

Event 1: The Czechoslovakia Crisis

When Czechoslovakia was created at the end of World War I, some 3.5 million ethnic Germans had been placed within its borders in a mineral rich, naturally defensible region known as the Sudetenland. In 1938 Hitler demanded the return of the Sudetenland to the Reich, or German government. He claimed that the Czech government was mistreating Germans in this region. Czechoslovakia turned to its ally France for support against Hitler's demand, and France turned to its ally Britain for consultation. At this point, Britain and France decided not to go to war over the Sudetenland, and on September 18 informed Hitler they would support self-determination (right to choose one's government) for Sudeten Germans. Hitler then decided that this was not enough; on September 22, he demanded complete annexation and military occupation of the Sudetenland.

Critical-Thinking Question A: How do you think your country responded to the Czechoslovakia Crisis?



A. Unconditionally supported Germany's demands



B. Proclaimed neutrality (not supporting either side)



C. Negotiated an agreement with Hitler that allowed Germany to take the Sudetenland if he promised to make no more demands on Czechoslovakia



D. Opposed Germany's demands but did not threaten to declare war on Germany if it tried to take the Sudetenland



E. Threatened to declare war on Germany if it tried to take the Sudetenland

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

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Event 2: The Violation of the Munich Pact

To address the Czechoslovakia crisis, Britain, France, Germany, and Italy met in Munich, Germany, on September 29 for the Munich Conference. Britain and France wanted to strike a deal with Hitler to avoid war. They based this plan on a policy called *appeasement*, or making concessions to an aggressor to preserve peace. When Hitler agreed to the proposal that he exchange the right to occupy the Sudetenland for a promise that this would be his "last territorial demand in Europe," the four nations signed a document known as the Munich Pact. Germany occupied the Sudetenland in October. But soon thereafter Hitler began pressuring Czech leaders, demanding that a new Czech government sympathetic to Germany be put in charge. Hitler threatened the Czech government with all-out war if it did not agree to his demands. The Czechs did not meet the demands, and on March 15, 1939, Germany broke the Munich Pact and occupied Czechoslovakia, annexing it the following day.

Critical-Thinking Question B: How do you think your country responded to the violation of the Munich Pact?



A. Supported Germany's annexation of Czechoslovakia



B. Declared war on Germany for breaking the Munich Pact



C. Continued to rely on appeasement, hoping that Germany had finished its territorial aggression



D. Attempted to negotiate with Germany to pull out of Czechoslovakia



E. Proclaimed neutrality



F. Proclaimed neutrality, but prepared for a defensive war in case of invasion

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

Event 3: The Invasion of Poland

After the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Hitler turned his attention to the Polish Corridor, a strip of German land given to Poland in 1919. This strip split Germany into two parts and provided Poland with its only access to the sea. In the spring of 1939 Hitler began making demands for the return of the territory to Germany. Fearing this aggression, Poland reinforced its defense agreements with France, Britain, and the Soviet Union. But on August 23, 1939, the world was shocked by the news that the hateful rivals Hitler and Stalin had signed a Nonaggression Pact, pledging not to attack one another in the case of war and rendering the Soviet-Polish defense agreement useless. Two days later, Neville Chamberlain, Britain's Prime Minister, signed a formal guarantee of British support of Poland; France promised that if Germany started a war in Poland, France would attack Germany 15 days later. On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland.

Critical-Thinking Question C: How do you think your country responded to the invasion of Poland?



A. Proclaimed neutrality



B. Proclaimed neutrality, but prepared for a defensive war in case of invasion



C. Provided financial aid to the Allies (all countries fighting against Germany and its allies, called the Axis powers)



D. Joined Germany in its invasion of Poland



E. Declared war on Germany, and hoped Germany would retreat from Poland, but did not actually fight



F. Declared war on Germany and sent troops to fight the Germans

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

Event 4: The Invasion of France

After the fall of Poland, Germany and the Allies did not fight for eight months. Journalists called this period the “phony war.” The phony war ended on May 10, 1940, when Germany invaded the Low Countries: Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Belgium. Luxembourg fell on the first day, and the Netherlands surrendered after four days. Belgium, with the aid of French and British troops, held out until May 27, when it surrendered. Germany had invaded France on May 12, and now, with Belgium conquered, was able to turn its full attention to capturing Paris, the French capital. Hitler had long felt that if Paris could be captured, all of France would fall. Germany had 130 infantry (foot soldier) divisions and 10 tank divisions aimed at Paris, while the French had only 49 infantry divisions with which to defend the city. Since crossing the French border, Germany had already captured one million prisoners in two weeks, and had forced the evacuation of 560,000 Belgian, Dutch, British, and French troops to Great Britain. The French moved their government south as the occupation of Paris seemed imminent (about to happen).

Critical-Thinking Question D: How do you think your country responded to the threat of the fall of Paris?



A. Surrendered unconditionally to Germany



B. Surrendered on the condition that your government retained limited independence and control of some of your territory



C. Proclaimed neutrality



D. Proclaimed neutrality, but prepared defenses in case the war spread to your country



E. Fought Germany wherever possible



F. Supported Germany's invasion of France

We think our country responded with choice _____ because _____

Event 5: The Battle of Britain

On June 22, 1940, France surrendered to Germany, putting Hitler in control of all Western European countries hostile to him except Great Britain. Hitler hoped the new British Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, would consider Britain's position hopeless and decide to surrender. Instead, Churchill said, "We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender." Nonetheless, Hitler planned Operation Sea Lion, an invasion of Britain. This invasion was planned for the late summer of 1940, but it would have to be preceded by a massive air assault aimed at taking out Britain's vital air defenses, such as radar stations and air bases. On August 2, sporadic German bombing raids intensified into a massive bombardment known as the Battle of Britain. The battle intensified on August 8, when the Luftwaffe, or German Air Force, began attacking Britain with 1,500 planes a day.

Critical-Thinking Question E: How do you think your country responded to the Battle of Britain?



A. Surrendered to Germany



B. Fought against Germany's attack on Britain



C. Supported Germany's attack on Britain



D. Proclaimed neutrality



E. Proclaimed neutrality, but supported Britain with military supplies and money



F. Proclaimed neutrality, but prepared defenses in case the war spread to your country

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

Event 6: The Invasion of the Soviet Union

Victorious in Western and Southern Europe, Hitler chose the summer of 1941 to begin his long-anticipated invasion of the Soviet Union, called Operation Barbarossa. For both Hitler and Stalin, the Nonaggression Pact of 1939 had been nothing more than a pragmatic (practical) attempt to stall the inevitable battle between the two countries. Hitler used the treaty to insure a one-front war while he was fighting in the West, and Stalin wanted time to modernize his army before he was forced to fight the Germans. The Nazis believed that once they attacked the Soviet Union, it could be defeated within a few weeks. The false security of the Nonaggression Pact was broken on June 22, 1941, when Hitler unleashed a massive invasion across a long front stretching from the Baltic Sea to the Caspian Sea.

Critical-Thinking Question F: How do you think your country responded to the invasion of the Soviet Union?



A. Supported Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union



B. Fought against the German invasion of the Soviet Union



C. Proclaimed neutrality



D. Supported the Soviets by sending military supplies and materials but not troops



E. Surrendered to Germany



F. Opposed Germany's invasion by fighting Germans elsewhere

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

Event 7: Operation Overlord

Since December 1941, when the United States entered the war, American and British officials had been planning Operation Sledgehammer, the buildup of a massive force in Great Britain for an invasion of western Europe to fight Germany. The invasion was initially set for the fall of 1942, but the plan was changed when the Allies decided to attack the Axis powers in North Africa. The plan was further delayed when the Allies attacked German-controlled Italy in the summer of 1943. By 1944 the Allies were ready to launch Operation Overlord, the invasion of the Normandy coast of France. Germany was now in control of all of France, having ended the Vichy government in 1942 because some Vichy generals had conspired with the Allies. The Nazi leaders had for some time been expecting an invasion of France and had reinforced their defenses along the Normandy coast.

Critical-Thinking Question G: How do you think your country responded to the plan to launch Operation Overlord?



A. Participated fully in an invasion of the Normandy coast



B. Supported the Allies by sending some troops and supplies to Operation Overlord



C. Did not participate in Operation Overlord, but fought the Germans elsewhere



D. Provided financial support only to the Allies



E. Proclaimed neutrality



F. Proclaimed neutrality, but secretly assisted the Allies

We think our country responded with choice _____ because

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