to advice.
 He was part of the government
 throughout the 1920s and supported
 the policy of Appeasement towards
 Hitler. He became Prime Minister in
 1937, although he had little
 experience of foreign affairs.
 He believed that Germany had real
 grievances – this was the basis for his
 policy of Appeasement.
 He became a national hero after the
 Munich Conference of 1938 averted
 war.
 In 1940 Chamberlain resigned as
 Prime Minister and Winston Churchill
 took over.

SOURCE 28



Digging air raid defences in London, September 1938.

In September the problem reached crisis point. In a last-ditch effort to avert war, Chamberlain flew to meet Hitler on 15 September. The meeting appeared to go well. Hitler moderated his demands, saying he was only interested in parts of the Sudetenland – and then only if a plebiscite showed that the Sudeten Germans wanted to join Germany. Chamberlain thought this was reasonable. He felt it was yet another of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles that needed to be addressed. Chamberlain seemed convinced that, if Hitler got what he wanted, he would at last be satisfied.

On 19 September the French and the British put to the Czechs their plans to give Hitler the parts of the Sudetenland that he wanted. However, three days later at a second meeting, Hitler increased his demands. He said he 'regretted' that the previously arranged terms were not enough. He wanted all the Sudetenland.

SOURCE 29

The Sudetenland is the last problem that must be solved and it will be solved. It is the last territorial claim which I have to make in Europe.

The aims of our foreign policy are not unlimited . . . They are grounded on the determination to save the German people alone . . . Ten million Germans found themselves beyond the frontiers of the Reich . . . Germans who wished to return to the Reich as their homeland.

Hitler speaking in Berlin, September 1938.

To justify his demands, he claimed that the Czech government was mistreating the Germans in the Sudetenland and that he intended to 'rescue' them by 1 October. Chamberlain told Hitler that his demands were unreasonable. The British navy was mobilised. War seemed imminent.

With Mussolini's help, a final meeting was held in Munich on 29 September. While Europe held its breath, the leaders of Britain, Germany, France and Italy decided on the fate of Czechoslovakia. On 29 September they decided to give Hitler what he wanted. They announced that Czechoslovakia was to lose the Sudetenland. They did not consult the Czechs, nor did they consult the USSR. This is known as the Munich Agreement. The following morning Chamberlain and Hitler published a joint declaration (Source 31) which Chamberlain said would bring 'peace for our time'.

SOURCE 30

People of Britain, your children are safe. Your husbands and your sons will not march to war. Peace is a victory for all mankind. If we must have a victor, let us choose Chamberlain, for the Prime Minister's conquests are mighty and enduring – millions of happy homes and hearts relieved of their burden.

The Daily Express comments on the Munich Agreement, 30 September 1938.

SOURCE 31

We regard the Agreement signed last night . . . as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. We are resolved that we shall use consultation to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to assure the peace of Europe.

The joint declaration of Chamberlain and Hitler, 30 September 1938.

Hitler had gambled that the British would not risk war. He spoke of the Munich Agreement as 'an undreamt-of triumph, so great that you can scarcely imagine it'. The prize of the Sudetenland had been given to him without a shot being fired. On 1 October German troops marched into the Sudetenland. At the same time, Hungary and Poland helped themselves to Czech territory where Hungarians and Poles were living.

The Czechs had been betrayed. Beneš resigned. But the rest of Europe breathed a sigh of relief. Chamberlain received a hero's welcome back in Britain, when he returned with the 'piece of paper' – the Agreement – signed by Hitler (see Profile, page 267).

SOURCE 32

A



B



- Study Sources 30–36. Sort them into the following categories:
 - those that support the Munich Agreement
 - those that criticise the Munich Agreement.
- List the reasons why each source supports or criticises the agreement.

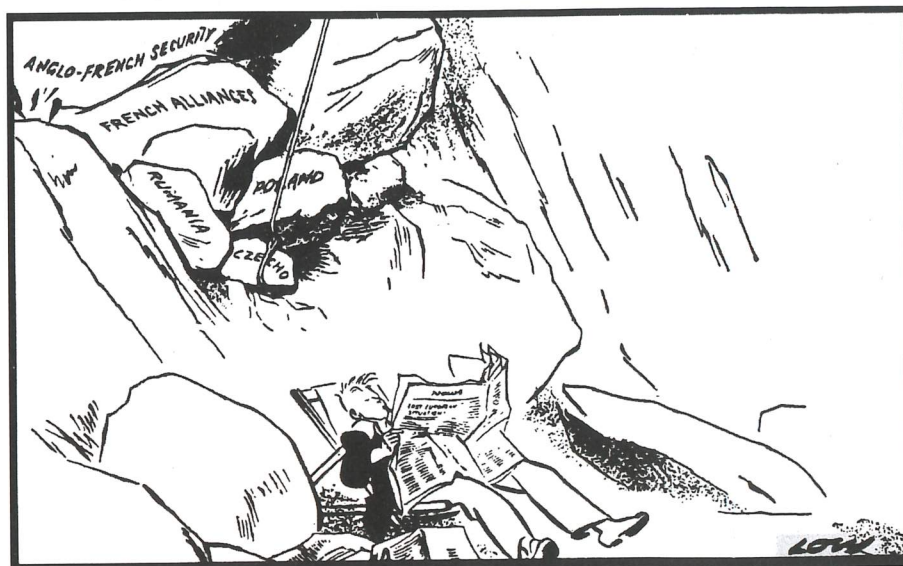
Two British cartoons commenting on the Sudetenland crisis of 1938.

ACTIVITY

Write extracts from the diaries of some of the main parties affected by the Sudetenland crisis, e.g. Chamberlain, Hitler, Beneš or one of the diplomats who was involved in making the agreement, or of an ordinary Briton or an ordinary Czech.

A triumph or a sell-out?

What do you think of the Munich Agreement? Was it a good move or a poor one? Most people in Britain were relieved that it had averted war, but many were now openly questioning the whole policy of Appeasement. Even the public relief may have been overstated. Opinion polls in September 1938 show that the British people did not think Appeasement would stop Hitler. It simply delayed a war, rather than preventing it. Even while Chamberlain was signing the Munich Agreement, he was approving a massive increase in arms spending in preparation for war.



A British cartoon from 1938.

SOURCE 33

By repeatedly surrendering to force, Chamberlain has encouraged aggression . . . our central contention, therefore, is that Mr Chamberlain's policy has throughout been based on a fatal misunderstanding of the psychology of dictatorship.

The Yorkshire Post, December 1938.

SOURCE 34

We have suffered a total defeat . . . I think you will find that in a period of time Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi regime. We have passed an awful milestone in our history. This is only the beginning of the reckoning.

Winston Churchill speaking in October 1938. He felt that Britain should resist the demands of Hitler. However, he was an isolated figure in the 1930s.

ACTIVITY

Write a selection of newspaper headlines for 30 September – the day after the Munich Agreement. Your selection might include headlines for:

- different British newspapers
- a neutral American newspaper
- a German newspaper
- a Czech newspaper
- a Polish newspaper.

For each newspaper decide whether the Agreement would be seen as a triumph or a sell-out.

For one of the headlines write a short article describing the Agreement. You can use quotations from Sources 30, 33 and 34.

SOURCE 36

DAILY SKETCH SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1938

CELEBRATE in the best of spirits SEAGERS GIN 100% PURE 100% PERFECT

DAILY SKETCH

No. 9,177 SATURDAY, OCTOBER 1, 1938 ONE PENNY

PEACE SOUVENIR ISSUE WIRELESS: P. 19

PREMIER SAYS 'PEACE FOR OUR TIME' - P. 3

Give Thanks In Church To-morrow

TO-MORROW is Peace Sunday.

Hardly more than a few hours ago it seemed as if it would have been the first Sunday of the most senseless and savage war in history.

The "Daily Sketch" suggests that the Nation should attend church to-morrow and give thanks.

THE fathers and mothers who might have lost their sons, the young people who would have paid the cost of war with their lives, the children who have been spared the horror of modern warfare — let them all attend Divine Service and kneel in humility and thankfulness.

To-morrow should not be allowed to pass without a sincere and reverent recognition of its significance.

MR. CHAMBERLAIN shows the paper that represents his great triumph for European peace to the thousands who gave him such a thunderous welcome at Heston yesterday. It is the historic Anglo-German Pact signed by himself and the Fuehrer, Herr Hitler.

'Determined To Ensure Peace'

WHEN Mr. Chamberlain arrived at Heston last night he said:

"This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler. Here is a paper which bears his name as well as mine. I would like to read it to you:

"We, the German Fuehrer and Chancellor and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting to-day and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the 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 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 the assurance of peace in Europe."

The front page of the Daily Sketch, 1 October 1938.

The end of Appeasement

Czechoslovakia, 1939

Although the British people welcomed the Munich Agreement, they did not trust Hitler. In an opinion poll in October 1938, 93 per cent said they did not believe him when he said he had no more territorial ambitions in Europe. In March 1939 they were proved right. On 15 March, with Czechoslovakia in chaos, German troops took over the rest of the country.

SOURCE 37

Key

- October 1938
Teschen taken by
Poland
- November 1938 to
March 1939
Slovak border areas
and Ruthenia taken
by Hungary
- October 1938
Sudetenland region
given to Germany in
the Munich Agreement
- March 1939
Remainder of
Czechoslovakia taken
under German control
- German border
in 1939



The take-over of Czechoslovakia by 1939.

SOURCE 38



- 1 Choose five words to describe the attitude of the crowd in Source 38.

German troops entering Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, in March 1939.

There was no resistance from the Czechs. Nor did Britain and France do anything about the situation. However, it was now clear that Hitler could not be trusted. For Chamberlain it was a step too far. Unlike the Sudeten Germans, the Czechs were not separated from their homeland by the Treaty of Versailles. This was an invasion. If Hitler continued unchecked, his next target was likely to be Poland. Britain and France told Hitler that if he invaded Poland they would declare war on Germany. The policy of Appeasement was ended. However, after years of Appeasement, Hitler did not actually believe that Britain and France would risk war by resisting him.

The Nazi–Soviet Pact

Look at your ‘Versailles chart’ from page 257. You should have only one item left. As Hitler was gradually retaking land lost at Versailles, you can see from Source 37 that logically his next target was the strip of former German land in Poland known as the Polish Corridor. He had convinced himself that Britain and France would not risk war over this, but he was less sure about Stalin and the USSR. Let’s see why.

Background

Stalin had been very worried about the German threat to the Soviet Union ever since Hitler came to power in 1933. Hitler had openly stated his interest in conquering Russian land. He had denounced Communism and imprisoned and killed Communists in Germany. Even so, Stalin could not reach any kind of lasting agreement with Britain and France in the 1930s. From Stalin’s point of view, it was not for want of trying. In 1934 he had joined the League of Nations, hoping the League would guarantee his security against the threat from Germany. However, all he saw at the League was its powerlessness when Mussolini successfully invaded Abyssinia, and when both Mussolini and Hitler intervened in the Spanish Civil War. Politicians in Britain and France had not resisted German rearmament in the 1930s. Indeed, some in Britain seemed even to welcome a stronger Germany as a force to fight Communism, which they saw as a bigger threat to British interests than Hitler (see page 264).

Stalin’s fears and suspicions grew in the mid 1930s. He signed a treaty with France in 1935 that said that France would help the USSR if Germany invaded the Soviet Union. But Stalin was not sure he could trust the French to stick to it, particularly when they failed even to stop Hitler moving into the Rhineland, which was right on their own border.

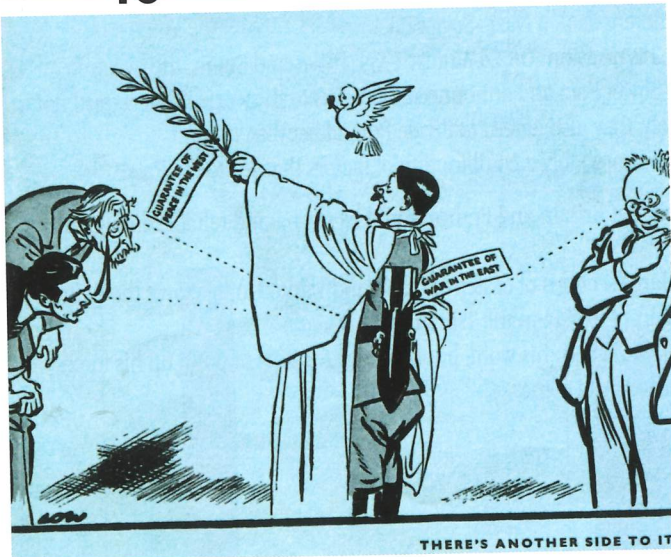
The Munich Agreement in 1938 increased Stalin’s concerns. He was not consulted about it. Stalin concluded from the agreement that France and Britain were powerless to stop Hitler or, even worse, that they were happy for Hitler to take over eastern Europe and then the USSR.

SOURCE 39

It will be asked how it was possible that the Soviet government signed a non-aggression pact with so deceitful a nation, with such criminals as Hitler and Ribbentrop . . . We secured peace for our country for eighteen months, which enabled us to make military preparations.

Stalin, in a speech in 1941.

SOURCE 40



A British cartoon from 1937. The figures on the left represent Britain and France. The figure on the right is Molotov, the Soviet Foreign Minister.

SOURCE 41



A Soviet cartoon from 1939. СССР is Russian for USSR. The French and the British are directing Hitler away from western Europe and towards the USSR.

- 2 What does Source 40 reveal about Soviet attitudes to Britain and France?
- 3 How might a British politician justify the Munich Agreement to Stalin?

- 1 Look at Source 44. What point is the cartoonist making about the Nazi-Soviet Pact?
- 2 Do you agree with his view of the Pact?

SOURCE 42

Hitler regarded the Pact as his master stroke. Although he had promised the Russians eastern Poland, Finland, Estonia and Latvia, he never intended to allow them to keep these territories.

Stalin did not expect Hitler to keep his word either. He was sure he could only gain from a long war in which Britain, France and Germany exhausted themselves. Seldom have two countries entered an alliance so dishonestly.

From *The Modern World since 1870*, a school textbook by LE Snellgrove, published in 1980.

SOURCE 43

Why did Britain and France help Hitler to achieve his aims? By rejecting the idea of a united front proposed by the USSR, they played into the hands of Germany. They hoped to appease Hitler by giving him some Czech territory. They wanted to direct German aggression eastward against the USSR and the disgraceful Munich deal achieved this.

[In 1939] the USSR stood alone in the face of the growing Fascist threat. The USSR had to make a treaty of non-aggression with Germany. Some British historians tried to prove that this treaty helped to start the Second World War. The truth is it gave the USSR time to strengthen its defences.

Soviet historian Kukushkin, writing in 1981.

- 3 What do Sources 39, 42 and 43 agree about?
- 4 What do they disagree about?

ACTIVITY

Was the war all Hitler's fault?

Imagine that Hitler is on trial. He is facing the charge that he deliberately planned and started the Second World War.

- 1 What evidence would the prosecution bring forward?
- 2 What evidence would be put forward by the defence?

SOURCE 44



A British cartoon from 1939.

Despite his misgivings, Stalin was still prepared to talk with Britain and France about an alliance against Hitler. The three countries met in March 1939, but Chamberlain was reluctant to commit Britain. From Stalin's point of view, France and Britain then made things worse by giving Poland a guarantee that they would defend it if it was invaded. Chamberlain meant the guarantee as a warning to Hitler. Stalin saw it as support for one of the USSR's potential enemies.

Negotiations between Britain, France and the USSR continued through the spring and summer of 1939. However, Stalin also received visits from the Nazi foreign minister Ribbentrop. They discussed a rather different deal, a Nazi-Soviet Pact.

In August, Stalin made his decision. On 24 August 1939, Hitler and Stalin, the two arch enemies, signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact and announced the terms to the world. They agreed not to attack one another. Privately, they also agreed to divide Poland between them.

Why did Stalin sign? It was probably a combination of factors that led to the Pact.

- Stalin was not convinced that Britain and France would be strong and reliable enough as allies against Hitler.
- He also had designs on large sections of eastern Poland and wanted to take over the Baltic states, which had been part of Russia in the Tsar's day.
- He did not believe Hitler would keep his word, but he hoped for time to build up his forces against the attack he knew would come.

War

The Pact was perhaps the pinnacle of Hitler's triumphs. It cleared the way for Germany's invasion of Poland.

On 1 September 1939 the German army invaded Poland from the west. On 17 September Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east. Poland soon fell.

If Hitler was planning ahead at all, then in his mind the next move would surely be an attack against his temporary ally, the USSR. He was certain that Britain and France would not go to war over Poland. But Hitler's triumph was spoilt by a nasty surprise. Britain and France did keep their pledge. On 3 September they declared war on Germany.

Hitler had started a war, but it was not the war he had in mind. It was too soon and against the wrong opponents. Hitler had taken one gamble too many.