

Historical Committee

The Munich Agreement : The Need for Peace

Initial date: September 29, 1938

1. History of the committee

The Historical committee was established in the Model United Nations (MUN) on January 24, 1946. Its purpose is to review a specific historical topic that has already occurred. It allows participants to explore and understand historical context and provide them the opportunity to explore new possible solutions different from how the event ended. The committee evolved from informal groups to complex bodies. Early committees were often temporary and focused on specific issues, however, standing committees with more broad jurisdictions became most common.

1. Introduction

The crisis arises from the fact that Adolf Hitler and the German Reich want to annex a region in Czechoslovakia, the Sudetenland, using ethnicity as an excuse to claim “rightful territory”. Both Britain and France were the “strongest” allies close to Germany, scared of the outbreak of a potential World War. Due to this fear, the British established a policy of appeasement, where they would meet Hitler’s demands for global “peace and prosperity”.

The members of the original treaty met to attempt to settle a deal that would promote world peace. Still, each leader had their agenda, and not everything was as smooth as it seemed.

It had a big impact in preventing a war in the short-term and was seen as a success in conflict prevention. But later on it made Hitler cocky and bold, to the point where he thought he could do whatever he wanted. It was this agreement that specifically made his personality show more, and increased even more his power. Attempting to test ally boundaries, Hitler still

threatened neighboring countries despite the settled agreement, and eventually entered Poland to start the outbreak of the war.

2. Historical context

We offer a (not so) warm welcome to Munich. The capital of Bavaria, and one of the most strategically important cities in Germany. The countries in the committee have a high relevance towards the global situation at hand now. The year is 1938, German *Fuhrer* Adolf Hitler (appointed in 1933) has demanded that the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia be given to Germany. After “The Great War” Germany was forced to sign an embarrassing treaty in the Versailles Palace. At the moment, Hitler created an *anschluss* (joint coalition) with Austria and has re-established his army. This violated many parts of the previously mentioned Treaty of Versailles. This time, history takes a twist as MANY top representatives/delegates of the most important countries of the world, have been called upon to debate the issue at hand.

Approximately 3 million people lived in the Sudetenland prior to the Agreement. Living conditions varied, but there were significant social and political divisions between the German and Czech populations. For example, the Sudeten Germans experienced discrimination and increasing tensions with the Czech government, particularly in the early-mid 1930s. Which they started to fight back at in the late 1930s when Germany rose to the international stage.

3. Current Issue

As of Today, September 29, 1938, Hitler has shown primal aggression against the Czechoslovak Republic, troops have been found near the border. And Adolf Hitler has indeed requested that the Sudetenland part of the country be given to the German Reich. Many countries are scared of the possibility of a Second War to come from this aggression from Hitler, and most of the allies have adopted a policy of appeasement towards Hitler. Should the Germans Appear? Or is catastrophe already due?

This topic marked the stamp on the Policy of Appeasement in real life. An event that basically made or broke the possibility of World War II. Czechoslovakia was scared, Britain was scared, the world was scared. They didn't want to go through another big war. So, after many

attempts of Hitler getting what he wanted, there was a meeting in Munich to see what the allies would do with Hitler. Consequently they appeased in real life, but how would **you** write the story? It is important to note that in the real Munich Agreement, many countries weren't invited, but here we want to get the full picture. So even countries like Czechoslovakia, which was excluded from negotiations early, gets a say in how history develops.

As for civilians in the Sudetenland, they were conformed by a majority German speaking population. The people of the region were even visibly opposed to Czech civilians and government, sparking riots, engaging in violence, and constantly supporting German annexation. The area was overall very divided between Pro-Germans influenced by Nazi propaganda, and loyal Czechs who fought for their government. Both ideologies clashed together in the mix of the Sudetenland.

4. Past International actions and formed treaties/alliances

The agreement itself was an international action that took place to address the issue of Hitler's expansion in the continent. At the time of the incident, the League of Nations, which was the closest thing to the UN today, was not the most efficient organization and country leaders were forced to diplomatically meet to reach a solution.

Some other diplomatic actions and relevant treaties include the Treaty of Versailles, which established the conditions Germany had to face after "The Great War". There was also the Treaty of Saint-Germain and Treaty of Trianon, which established the borders Germany had with Czechoslovakia, and what sparked the conflict initially. Moreover, France, USSR, Czechoslovakia, and Britain had formed alliances or agreements to cooperate if Czechoslovakia were to be attacked.

As for the Axis powers, Germany had previously established an Anschluss with Austria earlier in 1938, establishing a larger territory for the German Reich. In addition, Germany remilitarized the Rhineland (1936) and rearmed (1933) to further alarm other powers throughout the continent. The Rome-Berlin Axis cooperation pact declared mutual friendship between Germany and Italy. Germany also signed a Non Aggression Pact with Poland in 1934

Just before the Munich Agreement, Hitler decided to publicly announce a threat to Czechoslovakia, wanting to unleash armed conflict on the continent unless the Sudetenland was “rightfully” given to him. Nations from all over the world have now gathered in Munich with the idea of appeasing, giving Hitler what he wants, or other ideas to destroy the possibility of world conflict.

5. Subtopics

a) The Anschluss of Germany with Austria and its current impact and relevance in Czechoslovakia.

The Anschluss showed Hitler as an overly aggressive leader who had expansionist policies and could do anything to clear his path towards world dominance. Some countries, like the ones around Germany, understood that and were understandably scared of Hitler’s potential as a leader. Other countries chose to see only the last war which showed Germany as a nation not worth trusting and one that had to be calmed down so they could impede another possible war. This topic is highly relevant because it is the initial action Germany took towards their domination goal, something that could go hand and hand with what COULD happen to Czechoslovakia. Since it was also recent (the same year, 1938) it is a big topic of discussion as to whether or not Germany is going too far.

b) Is appeasement the best way to maintain peace on the continent?

Appeasing is, by definition, to placate someone by acceding to their demands. In other words, you comply with what the other is asking. For many countries, this was the only way of preventing a war outbreak. If Hitler kept his promise of only getting Sudetenland, or only getting Austria, etc. Then the appeasement would work, but he did what he wanted and kept asking for more and more, obligating the allies to find another way to stop him. But...was there another solution? Appeasement might have happened not because it was the best, but the only outcome. The importance of appeasement worldwide was astonishing at the time, after all, the Munich Conference was where allies and axis

joined to decide what would give peace for the continent. Still, was appeasement the best solution? Or is there another possibility?

c) How do the people of the Sudetenland respond to a sudden change in governments amidst world tensions?

Imagine you are part of a community your whole life and that community also belongs to a country. This country has also been part of “you” your whole life. Now, suddenly a neighboring country, who has a very militarized, expansion personality wants to take charge of your community with the excuse that SOME people in the community had German heritage. How should the rules apply and how far do the own Sudetenland people influence who should get jurisdiction over the area. Surveys, stats, data, anything. Ultimately, the people might be the deciding factor as to who should stay in charge of the area.

6. Positions

a) In Favor of Germany getting Sudetenland: (Axis)

- German Reich - Wants to take control of power throughout Europe. They just really want Sudetenland and honestly WILL have it, it's just a case of how the allies choose to counter them.
- Kingdom of Italy - A big fan of Hitler's work since the Rome-Berlin Axis cooperation in 1936.
- State of Austria - Part of Hitler's jurisdiction after the Anschluss between Germany and Austria.
- Second Spanish Republic - Is in the middle of a Civil war and is aided constantly by axis powers, supports an idea of appeasement.
- Kingdom of Hungary - Allied to Germany during The Great War, and at the moment does not want conflict around its borders. (Is scared)

b) Deciding Factors Inclined to Appeasement: (Allies)

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Neville Chamberlain) - Contrary

to public opinion, the current prime minister wants to give Hitler what he wants, as he is very afraid of another war.

- French Republic - Close to the conflict zone, and remembers fondly of what was done in the past to the French people. They do not want a repeat war, but they also despise Germany.
- Commonwealth of Australia - Relies heavily on the British, and had a strong desire to maintain ties with the British Empire, a fear of Japan's military strength, and a belief that appeasement could prevent another major war
- Dominion of Canada - Initially simply wanted to avoid war as any war declared by the British would mean their involvement since it was still the British Dominion.

c) Deciding important factors:

- Empire of Japan - Japan showed little interest in Hitler's appeasement deals and was generally not in favor of appeasement. It only believed in self expansion, and at the time, the Tripartite Pact hadn't been signed.
- Kingdom of the Netherlands - Initially, they maintained neutrality in face of the Nazi German aggression in hopes to avoid a conflict. At some point, they rejected the idea of appeasing Hitler, but then sided with the Germans to prevent invasion.

d) Against with Germany getting Sudetenland:

- United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Winston Churchill) - The prime minister who succeeded Chamberlain and the central face of Britain at the time was openly against appeasement, stating Germany were taking advantage of the policy.
- Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) - Initially, the Soviet Union was against any type of appeasement with Hitler. They were one of the countries most scared by Hitler's power, and fear obligated them to take action. They were against appeasement, but were obligated to cede to it as they had no other choice.
- United States of America - At the start of Hitler's power, the US chose to not intervene. However, after sometime they decided that he was simply taking advantage of the negotiations and rejected the policy of appeasement for Czechoslovakia.
- Czechoslovak Republic - They didn't want to lose territory, asking other countries to act

and impede Germany from entering their area. They were aware that if Germany took control of Sudetenland they would then take control of the whole country.

- Second Polish Republic - They did not want to appease Hitler, believing they could be next on his list. They signed a Non-Agression Pact with Germany as they later ultimately rejected Hitler's demands and refused to become a German satellite state.

7. Guiding questions

- What is the cost of excluding Czechoslovakia and the USSR from negotiations?
- Is the Kingdom of Italy acting as a mediator looking forward to stability or as a partner enabling Hitler's ambitions of influence?
- How far should the voices of the Sudetenland's population be measured and weighed in determining the region's future?
- How did the Anschluss shape international perceptions of Hitler's intentions and influence the Sudetenland crisis?
- Could appeasement become an effective long-term strategy when dealing with a power such as Germany?
- Should the German Reich's claim of self determination for Sudeten Germans justify the territorial annexation or is it just an excuse for expansionism?
- Does ceding Sudetenland truly prevent war or does it only postpone an inevitable larger conflict?
- Are economic motives like Sudetenland's fortifications and factories being disguised as ethnic or political disputes?
- Does the absence of the United States in negotiations weaken collective security or does Europe bear full responsibility?
- If Sudetenland is handed over, what prevents Hitler from demanding Danzing, Memel or Austria-like arrangements again?

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