

Weakening of Austrian Security and the Birth of the Axis - 1936

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The security that Hitler had gained for Germany from the military stronghold in the Rhineland meant less security for those countries in Central Europe (e.g. Austria and Czechoslovakia) who were reliant on a swift response from France in the event of German aggression. This led the Austrian Government, headed by Dr. Schuschnigg, during the summer of 1936, to begin a course of appeasement of Hitler by, for example, giving Austrian Nazis influential positions within the government in return for a pledge from Hitler to confirm his recognition of Austrian sovereignty.

The position of Austria was further undermined in October 1936 when the Italian dictator, Mussolini, who had previously pledged to maintain Austrian independence, formed an alliance with Hitler. This alliance, which became known as the Rome-Berlin Axis had been formed following the German and Italian support of fellow fascist, General Franco, in the Spanish Civil War. The Axis partnership included an agreement on a common foreign policy between the two countries.