

## Anschluss Crisis

Hitler was never shy in revealing his desire to bring about a union between Austria and Germany, known as the Anschluss. Hitler had been born in Austria and spent a majority of his life there. Hitler recognized the common culture shared between Austria and Germany and used this to justify Anschluss. Hitler's desire to incorporate Austria under German rule was a part of his grander scheme of expanding German Lebensraum, or "living space". A German-Austrian union was strictly forbidden under the restrictions stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles.

In Austria the Nazi party had developed a strong pro-Anschluss movement with the help of Hitler. In January of 1938 Kurt von Schuschnigg, the Austrian leader, asked Hitler to call a stop to Nazi disruptive tactics in Austria. On February 12th, Hitler and Schuschnigg agreed to meet in Austria to discuss the Nazi agitation inside Austria. At this meeting Hitler advised Schuschnigg to place two of the leading Austrian Nazis in key government positions in order to stop the disruptive tactics of the Nazi activists. Schuschnigg, feeling bullied by Hitler's response, returned to Austria and called a referendum urging voters to support Austrian independence as a show of defiance to Hitler's suggestions. Hitler, outraged by Schuschnigg's defiance, called for the Austrian government to withdraw the proposed referendum. On March 11<sup>th</sup>, 1938 Hitler secured Italian support for a Nazi takeover of Austria. Under intense pressure from Italy, von Schuschnigg was forced to resign. He was replaced by Arthur Seyss-Inquart, an Austrian Nazi. As his first act as Austrian leader, Seyss-Inquart invited Hitler to take over Austria. The following day German troops cross the Austrian border to be greeted by cheering crowds. Hitler was so enthused by the response the German troops received that he immediately declared the union between Austria and Germany.

**Decision Point: How should your nation respond to Hitler's initiation of Anschluss?**

### Relative Economic Strengths in Europe: 1930s

	Unemployment Rate (%)					Economic (% Change)			
	1932	1934	1936	1938		1929-32		1932-37	
						GDP	Indus. Prod.	GDP	Indus. Prod.
Britain	17	12	8	9		-5.8	-11.4	25.7	52.9
France	15	14	15	10		-11.0	-25.6	7.9	20.0
Czech.	13	18	14	9		-18.2	-26.5	20.3	51.5
USSR	na*	na	na	na		6.9	66.7	146.7	59.3
Germany	44	14	na	1		-15.7	-40.8	67.5	122.2
USA	25	20	14	16		-28.0	-44.7	46.6	86.8

na = No Statistics available. \* Under the Soviet system, there was officially no unemployment

### Relative Military Strengths in Europe: 1938-1939

	1938			1939			
	Army Divisions	Airplanes		Army Divisions	Airplanes	Battle ships	Subs
Britain	2	1,050		4	1,750	15	57
France	63	1,195		86	1,234	7	78
Czech.	34	600		None	None	None	None
USSR	125	3,050		125	3,361	3	20

Germany	81	1,820		130	4,210	5	65
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