

Chapter 3 sample Cambridge IGCSE questions with sample answers

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We secured peace for our country for one and a half years. This was a definite gain for Russia and loss for Germany.

Stalin speaking in a radio broadcast in 1941.

a) What happened at the Munich Conference in 1938? (4)

The Munich Conference settled the fate of the Sudetenland and arguably the whole of Czechoslovakia. Germany was allowed to receive those parts of the Sudetenland where the population was made up mainly of Germans. This process was to take place during a 10-day period. The remainder of Czechoslovakia was to be guaranteed by Britain, France, Germany, and Italy once various territorial claims by Poland and Hungary had been resolved. In areas where there was uncertainty as to the dominant nationality plebiscites were to be held, supervised by an international commission.

In addition to the above arrangements, Hitler and Neville Chamberlain signed a separate memorandum pledging both powers to promote the peace of Europe and to use the "method of consultation" to resolve any mutual differences.

b) Why did Stalin sign the Nazi-Soviet Pact? (6)

In the summer of 1939 Stalin faced the choice of signing an alliance with Britain and France to deter German aggression or a 10-year non-aggression pact with Germany itself. Stalin's short-term ambition was to buy time while he completed his internal reforms, and rebuilt and re-equipped the Soviet army. In view of this the German offer appeared the most attractive and provided the bonus of eastern Poland. Stalin feared that if he signed the alliance with Britain and France then he would be drawn into war with Germany before his country was ready to fight. This might lead to a war on two fronts for Soviet Russia as Japan was a hostile neighbour in the east.

For these practical reasons Stalin signed a pact with a country that had made little secret of its total opposition to everything that communism stood for. It was a pact of convenience.

- c) How far was Hitler's foreign policy to blame for war in 1939?
Explain your answer. (10)

Hitler's foreign policy was constantly changing. At first it appeared as if he simply wanted to make Germany great again by destroying the Versailles Settlement. This inevitably brought him into diplomatic conflict with Britain and France as they were the main upholders of this settlement. Yet both Britain and France were prepared to make concessions to Germany as a result of their policy of appeasement. By the end of 1938 Germany had broken the rearmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, remilitarised the Rhineland, united with Austria, and annexed the Sudetenland. All this was achieved without war. Britain and France also encouraged Poland to negotiate over Danzig and the Polish Corridor.

But in March 1939 Germany occupied Czechoslovakia and this act altered the whole approach to Hitler's foreign policy. Previously it had been thought reasonable that he wanted to achieve a "Greater Germany" by bringing all German-speaking peoples into the Reich. Now it was apparent that Hitler was an aggressive expansionist seeking to dominate Europe by force. From this point onwards Hitler's foreign policy was almost bound to lead to war, especially as he had formed the view that the western powers were spineless, mentally and physically incapable of resisting German strength.

Hence from March 1939 onwards Hitler's foreign policy was very much to blame for the outbreak of war. His aims had become limitless and the attitude of the western powers had changed from how to accommodate him to how to stop him. This was why a guarantee was given to Poland. Once the Nazi-Soviet Pact had been signed war was virtually inevitable.