

Cheering Austrians Greet Adolf Hitler in his Hometown of Braunau am Inn (March 12, 1938)

Abstract

Because of the German-Italian rapprochement after 1935, the new Austrian government under Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg (1897-1977) also found itself forced to improve its relationship with the German Reich. Concessions such as the so-called German-Austrian July Agreement of July 11, 1936 (which, among other things, gave amnesty to Nazi prisoners in Austria) were supposed to appease the Nazi regime and help preserve the country's sovereignty. But Hitler did not lose sight of his goal of annexation and tried, by exerting pressure in various ways, to lay the groundwork for a Nazi takeover in Austria. By threatening a military invasion, he forced Schuschnigg to sign the so-called Berchtesgaden Agreement of February 12, 1938, which lifted the prohibition on the Austrian National Socialists, brought them into the government, and coordinated the two countries' foreign policies. In particular, Hitler demanded control over the use of the police through the appointment of NSDAP member Arthur Seyß-Inquart (1892-1946) as Minister of the Interior and Security. On March 9, 1938, in response to the threat of a Nazi takeover, Schuschnigg announced that an Austrian referendum "for a free and German, independent and social, Christian and unified Austria" would be held on March 13. The Nazi regime replied with an ultimatum threatening an invasion. On March 11, it forced Schuschnigg to cancel the referendum and to resign in favor of Seyß-Inquart. The following day, German troops marched into Austria, where they met with no resistance and were even greeted with enthusiasm in many places. On the same evening, Hitler and Seyß-Inquart decided that there would be an immediate annexation [*Anschluss*] of Austria, which would subsequently be incorporated into the German Reich as the so-called Eastern March [*Ostmark*].

The photograph below was taken on March 12, 1938. It shows Hitler entering his hometown, the small Austrian border town of Braunau am Inn, where he was born in 1889. Hitler left Austria in 1913, at the age of twenty-four, to avoid service in the Austrian army. He settled in Munich, where he volunteered for service in the Bavarian army a year later. In 1925, Hitler formally renounced his Austrian citizenship and remained officially stateless until 1932, when he was granted German citizenship.

Source



Source: Adolf Hitler drives through his hometown Braunau on the afternoon of the “Anschluss Day”.

Photo: Heinrich Hoffmann.

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