

Czechoslovakia and the Sudetenland

When Czechoslovakia was formed after WWI, it included several million Germans who lived primarily in the western edge of the country. This area, known as the Sudetenland, was heavily industrialized and formed a natural geographic barrier/buffer from Germany. While Germans were only 10% of the overall Czechoslovakian population, they were 86% of the Sudeten population.

There was significant unrest in the Sudetenland, especially after the Great Depression. Many Sudeten Germans blamed the Czech government and the Czechoslovakian Jewish population for their economic difficulties. This led to the growth of Nazism in the area that was supported, at least indirectly, by Hitler. By 1935 a Pro-Nazi Sudeten political party was gaining support through local elections. As the tension grew, riots broke out in the area in October of 1937. In November the government had banned the Pro-Nazi Sudeten party from meeting and consequently it seceded from Parliament.

In 1938 Hitler demanded that the Sudetenland become part of Germany. He based this demand on both its significant German population and claims that they were being mistreated by the Czechs. Britain and France agreed to support self-determination within the Sudetenland (they could decide for themselves what government/nation they were a part of), but Hitler demanded complete annexation and military occupation of the area.

Decision Point: How should your nation respond to Germany's demand?

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