Could Appeasement Be Justified?

**Discover: reasons for appeasement**  **Explore: Were these reasons valid**  **Skill: source analysis + evaluation**

Appeasement means giving into someone in order to avoid trouble. Between 1933 and 1937 Britain and France had appeased Hitler in a number of ways. However, the best example of appeasement came in 1938. Chamberlain, Daladier and Mussolini met Hitler in Munich, Germany. During the meeting Hitler made promises that the Sudetenland was the “last territorial demand I have to make in Europe”. Desperate to avoid a war it was agreed to give Hitler the Sudetenland. Chamberlain was seen as a hero by the British people but others, such as MP Winston Churchill criticized him for giving into Hitler.

So who was right, the British Public or Churchill?

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** Appeasement Timeline**

- Hitler’s book Mein Kamp published. It outlines his idea for a German Third Reich.
  - 1924
- The Global Depression begins.
  - 1929
- Hitler achieves a number of his foreign policy aims. Rebuilding his army and he puts troops back in the Rhineland.
  - 1933-36
- The League is Dead.
  - By 1936
- Anschluss achieved.
  - March 1938
- Hitler met Chamberlain and asked his support in taking the Sudetenland. He said he only wanted part of this area and only after a holding plebiscite (people’s vote).
  - 17 Sept 1938
- Chamberlain thought this reasonable. He rallied support from France. However, Hitler then said that the Czechs were killing Sudeten Germans + that he would “rescue them” by October 1st.
  - 21 Sept 1938
- With Mussolini’s help, a final meeting was arranged in Munich. The world waited..........**The Munich Agreement** was signed. It gave Hitler all the Sudetenland and war was avoided.
  - 29 Sept 1938
- Hitler invades the rest of Czechoslovakia.
  - 15 March 1939

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I was then going onto some further questions when he said... “but all this seems so academic. I want to get down to realities. Three hundred Sudetens have been killed and that cannot go on: this thing has to be settled at once. I am determined to settle it. I do not care if there is a World War or not: I am determined to settle it and to settle it soon and I am prepared to risk a Word War rather than let it drag on.” To that I replied; “If the Fuhrer is determined to settle this matter by force without even waiting for a discussion between ourselves to take place, what did he let me come here for? I have wasted my time.

An official transcript of a meeting between British PM Chamberlain And Adolf Hitler in Munich, September 1938.
Daladier (the French Premier) believed he saw Hitler's ultimate goals. in late April 1938, he told the British that Hitler's real aim was to eventually secure "a domination of the continent in comparison with which the ambitions of Napoleon were feeble." He went on to say "Today it is the turn of Czechoslovakia. Tomorrow it will be the turn of Poland and Romania. When Germany has obtained the oil and wheat it needs, she will turn on the West. Certainly we must multiply our efforts to avoid war. " But that will not be obtained unless Great Britain and France stick together, intervening in Prague for new concessions but declaring at the same time that they will safeguard the independence of Czechoslovakia. If, on the contrary, the Western Powers capitulate again they will only precipitate (cause) the war they wish to avoid.

Primary Extracts from Daladier, French Premier. Edited in Wikipedia.

Dear Mr Churchill... The danger to world peace and to the freer nations arising from the Fascist dictator states... has been present in my mind from the first... The ideals and practices of Fascism are obviously directed towards war and conquest... Had Fascist aggression in Africa [Italian invasion of Abyssinia, now Ethiopia] been firmly checked at the start, the world would present a very different picture today. The mood of Hitler would undoubtedly be much less aggressive than it is... I again call upon you to raise these matters in the House of Commons...

Extract from letter by Sylvia Pankhurst to Churchill, 15th April 1936

"How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas-masks here because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing"

Chamberlain, speaking in a radio broadcast about the Sudetenland crisis, 27 September 1938.


Military Aircraft Production Comparison of Britain and Germany, 1936-39.
Mein Kampf was published in 1924 and outlined Hitler’s plan for a Europe dominated by the ‘Third Reich’ (A third German Empire).

Chamberlain pursued a policy of appeasement and rearmament. Chamberlain’s reputation for appeasement rests in large measure on his negotiations (talks) with Hitler. But Chamberlain was not ready for war. Appeasement bought him the time desperately needed. Chamberlain was not totally naïve (stupid) and British military spending was increased four fold between 1935 to 1938.

Chamberlain, in a letter to his sister in 1938.

“You have only to look at the map to see that nothing we could do could possibly save Czechoslovakia from being overrun by the Germans.”

Chamberlain, in a letter to his sister in 1938.

In 1943 Hitler admitted to one of his generals that he believed he should have started the war in 1938. His mistake was allowing his enemies further time to re-arm.

Ben Walsh. IGCSE Modern World History.
Czechoslovak Republic is being broken up before our eyes. Their gold is to be stolen by the Nazis. The Nazi system is to blot out* every form of internal freedom... They are about to lose all symbols of an independent democratic State... Many people at the time of the September crisis thought they were only giving away the interests of Czechoslovakia, but with every month that passes you will see that they were also giving away the interests of Britain, and the interests of peace and justice.

* A speech by Winston Churchill, MP, to parliament in 1938.

Stalin was disgusted with the policy of appeasement. He felt betrayed by the British and French. Stalin understood Hitler’s aggression would eventually lead to conflict between the Soviets and Germany. Appeasement actually pushed Hitler and Stalin together in an agreement known as the Nazi-Soviet Pact and brought Europe closer to war in 1939.

Mr P Chantler, History Teacher, 2013.

A David Low Cartoon published on the 8th July, 1938.

Find a source of your own and write in the space below.
“My good friends, for the second time in our history a British Prime Minister has returned from Germany bringing peace with honour. I believe it is peace for our time.”

March, 1939.

Nazi troops invade Czechoslovakia.

Our enemies are little worms. I saw them at Munich. Now Poland is in the position I wanted. I am only afraid that some bastard will present me with a mediation (peace) plan at the last moment “

Adolph Hitler in his speech to his Generals on 22 August 1939. A week before his invasion of Poland

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