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BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION:
THE MUNICH WEEK (SEPTEMBER 23-30, 1938)

HOMER 1963
BRITISH FOREIGN POLICY AND PUBLIC OPINION:
THE MUNICH WEEK (September 23-30, 1938)

by
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The prime frustration which one experiences in attempting to deal with an isolated week in the history of appeasement is the knowledge that it cannot be treated as a separate entity. Actually, Munich is the final major link in a chain of interrelated events occurring in the 1930's: the response (or lack of) to Japanese aggression in Ethiopia, to German reoccupation of the Rhineland, and Austrian Anschluss. The Munich week itself is important in that it is the culmination of these events and in that it provides considerable insight into the thinking and circumstances which fostered such a policy.

It also serves to provide some insight into events of recent years which smack of some degree of the same thing: our China policy between 1946 and 1949, the manner in which we conducted the Korean War, our methods in dealing with Communist infiltration and aggression in Southeast Asia, our reaction to the Sukarno action in Indonesia, and our hesitant Cuban policy.

In the following analysis I have endeavored to understand why Neville Chamberlain chose to follow his policy to the very end, in spite of the obvious dangers, and to evaluate this decision in light of the possible alternatives.

I have given considerable attention to available documents of the era, including British, German, Italian, and some Russian foreign policy papers; memoirs; and British newspapers and periodicals, including many letters to the editors, speeches, and published policy platforms of various organizations. At the same time I have lent consideration to subjective interpretations by a wide range of historians of divergent points of view ranging from J.W. Wheeler-Bennett to A.J.P. Taylor.

My focal point is Chamberlain's decision to act as he did from September 22 to the 30th and the fallacy of his personal inflexibility; there were a number of moves which he might have made but did not.

Some twenty-three hundred years ago Thucydides wrote that history should
provide lessons for future statesmen. The historian understands that, philosophically speaking, past, present, and future are inseparable—that the present should always be seen in light of the past and with an eye to the future. Whether our generation has learned Munich's lesson seems highly questionable. We can hope, although not necessarily expect, that our immediate successors will do so.
I. The Background

In seeking peace and dealing with the threat of Nazi Germany, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain had a choice of perhaps four courses which he might have followed: (1) collective security within the framework of the League of Nations, (2) an alliance of anti-Axis powers outside the League, (3) appeasement, and (4) a blend of (2) and (3). He chose appeasement, and his determination to make it work persisted until 1939.

John W. Wheeler-Bennett cites two fundamental roots to the Chamberlain brand of appeasement: (1) lack of preparation for war and (2) a conviction that revision of the Treaty of Versailles would provide a solution to a lasting peace. There were other less important factors which had some bearing on his thinking and policy-making. Included were a fear of war and what he thought was its futility as a means of settling international disputes (Chamberlain had a genuine thirst for peace); a belief that the word of Adolf Hitler could be trusted; a refusal to believe that Germany really wanted war or that she would chance it; and, as Raymond Stearns puts it, "a seldom-voiced hope that if war came, it would be a death-struggle between the Axis and Soviet Russia, fatal to both of Europe's terrors, Nazism and Communism."

The issue of preparedness is quite important. Notwithstanding arguments to the contrary, prestige and military strength generally "talk" at the conference table - being without them at least puts one at a significant disadvantage. Militarily, Britain and France fell behind Germany after 1935.

Regarding the situation in 1936, Winston Churchill stated (in November of that year), "Nothing could now prevent the German Air Force from becoming the strongest in Europe. By extraordinary, disturbing exertions we could improve our position. We could not cure it." By 1938 Germany had what was generally regarded as the strongest air force on the continent, and British and French air defenses were almost non-existent. But it must also be noted that Germany lacked the bases in 1938 for successful bombing operations against England. In early 1938 the German Army boasted 71 divisions of which 29 were reserves. On the other hand, although the English Army consisted of only 5 defensive divisions, France had approximately 60 divisions and Czechoslovakia 32 combat-ready divisions behind fortifications which greatly impressed German officers after the take-over following Munich. On paper, the really significant Allied weakness existed in airpower and air defenses; Hitler was well aware of these weaknesses.

Since England was the acknowledged leader of the Western Camp in 1938, the importance of her relative unpreparedness for war must not be underestimated. She was not prepared for war, militarily or psychologically. The responsibility for this lies primarily with the Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments and with the Labor minority in the Chamberlain era; the latter consistently sought a


strong stand against Hitler -- but invariably voted against armament increases. Arnold Toynbee summed up the situation in this way:

"Were not the Conservatives in favor of arms on the understanding that they were never to be used and the interventionists (mostly Laborites) in favor of using them on the understanding that they were never to be provided?"

It is true that Chamberlain did not inherit the office of Prime Minister until 1937 and that, by that time, it would not have been possible to wipe out the lead Germany had achieved before Munich. Nevertheless, it is also true that Chamberlain said nothing prior to his ascent to power which in any way reflected concern over military deficiencies -- nor did he for quite some time after assuming office. He paid scant attention to warnings from the militant Conservative minority, led by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden. Furthermore, he "repeatedly assured the House of Commons and the Nation that the Government were satisfied with the progress of the rearmament program." On March 7, 1938, five days prior to the Anschluss in Austria, he told Commons, "The almost terrifying power that Britain is building up has a sobering effect on the opinion of the world." It seems inconceivable that he could really have believed what he publicly declared.

How great an effect preparedness actually had on Chamberlain's decision to implement and adhere to appeasement is questionable, considering what little mention he makes of it during the entire Czech crisis period. As an excuse for his policy, it can be made to appear almost justifiable. At the same time, however, one must consider the overall strength of a potential counter-acting


9/ Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 43.

power block -- including, let us say, France, England, Russia, and Czechoslovakia -- before concluding that, because Britain was not prepared for war, appeasement was the only solution.

The self-determination concept made appeasement possible. The ideals expressed by Woodrow Wilson, particularly Point 10 of his Fourteen Points, which declared for the principle of self-determination, were not in all cases realized by the Treaty of Versailles. The peace treaty left millions of Germans in other East European states. Most regrettable was the placing of some three-million Sudeten Germans in the new Czechoslovakia -- questionable particularly because this minority group had a common frontier with the Reich. Thus, Chamberlain did not argue with Hitler when the latter said he was simply pursuing a policy originated by the Allies. Versailles was a wrong; Chamberlain sought to undo this wrong by demonstrating to the Fuehrer his willingness to give Germany what was rightfully hers. Having no faith in the League, he sought to appease Hitler, giving him what he demanded. All he seemed to desire was Hitler's promise that changes would be brought about peacefully and that they would have reasonable limits.

German rearmament (violations of the Versailles Treaty), re-occupation of the Rhineland (a violation of the Treaty and the Locarno Agreement), the British-German Naval Agreement, and Italian aggression in Ethiopia were followed by the resignation in February, 1938, of Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden who advocated collective security and standing up to Hitler.

When Hitler seized Austria on March 12, 1938, Chamberlain refused to change his course, no doubt rationalizing that its seizure was a realization of the self-determination principle.*

Immediately after Anschluss, the Russian Government proposed a Four-Power conference (France, England, Russia and Czechoslovakia) to prevent further ag-

* Actually he had implied his approval months in advance, and on March 3 Henderson had told Hitler that Britain had washed her hands of Austria, provided that the outcome could be designated as a "reasonable solution reasonably achieved." See Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 24.
gression. Chamberlain refused, at least in part because of his dogmatism in the conduct of foreign affairs, his hatred of Bolshevism, and his anxiety over Russian purges of the mid-thirties which seriously affected the military establishment. At the same time the Prime Minister of Britain turned down a proposal by a Labor body, representing the Labor Party and the National Labor Council, to have Britain, France and Russia unite in a common stand against the aggressor (Germany). Chamberlain said that this would not be wise since it would divide Europe and render war inevitable. This leads us to the Czech crisis period.

During the early months of 1938 Hitler had been waging an intense propaganda campaign against Czechoslovakia, demanding that she grant autonomy to the Sudetenlanders. And on April 24, 1938, Konrad Henlein (accepted by Hitler as the leader of the Germans in Czechoslovakia) published the Karlsbad Eight Points—demanding, among other things, that Czechoslovakia change her foreign policy and that the Sudeten Germans be granted complete freedom to profess adherence to the German National Socialist ideology. The Czech Government would not even consider acceding to these demands.

At this point Britain began to act as a mediator between Sudeten German and Czech factions. These efforts, culminating in the ill-fated Runciman mission in August, when Lord Runciman was sent (too late) to Czechoslovakia in an unsuccessful effort to bring them together, came to naught. Clashes between Czech police and Sudetenlanders occurred frequently. Henlein proclaimed that nothing short of complete autonomy would suffice, and Hitler threatened to in-


vade Czechoslovakia unless her President, Eduard Beneš, bowed to the Sudeten-Nazi demands. Although Beneš had regarded acceptance of the Karlsbad Eight Points as national suicide, by September 6, under pressure from Britain and France, he accepted them in principle. But Henlein and Hitler had apparently developed a new strategy. At Mährisch-Ostrau on September 7, a Sudeten German Party delegate was allegedly maltreated by a Czech mob; this provided an excuse for the Sudeten-Germans to break off negotiations with Czechs and for their agitators to demonstrate more vigorously against alleged Czech oppression. Hitler himself further sparked the agitation in a speech on the concluding day of the National Socialist Party Congress at Nuremberg (on the 12th), demanding self-determination for the Sudetenland. On the 13th the French Cabinet decided to let Chamberlain represent Britain and France in the manner which he desired: a personal conference with the Führer. Hitler readily agreed to a meeting at Berchtesgaden on the 15th.

Shortly before the Berchtesgaden Conference, Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty, encouraged Chamberlain to mobilize the fleet because, he maintained, it would have a strong effect on Hitler and would show him that Britain could not be dictated to; the Prime Minister refused.

At Berchtesgaden, Chamberlain modified his policy only to the extent that he now based his hopes for its success on a personal meeting between the two chiefs of state. Here Hitler demanded that Czechoslovakia be made to change her foreign policy and annul her alliances; he said that nothing short of self-determination for the Sudetenland would suffice. A second conference (Godesberg) was agreed upon since Chamberlain had to report back to his cabinet and to the French.

In response to Hitler's demands, Britain and France (the latter reluctantly) decided to grant Hitler what he had outlined. This resulted in the Anglo-French Ultimatum to Czechoslovakia (September 19); it recognized the principle of self-determination in the German regions of Czechoslovakia and demanded that the latter state agree to "...self-determination without a plebiscite to all the limiter Sudeten areas in which the population was over 50% German." President Beneš sadly gave in on September 21.

On the eve of the Godesberg meeting, Poland, sensing her opportunity to secure Czech territory which was substantially Polish in terms of population, began concentrating military forces along her entire frontier with Czechoslovakia. These moves were complemented by Hungary’s expressed desire to regain elements of her Magyar population lost to Czechoslovakia at the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Treaty of Trianon, 1919) and agitation for the cession of its minority in Czechoslovakia.

According to the Russians, the scene in Prague on September 22 included demonstrations expressing hope for assistance from the U.S.S.R., demanding the overthrow of Beneš’ government and proclaiming hatred for Hitler and Chamberlain alike. Chamberlain was hardly interested in the fate of a remote nation about which he knew little - especially if the sacrifice meant the preservation of peace in Europe - it was a simple case of the end justifying the means.

Cooper, visited on the same day by Winston Churchill, relates that "he [Churchill] was in a great state of excitement and was violent in his denunciation of the Prime Minister." Walking home that night, Cooper saw "a vast procession... marching down Whitehall crying, 'Stand by the Czechs' and 'Chamberlain must go.'" Although the latter observation is not important when considered alone, it is a symptom of the beginning of a "hardening" of public opinion in Britain which crystallised when the results of the Godes-


Berg Conference were made known to the public. This development will be given close attention in a later section.

On September 17, Hugh Dalton, former Undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, suggested to Chamberlain that the end of the appeasement process, "may well be the liquidation both of the British Empire and of our British liberties. And at each stage you will have fewer friends and weaker allies to join you in any stand you may, at some late hour, decide to make." But Chamberlain paid scant attention to such warnings.

At Berchtesgaden a second conference had been agreed upon, and it was held on September 22nd and 23rd. At this Conference in Godesberg Hitler blatantly declared that the Berchtesgaden decisions were no longer enough. In the so-called Godesberg "memorandum", Hitler demanded that the Hungarian and Polish claims also be met, that the German-speaking regions be ceded forthwith --- without removal or destruction of military and economic establishments --- and that there be plebiscites by district by the 25th of November, under German-Czech or international control. If Czecho-Slovakia, Britain and France did not agree, said Hitler, war would ensue. He would not enter into a guarantee against unprovoked aggression (which he said was impossible to define) against the (new) Czech state. A shocked and depressed Chamberlain returned to England; whether he admitted it or not, he was in the clutches of a blackmailer.

On September 19th Chamberlain had been given information of another sort.

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19. Cooper, Old Man Forgot, 232. Perhaps he was thinking of countries such as Czecho-Slovakia, Rumania, and Poland which might ultimately be forced to align themselves with Germany, if Britain continued to waver.

20. See Henderson, Failure, 159-159, and British Documents, Notes of Conver-
sation between Chamberlain and Hitler at Godesberg, September 22, 1938, 471.

* In such areas where there was a large German population.
On the 18th Herr von Kleist-Schmansin arrived in London to inform the British of German opposition to Hitler in the Army. He was granted interviews with Sir Robert Vansittart, Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs; Lloyd George, the former Prime Minister who was still an influential Conservative; and Churchill, regarded as the leader of the militant Conservative minority. Kleist told Vansittart that Ribbentrop had assured Hitler that France and England would not attempt to stop him; Kleist reasoned that in view of this Hitler would not limit his demands and that the Nazi leader was perfectly willing to risk war in order to get what he wanted. He emphasised that all German generals were opposed to war but that they needed encouragement and help from the outside if they were to successfully carry out a coup. After September 27, he said, it would probably be too late because by then the carving-up of Czechoslovakia might well be a fait accompli.

Kleist suggested that the British do two things: (1) show Hitler that France and England meant business and that they would not tolerate aggression and (2) have a top political figure in Britain appeal in a speech to the populace of Germany and the German Army. Kleist said that he sought Hitler's downfall as "a Conservative, a Prussian, and a Christian." He stated emphatically that Hitler would in all likelihood fall after his first real defeat. 21

When Chamberlain learned of this, he wrote the following to Halifax:

"I take it that Von Kleist is violently anti-Hitler and is extremely anxious to stir up his friends in Germany to make an attempt at its overthrow. He reminds me of the Jacobites at the Court of France in King William's time and I think we must discount a good deal of what he says." 22

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22. Ibid., Appendix, Aug. 19, 1938, 696.
Even after Godesberg, when the writing was on the wall, Chamberlain neglected to so much as explore this possibility.

None of these new developments caused Chamberlain to deviate from or, it seems, doubt his own diplomacy. The Munich week saw a continuation of his appeasement policy and the final write-off of Czechoslovakia. Should Chamberlain have changed his course between September 24 and September 30? If he should have, could he have done so? Was it necessary for him to accede to Hitler's demands; did relative arms strengths rule out any other alternative; would war have spelled defeat and perhaps annihilation for Britain and France? If his decision to change had been made, could British public opinion have been brought into concert with the policy change? And was there anything which Chamberlain might have had to gain for Britain by making a stand against the dictators in September, 1938, and thereby risking war? These and other, related questions will be dealt with in the ensuing pages.
II. France

Let us look briefly at Britain's principal ally. The French Government had been led since April, 1938, by Premier Édouard Daladier and by his Foreign Minister, Georges Bonnet; the latter might well be called the French personification of the appeasement attitude. Wheeler-Bennett describes Daladier as the "patriot without strength of will." What Daladier claimed that he wanted to do after Berchtesgaden (and at certain points prior to the conference) was to stand up to Hitler and if necessary go to the defense of Czechoslovakia under the provisions of the France-Czech Treaty of Mutual Assistance. This is clear, for example, in the record of the Anglo-French conversations held in London on September 18. But policy was really in the hands of Neville Chamberlain.

On September 13 Daladier told Sir Eric Phipps that, since the French Cabinet was divided in counsels over the question of dealing with the Czech crisis, he preferred to have Chamberlain go it alone and make the best bargain possible with Hitler. As soon as he got word of this, Chamberlain hatched his personal-meeting concept; he met with Hitler at Berchtesgaden on the 15th.

Daladier himself was unmistakably weak. A.J.P. Taylor says that he followed a regular pattern at various critical points - that he was always "first full of fight, then irresolute, and finally capitulating when it came to German demands. Also, Wheeler-Bennett makes this perceptive observation: "...the tragedy of Édouard Daladier is that, when he became aware of the evils which sur-

23. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 67.
24. British Documents, Record of Conversations at 10 Downing St., 376-386.
24a Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 104.
Hereafter cited as Taylor, Origins.
rounded him, he had not the strength of character to apply the drastic measures necessary to remove them. He preferred to shift the onus of responsibility elsewhere, rather than purge his entourage.  

A partial explanation is perhaps that the French Army, although sizeable, was neither modern nor possessed of the capabilities to sustain effective offensive warfare. The Maginot Line was purely defensive in character, and the troops were cogs in the defensive mechanism. The Air Force was outdated, having been neglected until January of 1938 when newly-appointed Air Minister M. Guy La Chambre hastily began the sorely needed revitalization job. In September of the same year, however, she was hardly a match for the Luftwaffe which had a head-start in production of modern aircraft on both France and Britain.

But few French leaders thought that the situation was hopeless. On September 24, Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador in Paris, reported to Foreign Secretary Halifax that the French Chief of Staff, General Gamelin, said that the only way to peace was to demonstrate that France was prepared to fight. As a result, reservists necessary to bring the Maginot Line defenses to full war efficiency were mobilized, and a second group of seven divisions was dispatched to the frontier area. This brought French active military strength close to one million men. The attitude of the French Government and the man-on-the-street after Godesberg is rather difficult to assess. However, the following strands of evidence may be noted. Former Premier Pierre Flandin said on September 24 that the

peasant class was overwhelmingly opposed to war and that if they had to fight their hearts would not be in it. Phipps also said that if a war vote were taken in the Chamber and Senate, there was some question as to what the outcome would be. He did add:

"Most observers consider, however, that if the Germans invaded Czechoslovakia and Czechoslovakia resisted with heavy casualties it would be difficult to keep public opinion within bounds for longer than ten days." About all that can be drawn from this is that, by the time Czechoslovakia had been demolished, the conscience-stricken French would have belatedly shown a willingness to enter the fray. Flandin concluded by saying, "All that is best in France is against war, almost at any price." Of course, what is "best" in France is open to question.

On September 25, Phipps reported that the President of the French Finance Commission, Joseph Caillaux, had stated that a large majority of the French people and a large majority of the French Senate were against war. Phipps also spoke of M. Caillaux' anxiety in the face of this crisis.

"War with Germany means war with Poland, Hungary and Japan. In the air, our towns will be wiped out, our women and children will be slaughtered. The French Army will fight magnificently. . . . It will be incidentally safer in its Maginot Line than civilians. Heavy air bombardments of factories round Paris may well cause another Commune." To put this view in its proper perspective, however, let it be noted that Caillaux had been a declared pacifist even during World War I. And the United States Ambassador to France, William Bullitt, said at this time that the French people

31. Ibid., 510.
32. Ibid., 510.
33. Ibid., Telegram from Phipps (Paris) to Halifax (London), September 25, 513.
would have fought for this cause.\textsuperscript{34}

On the 26th, after the publication of Hitler's Godesberg memorandum, Phipps reported a sharp change in French public opinion. The President of the Chamber, Édouard Herriot, "confirmed the complete sign-over of public opinion since Hitler's demands had become known. He assures me that an overwhelming majority in the Chamber will now be for resistance."\textsuperscript{35} Herriot urged that the matter be brought before the League Council as soon as possible to prevent Germany from claiming that France and Great Britain were the aggressors, in case the latter should decide to stop Hitler forcibly.\textsuperscript{36}

Apparently the indignation lasted little longer than does any moment of passion; fear of war and hope for peace, even at the price of Czechoslovakia and French honor, quickly replaced it. The change seems to have coincided with Neville Chamberlain's September 23 announcement of Hitler's invitation for a meeting at Munich. On this date, Phipps telegraphed Halifax: "The only whole party that favors war now are the Communists. Even the Socialists are divided . . . . . Representatives of 200 deputies are going to M. Daladier this morning and then to the President of the Republic to protest against being led into war on a mere question of procedure."\textsuperscript{37} Could it be that a question of honor - and one that had deep strategic connotations for the future - had become a question of procedure (i.e., legal or illegal invasion of the Sudetenland by forces of the


\textsuperscript{35} British Documents, Phipps to Halifax, September 26, received 2:15 P.M., 547.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 547.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 589. (Italics mine). It is probably very seldom indeed that any whole party favors war. The fact that many saw this to be merely a question of procedure tells us a great deal about French leadership at the time.
Third Reich?  

This gives us an idea of the internal condition of Britain's ally during the September crisis period. Public opinion cannot be accurately gauged by listening only, for example, to the statements of an avowed anti-Nazi, such as Caillaux. But it is true that in France there was confusion and lack of unity during much of the crisis period.

On September 25, before the French delegation left for the meeting with the British at 10 Downing Street, the French Cabinet was apparently united in its determination to show Hitler that he could not have all he wanted and under the conditions which he wanted.38 But French enthusiasm for standing up to Hitler was itself wholly dependent upon the attitude of the British. It was quickly extinguished by British determination to avoid war at all costs. Bullitt accurately forecasted the end result on September 25:

"I believe that if the British Government again should take the attitude that peace must be preserved at any price Da- ladier would not resist long. The ultimate decision will be made by the British Cabinet in London."39


III. Reaction to Godesberg: September 23-25.

On September 23, speaking at a meeting of the Sixth Policy Commission of the League of Nations, Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs in the Soviet Union, stated that the "German-French-British Ultimatum" to Czechoslovakia technically ruled out Russian obligation to the Czechs, in that by treaty (Czech-French Treaty of Mutual Assistance, 1924) the Soviet Union was not obliged to act unless France did so first. But, he stated, the "Soviet Government....replied to Prague that, in the event of France granting assistance under the conditions mentioned in the (Czech) inquiry, the Soviet Pact will again enter into force." He emphasized that his should make it clear that the Soviet Union did not seek to free herself of obligations.

She hoped to prevent German aggression, apparently through League channels, but under combined French, English, and Russian leadership. The suggestion, however, fell on deaf ears.

Also on September 23, French Premier Daladier asked the British, through Phipps, "whether the moment has not now come for us to cancel advice we gave Czechoslovak Government not to mobilize," as he felt that the responsibility involved in advising against mobilization was too great. Against, it seems, the wishes of Neville Chamberlain, Halifax ordered the canceling of the above-mentioned advice later that day. The British delegation at Godesberg cabled

40. New Documents, 115.
42. British Documents, Telegram, Phipps (Paris) to Halifax (London), September 23, 481.
this statement from Chamberlain:

"The Czech Government must bear in mind announcement of their mobilization may well entail immediate order to German Army to attack Czechoslovakia." 43

For their part, before receipt of the o.k., it seems, the Czechs mobilized in earnest. This was announced to Hitler and Chamberlain mid-way in their second Godesberg session on September 23.

After a preliminary meeting at Godesberg on the 22nd during which the two parties found no common ground to stand on, Chamberlain and Hitler separated temporarily. Sometime during this interlude, Hitler wrote a letter to Chamberlain which reveals the essence of and thinking behind the Godesberg Memorandum. In it Hitler expounded upon the treatment of Germans in Czechoslovakia and claimed that in recent days some 120,000 refugees, alleged victims of Czech oppression, had streamed into the Reich. He made it clear that he would rectify the situation one way or another, quickly, and without fail. The 14 Points of 1918, he added, expressed a belief on the part of the victorious powers in the principle of self-determination; he (Hitler) was now no longer interested in recognition of but in realization of this principle. Thus, he said, his demands must be met. He promised that on the day of the plebiscites he would withdraw troops from "most of the disputed frontier areas" (this was so vague that it committed him to absolutely nothing). In the letter he also questioned the sincerity of the Czechs on the basis of long experience with them. 45

On September 24th Chamberlain agreed to reject the Godesberg demands and to give France assurances of British support, in the event that France had to

43. Ibid., British Delegation (Godesberg) to Newton (Prague), Sept. 23, 484-485.
44. Great Britain, H.C. Deb., 5a, Vol. 339, Speech by Chamberlain, Sept. 28, Col. 22.
45. British Documents, 485-487.
come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. "In doing so," says Wheeler-Bennett,"the
Government had the unanimous support of the majority of the British press and
public."46 This writer also notes that, on the 26th, articles protesting the
Godesberg Memorandum appeared in the Daily Telegraph, The Times and the Man-
chester Guardian.47 This raises a significant point: public opinion can be
changed radically, provided the national leadership (1) releases information,
at the right time, which has the potential to get right at the "heart" of the
emotions of the public and/or (2) emphatically urges the mind of the country
to "think" a particular way. In this case, it took only point (1) to shift
the feelings of the British public for several days during the critical week —
and, ironically, the leadership did not seek such an effect.
A somewhat similar change occurred in France where Daladier ordered a partial
mobilization on the 24th, and Chief-of-Staff Gamelin voiced optimism regarding
comparative military strengths of Czechoslovakia and France via-a-via Germany;
he said that French foreign policy had been out of proportion to the military
strength of the nation.48 The implication was that it was time to get tough and
that it was feasible to do so.
However, Chamberlain was not in the least bit interested in abandoning his
policy (appeasement of Hitler and peace at almost any price), in spite of this
hardening of opinion in Britain. At a Cabinet Meeting on September 24, Cooper
relates, Chamberlain "snorted" with indignation at Hitler's terms, but "he
[Chamberlain] concluded, to my astonished, by saying that he considered that
we should accept those terms and that we should advise the Czechs to do so."49

46. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 140.
47. Ibid., 140.
48. Ibid., 141.
49. Cooper, Old Men Farnar, 234.
Cooper could not contain himself.

"I said that from what the P.M. had told us, it appeared to me that the Germans were still convinced that under no circumstances would we fight, that there still existed one method and one method only of persuading them to the contrary, and that was by instantly declaring full mobilization. I said that I was sure public opinion would eventually compel us to go to the assistance of the Czechs; that hitherto we had been faced with the unpleasant alternatives of peace with dishonour or war. I now saw a third possibility: namely, war with dishonour, by which I meant being kicked into the war by the boot of public opinion when those with whom we were fighting had already been defeated."

In other words, Chamberlain was ready to surrender to Hitler almost immediately after Cordesberg; the impression he presented to the world at the time, however, was quite different.

Cooper also tells of a brief, private conversation he had with Halifax after the cabinet meeting. When Cooper remarked that Chamberlain could not now get this policy through the House of Commons (if he had to), "to my [Cooper's] surprise he said, 'Of course he can't', and went on to tell me of the strength of feeling at Oxford. . . . among all parties against surrender." 51

It seems that at this juncture - perhaps for the first time - the symptoms of a cleavage between the appeasement policy of Neville Chamberlain and the attitude of British public opinion were in evidence.

In the meantime, the Czechs themselves appeared more ready than ever to resist the Germans. The "honor" principle dominated thinking in Czechoslovakia, and determined leadership could have rallied public opinion to a spirited defense against the German invader. On September 25, the German Chargé d'Affaires in

50. Ibid., 234-235.
51. Ibid., 235.
Prague, Andor Hancke, reported to his Foreign Ministry that the Czech attitude toward Germany was "stiffening increasingly" and that Benes then really believed that he could count on "Russia, France and perhaps Britain".52

Russia continued to emphasize that she fully intended to aid the Czechs if the Germans invaded. On September 25, Litvinov cabled the Air Attaché of the U.S.S.R. in France to tell Gamelin that Russia had (1) placed thirty infantry divisions on her Western frontiers, (2) brought up the necessary reserve reinforcements and (3) brought aviation and tank units to a condition of "full readiness".53 This information was transmitted to Gamelin in London on the 26th, where the French Chief-of-Staff was reiterating his semi-optimistic estimates of Allied strength to the British Government.

Thus it seems clear that the potential for united counter-action to the German threat existed during the Munich week. The British Prime Minister, however, never considered changing horses in mid-stream.

At this point it is imperative that we take a closer look at Russia and what she might or might not have meant to the makers of British policy.

52. Documents On German Foreign Policy, Series D, Volume II (Washington, 1949), 930-931. Telegram, Andor Hancke (Prague) to German Foreign Office (Berlin). Hereafter cited as German Documents.

53. New Documents, 118.
IV. Russia

The era of Maxim Litvinov, People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., is marked by a consistent effort to bring about effective implementation of collective security under the League of Nations - specifically, to check the advance of Nazi Germany in Central Europe. Of course, this probably was true because of the Soviets' fear of Germany and because playing along with collective security at the time offered them their most favorable position vis-à-vis Germany, the most threatening of Russia's enemies. In March, 1938, immediately after the Austrian Anschluss, Litvinov sought collective action under the League to stop territorial aggrandizement on the part of the Third Reich. The League let the proposal die, largely because Britain was not at all receptive to such a move.

On September 3 the French Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow saw Litvinov and reported that the latter told him that Russia would support France in a war over violations of Czechoslovakian territory and that Litvinov had proposed immediate staff talks among Soviet, French and Czech experts; he also reported the Litvinov favored raising the question of Germany's threat to Czechoslovakia at Geneva, under Article 11 of the League of Nations, with the hope that Romania and Poland might thereby be injected with a degree of faith in the Allies; finally, he said Litvinov had advised that France, Britain and the Soviet Union

54. *The Treaty of Versailles and After*, U.S. Government Printing Office. (Washington, 1947), 83-84. Article 11: "Any war or threat of war, whether immediately affecting any of the Members of the League or not, is hereby declared a matter of concern to the whole League, and the League shall take any action that may be deemed wise and effectual to safeguard the peace of nations. . . ."
send a note to Hitler warning him not to resort to force.\textsuperscript{55} According to Ivan Maisky, Russian Ambassador in Britain, French Foreign Minister Renne\textsuperscript{56} ed this Litvinov offer on "four or five different occasions". Later on this day, Maisky visited Winston Churchill, and the latter indicated that he was in favor of the Litvinov proposal. However, Foreign Secretary Halifax said on September 5 that he did not like the Article 11 idea (in line with Chamberlain's complete lack of faith in the League of Nations), but he said that he "would keep it in mind".\textsuperscript{57} Obviously, he pushed it far out of his mind. According to Kagan, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain rejected the proposal.\textsuperscript{58}

In a major address at the Plenary Meeting of the League of Nations in Geneva on September 21, Litvinov reminded his audience that at the time of Anschluss he had advocated collective preventive measures. Relative to the question of Russian adherence to her commitment to the France-Czech Treaty of Mutual Assistance, he said, "We intend to fulfill our obligations under the pact and together with France, to afford assistance to Czechoslovakia by the ways open to us." He called for a French-Czech-Russian conference of war department heads and said that the entire question should be raised under Article 11 of the League. Two days before, said Litvinov, he had answered the Czechs in "the affirmative" when they asked whether or not Russia would aid France in the defense of Czechoslovakia.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{55} Dalton, H., \textit{Memoires}, 184.
\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 184. (This occurred sometime in early September.)
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 185.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 183. (No specific date of rejection given.)
\textsuperscript{59} \textit{New Documents}, 105-107. (Italics mine - The wording here merits careful scrutiny.)
Sir Eric Phipps reported this and the Bonnet reaction to it:

"M. Litvinov said Russia would only come in after France had already come in, and that she would request Council of League to recommend to Rumania to allow passage of Russian aeroplanes over Rumanian territory. M. Bonnet is not much impressed by this prospective late and limited Russian help. He now further fears Poland would also be on the wrong side in the event of war." 60

Dalton makes no attempt to disguise his conviction that Bonnet lied about Russian intentions to Allied leaders.

On the other hand, the United Kingdom Delegation at Geneva did report to Halifax on September 23 that Litvinov and Maisky had promised to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia, were France to do so as well. Here the British made their sole diplomatic overture of the entire Czechoslovakian crisis period (April through September) to confer with Russia; the United Kingdom delegation suggested that British, French, and Russian representatives get together and discuss vital issues. The Russians were delighted and suggested a three-power meeting away from Geneva, to show the Germans "we mean business." However, the British and French never followed it up with an official acceptance or proposal - the fact that Litvinov had made such a proposal might well have been suppressed by those higher up, perhaps by Chamberlain himself. This was the extent of Anglo-Soviet diplomatic contact through Munich.

60. British Documents, Telegram from Phipps (Paris) to Halifax (London), Sept. 22, 489. (Italics mine - there was certainly nothing "late" about this Russian offer).


63. Taylor, Origins, 180.
At this time Russia also sent a warning to Poland regarding the consequences of a Polish attack on the Teschen area, 64 in answer to reports of Polish forces on the Czech frontier.

The German Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg, reported from Moscow on September 26 that it should be noted that the Russians had been making appreciable noise only after Berchtesgaden and that Litvinov had stated that Russia would help Czechoslovakia "in the ways open to us." 65 (However, Schulenburg's message shows concern over the fact that Litvinov had been making every effort to get France to fulfill her obligations.) 66

Furthermore, the Russian offers cannot be taken at face value, for there are important sub-surface realities which must be considered. In the first place, it must be remembered that Communism envisaged an inevitable, ultimate war among the capitalist powers which would pave the way for the global spread of the Communist ideology. Whether or not Russia saw this as an opportune moment to spur the "capitalists" against each other is open to question; in view of the ominous menace of Germany and in view of the fact that Litvinov had been retained as Foreign Commissar, this does not seem likely. This is not to say that the long-range aims of the Soviet Union should not be kept in mind; they must be if she is to be dealt with realistically.

Perhaps more important in this instance is what George F. Kennan refers to as the "basic geographic reality which underlay the entire chapter of Soviet partnership in the policy of collective security." The U.S.S.R.,

64. Ibid., 498.

65. German Documents, Telegram from Schulenburg (Moscow) to German Foreign Ministry (Berlin), 946. (This was to imply that Russia had few, if any "ways" that she might help. The comment is shrewd.)

66. Ibid., 946.
he says, did not have a common border with Germany; between her and the Reich stood Poland and Rumania, both of which feared the dangers of allowing Russian troops to cross their territory to get to Czechoslovakia since the U.S.S.R. had long claimed that large areas of these nations were rightfully hers. In that Russia was well aware of this, she could conduct her foreign policy with the assuring knowledge that she had a "ready-made excuse for delay in meeting its obligations of mutual assistance", should she deem it advisable to invoke it. 67 Poland could hardly have been led to giving Russia permission in September, 1938, because she distrusted her and because she did not wish to annoy Germany. 68

Rumania was more susceptible to the idea than Poland, but Kennan says that there is no evidence that she ever gave the Russians the green light. Moreover, the New York Times noted on September 21: "It was believed the Rumanians had refused . . . . to permit free passage of men and material for war if Russia were the only power going to the aid of Czechoslovakia." 70

Kennan also adds this interesting bit of information: the German Military Attaché in Prague during the Munich crisis period later told Kennan that the physical characteristics of the Rumanian railroad network were such that "it would have taken the Soviet command approximately three months to move a division into Slovakia over this primitive and indirect route." 71 Kennan's conclusion is that, although there was "a good chance that at the time the Czech Republic might have been saved," it certainly could not have been done by the Soviet

67. George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and Stalin (Boston, 1961), 323. Hereafter cited as Kennan, Russia and the West.


71. Kennan, Russia and the West, 323.
Kennan does not discuss the possible use of Russian air power. But Charles A. Lindbergh, of American military intelligence, had seen all of the world’s major air forces perform in training maneuvers at the time. He had been lavish in his praise of the German Air Force, saying that the Luftwaffe was then the strongest air force in the world and that England and France were too weak in the air to protect themselves alone. But he admitted that Russia probably had a sufficient number of planes to make her weight felt in any war she might enter. Hence, even if Russia had or had not been able to send ground forces to aid Czechoslovakia, she most likely would have been able to contribute appreciable air support. Air passage over Rumanian territory could probably have been secured if France were also coming to the air of Czechoslovakia. And it was in the air that Czechoslovakia was weakest.

Chamberlain’s entire appeasement policy ruled out even so much as discussing the problem with Russia. He had long distrusted the U.S.S.R. and was even more apprehensive after the Russian purges of the late ’30’s which were disquieting to the entire outside world, although others such as Winston Churchill were still receptive to Litvinov’s and Maisky’s pleas. Most important as far as the Prime Minister was concerned was the simple fact that since his efforts to achieve peace for his time were based on cooperation with Hitler, Russia had to be ignored ("...if any deal was to be made with Hitler, this would be one of

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72. U.S. Foreign Relations, Telegram, Ambassador in the United Kingdom (Joseph Kennedy) to Sec. of State (Cordell Hull), London, Sept. 22, 73.
73. Mowat, Britain, 606.
74. Halton, Memoirs, 190.
Hitler's chief conditions). As the Manchester Guardian said on September 24, 1938:

"It has been a misfortune of our own policy that it has been so chilly towards Russia. The reason must have been that any sort of cooperation with her would have been unpalatable not only to Hitler but also to Mussolini, who had adopted the 'Bolshevism' argument as the camouflage for his designs in Spain against France and against British security. The result is not to be seen. We have got nothing at all for our attempts to win the favour of the Dictators by cold-shouldering Russia." 

Of course, Stalin was also a dictator, and the Guardian apparently was not quite cognizant of this. But the main point of this writer's argument lies in the italicized portion of the above question.

Chamberlain had, it seems, so blindly devoted himself to the Reich-oriented appeasement policy that he could not even consider the possibility of discussing the questions of the day with the Soviet Union. It is true that Russian aid would probably have been negligible to begin with, with the possible exception of air power, but this does not seem to be why he ignored her offers; there is no evidence available that he even gave them enough thought to have done so for that reason.

75. Mowat, Britain, 609.

76. Manchester Guardian, September 24, 1938, 12 (Italics mine).
On September 25, at the opening of the British-French meeting which followed the Codesberg Conference and Hitler’s memorandum, Chamberlain said that the Führer’s projected seizure of Czech territory was analogous to the seizure of conquered territory. When he told Hitler this, the latter said that the Czechs had the choice of agreeing to a nationality frontier now or later seeing Germany create a “strategic” frontier.

Daladier said, much as he had in the opening rounds of all conversations during the Czech crisis, that France could not recognize the taking of any Czech territory by force and that France opposed plebiscites in certain Czech areas since the population of these areas was predominantly Czech and since German troops would most likely appear wherever there were plebiscites. Chamberlain said that Hitler just wanted “to show that the proportion of the German population was larger than had been supposed.”

Chamberlain, obviously attempting to modify the French antipathy to Hitler’s Codesberg demands, said that the only real difference between the Anglo-French proposals of September 18 and Hitler’s were that in the latter Hitler had said that the areas with German majorities should be occupied “forthwith” by German troops.

77. British Documents, Anglo-French Conversations at 10 Downing St., September 25, 1938, 521-522. (It is difficult to determine the difference).
78. Ibid., 523.
79. Ibid., 525.
Daladier said that it was France's "duty" to stand by Czechoslovakia. The British asked precisely what France would do in the case of war. She would draw the greater part of the German Army against France, said Daladier. Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer, then asked if the French intended simply to man the Maginot Line and stay there. To this Daladier replied that it "depended" on the circumstances. 80

Then the French Premier stated that "he thought that, in spite of Herr Hitler's recent declarations, the German system of fortifications was much less solid than Herr Hitler had indicated "and that it would be several months before the Siegfried Line would be really strong." 81 Again Daladier emphasized the question of honor and said that although France was willing to allow German occupation of areas in which the Sudeten inhabitants were in a definite majority, the Hoddesberg proposals would "lead straight to war."

Chamberlain then said that he "wished to speak quite frankly and say that the British Government had received disturbing accounts of the condition of the French Air Force and of the capacity of French factories to maintain supplies for the air force, which was likely to suffer great losses in the early days of a war." How would France defend herself against German bombing, and how would public opinion react to French participation in a war? 82

Daladier admitted French military weaknesses but pointed out that "one million Frenchmen have manned the frontiers without hesitation" and that France was still capable of mobilizing an air force and of attacking Germany. "Must

30. Ibid., 526-527.
31. Ibid., 531.
32. Ibid., 532.
we always give way to Hitler's ultimatum?" he asked. If so, he continued, there was no point in having (Anglo-French) meetings. We are "too modest", he said, pointing out that Russia had a significant air force (5,000 planes) and that England could use her fleet for blockading Germany.

The meeting closed after Chamberlain said that this was all up to France to decide. The trick was, of course, that Daladier knew that he could do nothing without England because France alone was too weak vis-à-vis the Reich. But by the same token, it seems that Chamberlain knew that he could always bring the French around - it took merely a little time and patience. In the final analysis, it appears that neither government really meant business.

Also on September 25, the Czech Minister in London, Jan Masaryk, wrote to Halifax on behalf of his Government that Czechoslovakia had agreed to the "so-called Anglo-French Plan" for ceding parts of Czechoslovakia but that Godesberg raised entirely different questions calling for a new decision. Masaryk continued:

"My Government has now studied the document and the map. It is a de facto ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposal to a sovereign state which has shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe. . . . [the proposals] deprive us of every safeguard for our national existence. . . . the whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight on the part of those who will not accept the German Nazi regime. They have to leave their homes without even the right to take their personal belongings or even, in the case of peasants, their cow. . . . Herr Hitler's demands in their present form are absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable to my government."85

On the following day, the British-French discussions were resumed. Chamber-
lain announced that he had sent his confidant, Sir Horace Wilson, to see the Führer personally in a last-ditch attempt to reach a peaceful agreement; the meeting was to take place just prior to a major speech that Hitler would deliver on the evening of the 26th. Bonnet and Halifax agreed that the Czech Government should be informed of the Wilson mission. With this the two-day meeting came to a conclusion, boasting little accomplishment, whatever the press releases about "complete agreement" and "mutual understanding" might have implied.

Chamberlain's letter to Hitler, delivered by Wilson on the 26th, stressed that in his "capacity as an intermediary" he had delivered the Godesberg memorandum and map to the Czech Government, who had in turn ruled it totally unacceptable. Occupation by force, wrote the Prime Minister, would spell war; and world public opinion would unite against Germany. He concluded by imploring Hitler not to go to war and asking for further Czech-German negotiations. Hitler, sensing realization of his aims regarding Czechoslovakia, was hardly interested in the appeal.

86. Ibid., Letter from Chamberlain to Hitler, September 26, 1938, 541-542.
VI. From the Wilson Mission to Chamberlain's Speech in Commons, September 28.

On the 26th Basil Newton, British Ambassador to Czechoslovakia, reported from Prague that order among the Czech forces at the front had been "well-maintained" and that the Czech mobilization had been "going well and according to plan." From Washington Franklin D. Roosevelt appealed to Hitler to avoid the use of force. And in Berlin itself, the foremost confidant of Neville Chamberlain, Sir Horace Wilson, came before the Führer.

When Sir Horace Wilson gave Hitler word of the Czechs' refusal, the German leader was utterly disgusted, seemingly near the end of his patience. When he came to the words "Czech Government. . . . regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal. . . .", he moved to leave the room, making it clear that he would invade Czechoslovakia and cared little if England and France retaliated. This was probably histrionics in part since (1) Hitler knew how little likelihood there was of Anglo-French retaliation and since (2) he expected Wilson to react just the way he did.

Wilson bit. He urged Hitler to have no fear, for Chamberlain would make certain that Czechoslovakia did hand over the territory. Hitler replied that his patience was running out on this score. Wilson said that Chamberlain would like to see a Czech representative in Berlin, to which Hitler replied that there might be one only if he came on the basis of the German (Godesberg) memorandum and added that he had heard that Masaryk in London had been playing for the

87. Ibid., Telegram to Halifax, (London), 544-545.
88. Ibid., Notes of Conversation between Sir Horace Wilson and Hitler, Berlin September 26, 1938, 554-555.
overthrow of Chamberlain. 89

That evening Wilson sent word to Chamberlain that Czechoslovakia must accept the memorandum, including the date of October 1 for evacuation. "At one stage he (Hitler) intimated that unless evacuation were agreed to by Wednesday afternoon (September 28) occupation might begin before October 1." 90

Hitler's speech to the German people on the evening of September 26 was in large measure an expanded repetition of what he had said to Wilson. Chamberlain was to voice his opinion, after hearing it, that the "chief burden" of Hitler's speech was that Czech promises were "worth nothing" and that "Benes won't ever carry out his promises." 91

On the following day Wilson continued his discussion with Hitler - with the same results. The notes of these conversations reveal a reckless impatience and self-assurance on the part of Hitler and a semi-abject pleading on the part of Wilson. The latter opened by playing up the Chamberlain-Hitler desire to improve the "economic position all around." Almost immediately Hitler had him on the defensive. The Czech refusal, he said, means that France will attack Germany and that England will support France. Wilson demurred. Hitler then angrily criticized the Czechs' "frivolous game of precipitating a world war." 92

The net result of these conversations was nil, as least as far as the British were concerned.

89. Ibid., 555-557.

90. Ibid., Telegram from Henderson (Berlin) to Halifax (London), reporting Wilson's meeting with Hitler, 553.

91. Ibid., Telegram from Halifax to Henderson (Berlin), September 27, 572.

92. Ibid., Notes of Conversation between Wilson and Hitler, Berlin, September 27, 565-567.
Later that day the British fleet and auxiliary air force were finally mobilized. 93

At 8:30 p.m. on the 27th Phipps received a rather curious telegram from Halifax on the Gamelin estimates.

"General Gamelin made it plain to us on Monday [26th] that, in his view, if German forces now invaded Czechoslovakia, Czech resistance is likely to be of extremely brief duration. This disturbing estimate is confirmed by our Military Attaché in Berlin who had just returned from Czechoslovakia and reports that he is convinced that morale is poor and that resistance will prove to be feeble." 94

This is curious because Gamelin had only a few days before implied that the Czechs could hold out quite adequately if France were to provide a second front by declaring war on Germany as soon as Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, provided she actually did so. And if the morale were really as low as Halifax claimed (which is doubtful), this was probably attributable to the Czechs' lack of confidence in France and Britain and to various ethnic groups represented in the Czech forces, with conflicting loyalties (it is difficult to estimate the effect of this reality). Nonetheless, demonstrations against the Munich agreement a few days later and suicides among front-line troops after the signing of the Pact reflect a reasonably broad determination to resist. There is also a footnote in the British Documents to Halifax's telegram on the 27th which states that Gamelin indicated that the Czechs could hold out "for a few weeks, perhaps not for a few months"; that depended to a large extent on what Poland did. 95 For his part, Newton told Halifax that Colonel Mason-MacFarlane,

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93. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Duff Cooper, had been urging mobilization of the fleet for at least two weeks.
94. British Documents, 575.
95. Ibid., Telegram from Halifax (London) to Phipps (Paris) on September 27, and accompanying editorial footnote, 575.
the Military Attaché in Prague, had said that the Czech frontier guard (not military) were not impressive, but that the army itself "made a good impression and displayed no lack of morale. . . . He considers that [the Czech forces] have confidence in their cause, their leadership, and their equipment. He thinks it not unlikely, if they have the moral support of knowing that they possess powerful allies, even if these cannot immediately act on their behalf, that they may render a good account of themselves."96

With regard to Poland, I think it fair to say that what she did depended largely upon the firmness of the Anglo-French position. During the Munich week, of course, Poland had one major thought in mind - seizure of "Polish" Teschen. Whether or not cession of the disputed territory would have kept the Poles out of the war had it begun at this time can not be proved. But two telegrams of September 27 from Hans Adolf von Moltke, German Ambassador in Warsaw, are revealing. In the first he said that Colonel Józef Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, "wants to keep Poland neutral", that he wants to gain his territorial claims without giving the world any impression of "Polish dependency on Germany."

In the second Moltke emphasized that there was "no question of" any Polish cooperation with the Soviet Union "so long as the latter interferes in European affairs; that was an irrefutable principle of Polish policy." He added that the Polish impression was that the Rumanian view was much the same.98 Had there been war in 1938, then Poland would probably have taken neither side (at least at the outset.).

96. German Documents, Telegram from Newton (Prague) to Malifax (London), September 27.
97. Ibid., To Foreign Ministry, 973-974.
98. Ibid., 982-983. (Italics mine).
As for Rumania, alluded to above by Moltke, she had been tremendously shaken by the Anglo-French memorandum to Czechoslovakia (September 21). The New York Times reported on September 22nd.

"The whole Rumanian press condemns the Anglo-French plan to partition Czechoslovakia, especially as it is believed here that its acceptance will have wide repercussions on the Rumanian situation.

"Newspapers point out the Central and Eastern Europe are now shaken to their very foundations. Rumania had full confidence in France's and Great Britain's loyalty and readiness to fulfill their treaty obligations, but now, to her great dismay, she is compelled to recognize that those two powers may go back on their word in an hour of danger.

"A reorientation of Rumanian foreign policy is envisaged generally."99

"Reorientation" probably meant adopting a neutralist position, with the hope that this would save her from destruction by Germany.

Regarding the American attitude, above and beyond F.D.R.'s peace overture, the German Ambassador in the United States, Dr. Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff, said on the 27th:

"There is reason to assume...[that American Government]...are doing everything to suppress the existing but decreasing isolationist tendency among the American people, so that, when the moment comes, the whole weight of the United States can be thrown into the scale on the side of Britain. I consider it my duty to emphasize this very strongly."100

The observation is not conclusive, but interesting. On the other hand, the New York Times concluded on September 28 that Roosevelt would probably apply the Neutrality Law if there was a larger than "highly localized" conflict.101

Although Cordell Hull himself thought that neutrality would gain nothing for

100. German Documents, Telegram to Foreign Ministry (Berlin), 981-982.
the United States, his memoirs reveal that the isolationist element in Congress was still very powerful in 1938, so strong that he dared not state publicly what he really believed.102

On the night of the 27th Neville Chamberlain delivered a radio speech in the depressed tones of one "who has abandoned all hopes of peace."103 Wheeler-Bennett interprets it as a "complete revelation of his whole attitude towards the crisis." In it are statements regarding the horror of war and a determination to avoid it, greater sympathy for Germany than for Czechoslovakia, puzzlement at Hitler’s hatred of the Czechs as well as at Czech obstinacy, "continued and incomprehensible belief in Hitler’s promises and the evident lack of perception of the deeper issues at stake."104 Mowat describes the speech as one of despair.105 Duff Cooper notes that Chamberlain had not one good thing to say for the Czechs and did not even mention Roosevelt’s telegram, the "hardening" of public opinion in France, or the "Hardening" of world opinion.106

Later that evening Chamberlain received a message from the German Chancellor which may well have formed the basis of Chamberlain’s speech the next day as well as of the Munich agreement itself. The Prime Minister drafted a reply without consulting anyone but Sir Horace Wilson. Mowat comments: "This was the nadir of diplomacy - a personal deal between two men at the expense of a third party: I can give you all you want without war and without delay."107

104. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 157 (italics mine).
105. Mowat, Britain, 615.
106. Cooper, Old Men Forget, 239-240.
107. Mowat, Britain, 615.
In the meantime Chamberlain had been making overtures to Mussolini to get the latter to serve as mediator in the crisis and thereby stop Hitler short of going to war - although Italy had made it perfectly clear that in the event of a conflict she would be on the side of Germany. The proposed meeting with Mussolini "mediating" (forestalling war once again) was suitable to Bonnet who had told Phipps "that we must continue to keep the ball rolling unremittingly till October 1, so as to do everything humanly possible to avert a conflict for which both our countries are undoubtedly ill-prepared." Early in the afternoon Chamberlain received gratifying news from the Earl of Perth in Rome: "At Signor Mussolini's request Herr Hitler has accepted to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours."

The Ciano version of the agreement puts the Chamberlain Government in a rather poor light. According to the Italian Foreign Minister, when Perth was informed that Italy sided with Germany: "His face quivers and his eyes are red." When Mussolini accepted the Chamberlain proposal for a delay of twenty-four hours, the Earl "bursts into a sobbing laugh and rushes off to his Embassy." Although this cannot be taken literally, there is probably considerable truth in the account. At any rate, the stage was then set for the Munich announcement, for with the delay came the agreement to hold a four-power conference presided over by Mussolini. The announcement was made that evening.

Neville Chamberlain's speech to Commons September 28, 1938, was one of the

108. The Earl of Perth stated that "Ciano (Foreign Minister) remarked that Italy's interests, honour, and pledged word required that she should side actively with and fully with Germany", British Documents, Telegram to Halifax (London), September 28, 600.

109. Ibid., Telegram to Halifax (London), Sept. 28, 571.

110. Ibid., 571.

111. Ciano Diary, 165.
most dramatic in the history of that body and unprecedented in its response.

He spent considerable time reviewing events during the Czech crisis period, emphasizing those which occurred between September 14 and 27. Then he came to Hitler's letter which he had received at 10:30 p.m. the previous day. In it Hitler had reassured him that German troops were to be used only to preserve order, that the vote (plebiscite) would be free, and that he (Hitler) would join (France, England, and Italy) in an international guarantee. Chamberlain said:

"Those are all reassuring statements as far as they go, and I have no hesitation in saying, after the personal contact I had established with Hitler that I believe he means what he says when he states that." This is a shameful statement; this is especially obvious when one remembers that Hitler flagrantly tossed aside the Berchtesgaden promises at the Godesberg Conference.

Chamberlain continued, referring to his appeals to Hitler and Mussolini and to the Führer's (apparent) resultant decision to postpone mobilization for twenty-four hours (Chamberlain had by then been speaking for approximately eighty minutes). Then, at this appropriate point, he was interrupted when a message was handed to him. After a pause, he dramatically continued:

"I have now been informed by Herr Hitler that he invites me to meet him tomorrow morning. . . . We are all patriots, and there can be no honorable Member of this House who did not feel his heart leap that the crisis has been once more post-

113. Ibid., cols. 24-25.
114. "Mobilization" must have meant "invasion"; Germany had been "mobilized" for quite some time.
poned to give us once more an opportunity to try what reason and good will and discussion will do to settle a problem which is already within sight of settlement. Mr. Speaker, I cannot say any more. I am sure that the House will be ready to release me now to go and see what I can make of this last effort."116

A member cried: "Thank God for the Prime Minister!" This "touched off a demonstration of mass hysteria which the Mother of Parliaments had never before witnessed." There were tears, cheers, and Order Papers flying in the air.117

Gallacher, the Communist member, voiced the only negative opinion and was shouted down,118 Eden walked out, and Masaryk sat disbelieving.119 Shortly thereafter, in Halifax's room at the Foreign Office, the courageous Masaryk allegedly said to the Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister: "If you have sacrificed my nation to preserve the peace of the world, I will be the first to applaud you. But if not, gentlemen, God help your souls."120

116. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 170, and Great Britain, H.C. 339 Debts 5s. col. 28.
117. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 170.
118. Great Britain, H.C. Debs 339 5s, col. 28.
119. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, 170.
120. Ibid., 170-171.
VII. British Public Opinion
And The Czechoslovak Crisis

In Great Britain during the mid-30's popular sentiment against war grew by leaps and bounds. An organization known as the Peace Pledge Union was formed in 1934 and soon boasted thousands of signatures - pledging that they would have nothing to do with war. On June 25, 1935, the famous Peace Ballot was conducted under the sponsorship of a special organization supported largely by the Liberal and Labor Parties; it resulted from the challenge of the Ethiopian crisis, and its aim was implementation of collective security measures under the League of Nations. Although 60% voted yes to a question as to whether or not they favored collective action to stop an aggressor nation (clause five), a higher percentage voted for a general reduction of armaments. This was indicative of the curious confusion of motivations and lack of realism which persisted. Paradoxically it might seem, many believed that pacifism and appeasement could be meshed with collective security under the League of Nations. But perhaps this may be explained in part by the not often expressed but often felt argument that collective action is individual irresponsibility - i.e., let the "other guy" or the "group" do it.

There were several major factors which made the situation all the more confusing. Some British newspapers simply sided with the National Socialist movement in Germany, thereby helping to allay the British public's fears of the Third Reich. On March 25, 1935, William L. Shirer recorded in his diary that "the


122. Ibid., 244.

123. Dalton, H., Memoirs, 16.
Daily Mail. . . through Lord Rothermere, its owner, and Ward Price, its roving correspondent - both pro-Nazi - has become a wonderful Nazi mouthpiece and sounding board. . ."124 After Hitler had announced conscription, thereby violating the Versailles Treaty, Beaverbrook's Sunday Express "warned against threatening Germany with force."125 And when Hitler's forces re-occupied the Rhineland, Shirer noted that the Observer and [Lord Rothermere's] Sunday Dispatch "are delighted at Hitler's move."126

Adding to the psychology of the times were the many important pacifist organisations in Britain. The somewhat influential Quakers were dedicated to the principle of non-resistance.127 There were also the intellectual radical pacifists led by C.E.M. Joad and that perennial, ageless agitator for non-resistance and disarmament, Bertrand Russell. Their argument was that war did not pay, that it defeated its own ends, and that it was evil. By refusing to fight, they said, people "could save their own skin" and that of civilization itself.128 There were other less important organizations, but the point is that pacifism, whatever its various forms, had become a force to be reckoned with in Britain of the mid-'30's and therefore contributed to the appeasement psychology.

The people could not be expected to show concern over lack of arms strength if their leadership did not. And Government policy, in the words of the Annual

Reals text. was (in 1933) "'hesitant, indecisive, apologetic, content to drift," 129

No particular concern resulted from such events as the German Army's re-occupation of the Rhineland.

In July, 1936, a group of eighteen conservatives, led by Winston Churchill, appealed to Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin for increased armaments, but they were not taken seriously. 130 The prevailing attitude in the government and among the people was that Versailles had been a wrong and that it was in dire need of correction; therefore, very few favored preventive measures to counter Germany's move in the Rhineland. 131 The British nation suffered from a Versailles Treaty guilt complex, and it was this same psychology which persisted when Germany occupied Austria and, to a lesser degree, when she coveted the Sudetenland. The Reich merely sought realization of the principle of self-determination; it would be wrong to prevent her from pursuing this course. The British guilt-complex over the Versailles decisions (especially the declaration for self-determination) is not to be taken lightly in any analysis of this period.

However, opposition developed - at first imperceptibly, then more noticeably, and there were many individuals in Britain who sought to convince others that Hitler was using the self-determination principle as a pretext for conquest, that he was nothing more than a blackmailer. What they argued seemed to make sense, especially when one considers the manner in which Germany occupied Austria in March, 1938. On July 1 of that year Dr. Gilbert Murray wrote in The Spectator:

"We seek peace by international cooperation, not by submission to aggressors. . . . Continued submission tends to stimulate both the contempt and the appetite of an am-

129. Mavigaust, A.F., Twentieth Century Britain, 250.
130. Ibid., 251.
131. Ibid., 251-252.
bitious aggressor. . . Every loss of prestige by the forces of peace, every concession to blackmail, every betrayal of trust through fear makes war more likely, not less likely." 132

Others argued for preventive measures under the banner of the League of Nations and received much favorable response. For example, a rally (July 6, 1938) for action against appeasement sponsored by a youth organization filled Earls Court Stadium with 10,000 people, while an estimated 5,000 were turned back at the gates. 133 Public opinion seemed to be awakening to the German threat.

On July 8 an interesting argument was presented by a Jerome Dessain (age 26) in The Spectator. In asking what we should fight for, he said that there were no good material, moral, or defensive reasons - that pacifism ought to be right. But, he wrote, "You can't buy off a blackmailer. You can only increase his lust and greed," and dictators "only respect force." 134

Early in September the Trades Union Congress met at Blackpool. While criticizing capitalism for its alleged evils, it also stressed Britain's duty to the League of Nations and said that it was time for the Government's "acquiescence" to Fascism to cease. 135 In a declaration issued September 8, the Congress stated that:


133. Ibid., 12.


The British Government must leave no doubt in the mind of the German Government that they will unite with the French and Soviet Governments to resist any attack on Czechoslovakia...Whatever the risks involved, Britain must make its stand against aggression. There is now no room for doubt or hesitation. [Our simple slogan is] Stand by the Czechs!" 136

The President of the Congress, Herbert H. Halden, pointed out that appeasement had resulted in the fall of Abyssinia, stalemate in Spain, and Anschluss in Austria; Czechoslovakia seems to be next, he said. And he warned that this might be Europe's last chance to check the advance of Nazi Germany. 137

In September The Times continued to support the Government's viewpoint to the letter in its editorials. In fact, it is impossible to find one word of criticism relating to the policies of Neville Chamberlain. This may be explained in a large measure by the fact that its editor, Geoffrey Dawson, was a member of the Prime Minister's "inner circle", and that he had "special" sources of information. Hence, The Times was reputed to be the "honorary instrument of British policy." 138 Dawson was pro-German and anti-French; his editorials clearly attest to this.

For example, when it was announced that Chamberlain would meet with Hitler at Berchtesgaden on September 15, The Times emphasized the relief expressed by French opinion in response to the Chamberlain mission 139 - implying that France really wanted to appease Hitler. And the cheers for Chamberlain at his departure from London for Berchtesgaden showed, according to this publication, a "universal

gratitude for what he had done. . . . [He had] earned for Great Britain a tit-
tle to be called the sleepless sentinel of liberty and peace."

On September 22, The Times justified the beginnings of what amounted to
a sacrifice of Czechoslovakia as follows:

"The hopes of those who laid these [Anglo-French] proposals
[of September 19] before the Czech Government will certainly
be that they would leave Czechoslovakia, though smaller in
size, stronger by being made more nearly homogeneous."

Further, the union of Sudetenlanders to Germany would conform with racial prin-
ciple and with that of self-determination.

"To the vast bulk of his countrymen, and to many millions out-
side this country, Mr. Chamberlain's bold move in going to
have a talk with Herr Hitler about the present troubles of
Europe came as water in the wilderness and as another proof
of his courage and his common sense."

The Czechs should give in for the good of all, said The Times.

"It is emphatically possible for the Czech Republic to main-
tain for itself a strong, honorable, and secure position in
Central Europe. . . ." [41]

The Times also criticized the ideas of Winston Churchill, implying that he might
damage what it thought to be the only path to a peaceful Europe: "progress by
mutual concession."[42]

In the meantime, the opposition was making itself heard more often and
more emphatically. Anthony Eden, the forgotten member of the original Chamber-
lain administration, spoke out in favor of standing up to Germany. He argued
that "if appeasement is to mean what it says, it must not be at the expense of

140. Ibid., 11.
142. The Times, London, September 23, 1938, 13. Actually there was no such
thing as "mutual concession". The only real concessions were made
by the allies during the Czech crisis period.
our national reputation, or of our sense of fair dealing", that appeasement will be "neither real nor lasting at such a price." 143

In The Spectator on September 23, Owen Barfield wrote: "I am still rubbing my eyes, as I am one of those who had retained the belief that there were depths below which this country would not sink. I now see that the abyss is bottomless." 144 In the same issue this publication noted: "Opinion in this country will be -already- split in two, and by no means only on party lines." 145

In a telegram to the British delegation at Godesberg, Halifax said (September 23) that the mass of public opinion was hardening - "while mistrustful of our plan [Anglo-French plan of September 19] but prepared perhaps to accept it with reluctance as an alternative to war." He said further that Britain had "gone the limit of concession." 146 The very fact that Halifax would admit this much is significant, considering the position he held in the Chamberlain Government.

On September 21, Winston Churchill demanded the recall of Parliament, arguing that: "The menace . . . is not to Czechoslovakia but to the cause of freedom and democracy in every country." 147 And the General Committee of the Manchester Liberal Federation passed a resolution for the immediate assembly of Parliament and the resignation of the government as a result of its "abject and absolute surrender" at Godesberg. 148

145. Ibid., 469.
146. British Documents, September 23, 1938, 490.
148. Ibid., September 23, 1938, 11.
On September 24, The New Statesman and Nation published a scathing indictment of Chamberlain's policies entitled, "The Surrender To Hitler". Berchtesgaden is spoken of as a peace without honor or security; France and Britain are held responsible for the betrayal of Czechoslovakia. Although Hitler talks of "the right of self-determination," it continues, "[Chamberlain] should not think that the matter will stop here... The wealthy landlord has never gotten off with one payment to the blackmailer. But next time the money may be paid not in Czech but in British currency." This publication advocated the overthrow of Chamberlain in the "next fortnight"; for, although Czechoslovakia could no longer be saved, Britain might be.

It is difficult to gauge the influence of newspapers on British public opinion. It is clear that The Times, the Observer, and the Daily Mail usually parroted Government policy; it is also clear that there were editors and writers who took the side of the opposition - and printed this side of the story. But how many amongst the masses are guided by editorials? This is one of the imponderables in a case such as this. And, by the same token, newspapers certainly cannot be relied upon as barometers of public opinion; bear in mind, for example, the unique role of Dawson of The Times.

A telegram from the Acting Counselor of the German Embassy in Great Britain (Selsam) to the German Foreign Ministry is another, perhaps more accurate, source of insight into the mood of public opinion during the Munich week. Selsam said that although the British public's reaction to Berchtesgaden was "characteristic of the reaction produced in British public opinion by his bold decision", distrust developed on the eve of Godesberg - particularly as a result of exaggerated German press and radio propaganda against Czechoslovakia. He continued:

"The distrust of the aims of our policy, which up to now could be noted latently and vaguely here and there, and which found expression in the speeches of Eden, Churchill, and Attlee, as well as in the resolutions passed by the Labor Party and the trade-unions, gained ground everywhere. It extended to all circles of the population without exception, when on the 23rd instant the news came that the Godberberg talks would not now be continued." 150

The implication was clear; a German was warning Germany that she had better exercise care, for Britain might fight after all.

Letters to the editors of newspapers are another possible barometer of public opinion. And on September 23 the New York Times noted that spontaneous letters of indignation (regarding government policy) were flooding British newspaper offices. 151 On the 22nd The Manchester Guardian published a letter written by an R.H. Tawreye which included the observation that "The ambition to be eaten last, which inspires our present policy, is intelligible but futile; we shall (if we remain edible) be eaten all the same, nor shall we be consulted as to the date of the ceremony." 152 The same issue included a letter from C. Delisle Burns, the theme of which was that there were "limits" to the realization of the self-determination principle. 153 Letters to The Guardian on the 23rd included one from a former British resident in Germany appealing to the British not to succumb to blackmail and a letter from Briar MacMurrough blasting British leadership, including that of the (minority) Labor Party. 154 A letter

150. German Documents, 919-920 (Italics mine).
153. Ibid., 20.
to The Guardian published on the 26th claimed that the long-term effect of Chamberlain's policy would be to make Britain Germany's vassal. 155

There were also a lesser number of letters supporting Chamberlain, such as one from Len Harding which noted that Chamberlain had had the foresight to avoid the mistakes of the past - that he was the only one to seek new solutions. 156 But the important thing is that there was a sizeable amount of written protest from the public.

Several other factors may be noted as further evidence of the change which was taking place. On September 22 the Archbishop of York characterised appeasement as a morally calamitous process. 157 Many organizations, including the Women's International League, the South Manchester Peace Council, the League of Nations Union Youth Groups, 158 the National Union of Railwaymen, the Association of Women Clerks and Secretaries, and the Council of Ministry of Health Branch of the Civil Servic Clerical Association, 159 protested against the government's policy and demanded that Czechoslovakia not be abandoned. All of this led The New York Times to speak of the "...grim desire of the British masses...that the long series of retreats of the National government before the dictatorships be terminated once and for all", and to state that, "this desire has become most pronounced in the past week. It is due to humiliation over recent events, and it is due to growth of the conviction that there can be no peace, that no settled prosperity is possible until Europe is freed from

155. Ibid., Monday, September 26, 1938, 16.
156. Ibid., 16.
158. Ibid., September 22, 1938, 4.
159. Ibid., September 24, 1938, 17.
the menace of Nazi extremism"; and the sooner the showdown came, the better. 160

Mowat says in no uncertain terms that there was a definite "hardening" of British public opinion after September 19 against Chamberlain's willingness to sacrifice Czechoslovakia in the course of peace. The public, he says, was bewildered, for it was not kept well informed by the press or B.B.C. as a result of Chamberlain's "secretive diplomacy"; and Parliament was not in session. But the people felt badly for the Czechs. On Sunday, September 25, even Garvin argued in the Observer for a strong stand, as did the Daily Telegraph on the 26th. 161

On September 26th a series of speeches were given at Earls Court by Labor Party members of Parliament. "'Stand by the Czechs!'" was the popular cry. Hugh Dalton writes: "Our audience rose to it, and so, I believe, would the great mass of British opinion have done, had the bugle blown." 162

September 27 was the third or fourth day in the high point of opposition to Chamberlain's policy in Britain, and his speech undoubtedly underlined the feeling. But the dramatic Munich announcement on September 28, referred to earlier, changed most of this. Public opinion was once again in the palm of Chamberlain's hand. A London Times editorial on the 29th spoke of the glowing response to Chamberlain's speech of his great success where in a parallel situation in 1914 Sir Edward Grey, British Foreign Minister, had failed to preserve the peace. 163 When the results of the Munich Conference were made known, The Times referred to the agreement as "a manifest improvement on the


161. Mowat, C.L., Britain, 613.

162. Dalton, H., Memoirs, 175. The implication is that other leadership could easily have swung Britain in favor of collective security and standing by the Czechs.

Godesberg memorandum. With war temporarily averted, the people were content to let the Prime Minister handle the situation as best he could. The majority applauded the announcement of the conference, applauded when the Prime Minister left for Germany, and lauded his "triumphal" return.

The Times Weekly Edition for October 6 featured a front-page photograph with the caption: "Chamberlain ... on his return from the successful Munich Conference." The edition speaks of his "noble" efforts and of how the House of Commons had been stirred to a "passionate relief". It also claimed, with little exaggeration, "London gave the Prime Minister the welcome of a conquering hero on his return from Munich late on Friday." The King congratulated Chamberlain, and the crowd outside chanted: "We want Neville!"

Taking The Times' bias into account, Chamberlain did go to Munich with a fairly clear popular mandate for the policy of appeasement. At least several major answers for this may be found, including a simple, understandable dread of war and an "uncritical admiration of Nazi Germany by members of the upper class, such as Lord Londonderry." But much insight into the problem may be found in a letter to the editors of The Spectator on September 30. The author is twenty-one-year-old R.S. Ryder. He stated frankly that the British were "not prepared to fight and die for collective security" because (1) there was an element of "right" (self-determination) in the German demands and (2) Britain was afraid to make final commitments in Eastern Europe. His generation, Ryder maintained, was not prepared to fight for territories in Eastern and Central Europe that contain "big and discontented minorities." Regarding British policy in the

164. Ibid., Friday, September 30, 1938, 12.


166. Mowat, C.L., Britain, 592.
30's he was very critical. Policy had fluctuated continually since 1931 -
changing according to what he referred to as the "behindhand" feelings of the
people and in the face of threats from other nations. Chamberlain was always
vague; if he would clearly pledge to defend [rump] Czechoslovakia, said Ryder,
"then, I believe, Mr. Chamberlain would have the main backing of public opinion."\textsuperscript{167}

Mowat concludes that ". . . until after Munich there was no question that
appeasement was popular, despite its many critics."\textsuperscript{168} However, there were
"many critics", and their numbers multiplied rapidly during the Munich week, in
spite of the fact that the leadership had certainly made no attempt to rally
them to the support of the Czechs. In that there was this "hardening" of opinion
in Britain, it is quite possible that different leadership might well have

gained the general support of the public in initiating a new stand-firm policy.
This projection is certainly reasonable in that the "hardening" of public opin-
ion between September 22 and 28th cannot be disputed. As it was, when Chamber-
lain offered an anxious nation a new chance for peace (September 28), it was
only human nature that they should jump at the chance and give him their moral
support. The general public simply did not know any better; the Prime Minister
had never told them of the underlying issues at stake, even if he himself
secretly recognized their existence.

\textsuperscript{167} The \textit{Spectator}, London, September 30, 1938, Letter to Editors from R.S.
Ryder, 517.

\textsuperscript{168} Mowat, C.L., \textit{Britain}, 591.
VIII. The Role of Neville Henderson

As early as 1937, Neville Henderson made it clear that he favored handing the Sudetenland to Germany since it was, in his view, rightfully hers.169

This same Henderson was Neville Chamberlain's hand-picked successor to Sir Eric Phipps for British Ambassador to Berlin in 1938. Phipps was transferred to the less important Paris office, not because he was incapable of handling the Berlin assignment, but probably because Henderson was (according to Wheeler-Bennett, Cooper and others) more amenable to the German point of view and therefore more necessary to the success of appeasement than was Phipps. This cannot be proved, but the transfer was implemented. Let us give the record a quick glance.

In a letter to Sir Horace Wilson from Nuremberg on September 9, 1938, Henderson said:

"Versailles was the error which has got to be corrected. Much as I hate saying so, that is the hard fact. Otherwise we must fight Germany again. It is revision by war or revision by peaceful negotiations which in fact means compulsion at Prague and not Berlin, because compulsion here settles nothing."170

In a letter to Halifax on the 20th, he said that he

"...would rather have local trouble between Czechs and Germans than a world war... It may be humiliating, but it's better to keep the peace for a principle than to fight a war in opposition to one. And I have no doubt whatever of the rightness of the principle pure and simple. Anyway now that we have taken the plunge for self-determination we have got to see it through, and if Benes is reasonable, do the best we can for him."171

169. Cooper, D., Old Men Forget, 225.
171. Ibid., App., 655.
During the Munich week he said to Halifax: "Any encouragement given to the Czechs to hesitate or prevaricate will be disastrous and only immediate surrender of territories which they have agreed ultimately to surrender can save them from complete tragedy." The only answer to the problem short of war, he maintained, was acquiescence to the German demands, and this included the Godesberg memorandum. He added fuel to his argument with reports such as this.

"Military Attaché has just returned from Czechoslovakia and is convinced that morale is poor and that resistance will prove to be feeble. This must be known to the French too and to the Czech General Staff as it is clearly known here." 173

His answer to the honor position expressed by such people as Jan Masaryk, Churchill, and Dalton was this twisting of the word.

"I told [Czech Chargé d'Affaires] that I thought it was . . . with honour and that nothing could be more honourable than for M. Benes to announce to the world that he preferred to yield to overwhelming force than . . . a war which would ruin his own country and might ruin the whole of Europe." 174

Early on the 28th he told Halifax that by mid-day Czechoslovakia should be informed that if Benes does not (yield to German demands) we shall not support him, "and that Britain would lose more prestige by ineffectual military efforts to stop Germany than by giving Hitler what he wanted. And in this case, Henderson said, "no compromise" was possible. 175

173. Ibid., Telegram from Henderson (Berlin) to Halifax (London), September 26, 1938, 563.
174. Ibid., Telegram Henderson (Berlin) to Halifax (London), September 27, 1938, 579.
175. Ibid., September 28, 1938, 585-586.
Such commentary could not help but reaffirm Chamberlain's belief that his policy was feasible, desirable, and necessary - that its course should not be changed. In this way Neville Henderson contributed to the Munich results. It must also be noted that the pro-German slant of the views of this man referred to by Duff Cooper as "the Hysterical Henderson" afforded the British absolutely nothing in the line of concession from Hitler; and it certainly contributed to the destruction of the territorial integrity of Czechoslovakia.

The selections from his correspondence are also interesting in that they are a clear reflection of the Chamberlain-sponsored appeasement attitude. The author was Neville Henderson, but he might easily have been Wilson or Chamberlain himself.

IX. The Munich Conference.

When it was announced that the Four Powers would meet at Munich, Beneš immediately begged Chamberlain not to do anything that would place Czechoslovakia in a worse position than she would be in were the Anglo-French proposals implemented; he warned of the implications behind Polish threats and asked that Czechoslovakia be allowed to present her case at Munich. However, no part of this appeal was granted consideration; the Czech representatives waited in an anteroom at Munich and were simply issued a dictat at the conclusion of the conversations. Russia was not invited to participate in any way; this would have been unacceptable to Germany. The principals were Germany, Britain, France and Italy, with Mussolini acting as mediator.

Count Dino Grandi, Italian Ambassador in Britain, expressed his opinion, "that it would have been impossible for Signor Mussolini to have persuaded Hitler to hold up mobilization and agree to a conference if he had not previously given Germany full assurance of military support." The Italian nation, he added, was not happy with the prospect of war.

Ciano provides this brief account. At the beginning of the conference, the Duce went to a corner of the room where he was surrounded by Nazi leaders. "There was a vague sense of embarrassment, particularly on the part of the French."

Shortly thereafter, the minor participants – German Foreign Minister Ribbentrop,


178. Ibid., Telegram from Halifax (London) to Earl of Perth (Rome) September 29, 1938, 626.
Alexis Léger (Secretary General of the French Foreign Office), Sir Horace Wilson, Schmidt (the German Interpreter), and Ciano - discussed the situation in general terms. Then Hitler, Chamberlain, Daladier, and Mussolini got down to business. Ciano continues, "Chamberlain is inclined to linger over legal points; Daladier defends the cause of the Czechs without much conviction; the Duce prefers to remain silent and sum up and draw conclusions when the others have finished their dissertations." In the afternoon, according to Ciano, Daladier said that the whole problem was due to the pig-headedness of Benes and that he had repeatedly suggested that the Sudeten Germans be given autonomy.\textsuperscript{179} These "observations" are biased and may not be too accurate. Nonetheless, it is true that it did not take long for the four leaders to come to an agreement.

The terms of the Munich agreement, formulated and concluded by evening on the 29th, may be listed (in somewhat abbreviated form) as follows:

1. Evacuation begun by 1 October.
2. Evacuation concluded by 10 October - no destruction of installations (Czech Government to be held responsible for this).
3. Evacuation under control of international commission (represented by Germany, Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia.)
4. Schedule for evacuation of various areas.
5. International Commission to determine territories in which a plebiscite is to be held. Occupation by international bodies until after plebiscite. Commission to set date for plebiscite - not later than end of November.
6. International Commission to render final decision on frontiers. Commission may also "recommend to the four Powers - Germany, the United Kingdom, France and Italy - in certain exceptional cases minor modifications in the strictly ethnographical determination of the zones which are to be transferred without plebiscite."
7. Six months' right of option "into and out of transferred territories."
8. Within four weeks - Sudeten Germans who wish it will be released from military or police service in Czechoslovakia and Sudeten German political prisoners will be released by Czech Government.

\textsuperscript{179} Ciano, \textit{Diary}, 166-167.
ANNEX: Anglo-French guarantee of new borders of Czechoslovakia. German-Italian guarantee of same to go into effect "When the question of Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia has been settled." New meeting if latter question not resolved within three months.

SUPPLEMENTARY DECLARATIONS:
"All questions which may arise out of the transfer of the territories shall be considered as coming within the terms of reference of the international commission. "The Four heads of Governments here present agree that the international commission provided for in the agreement signed by them today shall consist of the Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, the British, French, and Italian Ambassadors accredited in Berlin, and a representative to be nominated by the Government of Czechoslovakia."180

Munich legalized the cession of 11,000 square miles of territory, 2,800,000 Sudeten Germans, and 800,000 Czechs.181 Chamberlain was to say with satisfaction that he gained a negotiated settlement which was more moderate that Hitler's Godesberg demands. Hitler's supposed "concessions" at Munich included: (1) Provision for a Czech representative at the International Commission at Berlin with equal voting power with those representatives of the Four Powers, (2) the "exceptional cases" ruling - point 6, and (3) the further concession in the right of option and the transfer of populations. But were there really any concessions on Hitler's part?

The Godesberg "Memorandum", substituted for the Berchtesgaden resolutions in part because Hungarian and Polish minorities would not be thereby relieved of distress, demanded that Hungarian and Polish claims be met as a requisite to a peaceful solution. The "Annex" to the Munich agreement granted Hungary and Poland the right to take the territories which they claimed. Secondly, the God-

180. British Documents, Telegraphic, Text of Munich Agreement, September 29, 1938, Germany, United Kingdom, France, and Italy, received Sept. 30, 627-629.
181. Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich, 194.
esberg demand that German-speaking regions be "ceded forthwith" was hardly modified at Munich since all areas to be ceded were to be evacuated within eleven days; a Godesberg decision would have given the Czechs approximately seven or eight days to evacuate (depending upon the day which the memorandum might have gone into effect). Thirdly, Hitler's original demand that military and economic establishments in the areas evacuated be left intact was granted by the terms of the Munich settlement. Fourthly, at Godesberg the Führer had warned that the Czechs might give in with the Czech-German frontier settled on a national basis or not give in, in which case Hitler would force the construction of a strategic frontier. Munich granted Hitler both, since the Czech fortifications system, as strong as the French Maginot Line, was handed over to Germany. Fifth, at Godesberg Hitler had been unwilling to guarantee the new Czech boundaries against unprovoked aggression; at Munich, in the "Supplementary Declaration", he and Mussolini "conceded" to guarantee "rump" Czechoslovakia after Hungary and Poland had bitten off the chunks which they coveted. This was an easy concession, for there would be very little left to guarantee and because no one could really hold Hitler to it.

It is difficult to draw any real distinction between the Godesberg "memorandum" of September 24 and the Munich agreement of September 30. In actuality the trials and anxieties of the "Munich Week" resulted in nothing different than what might have been conceded on September 23rd or 24th. It prompted André Francois-Poncet, French Ambassador in Berlin, to say: "Voilà comme la France traite les seuls alliés qui lui étaient restées fidèles!"182

Without conceding anything significant, according to Wheeler-Bennett, Hitler hereby destroyed the French system of security, drove Russia out of the

182. Ciano, Diary, 163.
Although Duff Cooper registered contempt for the Munich decision and resigned his position, the rest of the Chamberlain Government reservedly lauded Chamberlain’s "success". According to The Times, the people were overjoyed:

"They [the British people] were a demonstration of thankfulness [appreciated the fact] that reason, backed by rapid action and determination, had removed an issue upon which the British people had shown itself rightly and unhesitatingly prepared to fight."\(^{184}\)

The New York Times reported that the reaction was merely one of understandable relief.\(^{185}\) Mowat writes that Chamberlain was "deluged with letters of praise from people at home and abroad" - those in England including the King, General Smuts, and the kitchen-maid of the Chamberlain family.\(^{186}\)

Not all were joyful over what had transpired. Many of the British people were skeptical. Daladier felt guilt and despair - and his face showed it when he arrived in Paris after the conference, in spite of the fine welcome which was granted him at the airport. When the Czech troops on the Czech Maginot Line were ordered to retreat without fighting, many suicides resulted among the unhappy ranks.\(^{187}\) And George F. Kennan, who was in Prague on the day of Munich, says: "I shall never forget the sight of the people weeping in the streets as the news of what had occurred came in over the loud-speakers."\(^{188}\) Of Chamberlain Winston Churchill said at the time of Munich:

"In the depths of that dusty soul there is nothing but abject surrender. . .the Government had to choose between war and shame. They chose shame, and they will get war, too."\(^{189}\)

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188. Kennan, G.F., *Russia and the West*, 322.

Munich: 1938 - Conclusions

Twenty-four years have elapsed since Munich, and it may be argued that it is not entirely fair for this generation to stand in judgment of Neville Chamberlain's policies. We look back and make value judgments in retrospect; he had to utilize foresight, a very scarce commodity indeed. However, this is not reason enough to acquit him of responsibility for what constituted a tremendous foreign policy failure.

In my estimation certain almost irrefutable things may be said about Munich and the week which preceded it - evidence, if you will, of Chamberlain's failure to rise to the occasion and meet the problems successfully on behalf of Western Europe. Let us consider the more important points I have sought to bring to light in this analysis.

(1) The question of preparedness, dealt with rather briefly here, is probably the most complex problem at hand and not one which may be easily resolved. But obviously prestige and military strength greatly enhance a nation's position at the conference table. And obviously Britain alone had little of either in 1938. This weakness is attributable not only to the Baldwin Government and the Labor Party which "rejected rearmament though advocating collective security" during the Chamberlain and Baldwin eras, but also to Neville Chamberlain himself. As was mentioned earlier, the Prime Minister never showed any dissatisfaction with the rearmament program until September, 1938, and then relatively little.

A Conservative minority, led by Winston Churchill, had urged preparedness beginning at least as early as 1934; but this was a very small minority with an

equally small voice in policy-making. The Chamberlain Government must accept its share of the criticism on this score since it had no clear policy and since it showed little anxiety over military strides in Germany and Italy. Military measures were passed as early as 1935, but "... not until the spring of 1939 did preparedness for war become the avowed intention of rearmament."191 As a result the British Army had only five (defensive) divisions until the spring of 1939. This "fact" of 1938 would seem to stand as a very good reason for appeasement at Munich.

However, the Germans were also weak in many respects. In September, 1938, they had only 13 divisions in the West,192 whereas the French had upwards of 60 divisions. Czech forces equaling at least 32 divisions and her formidable defenses were available in 1938; they were gone in 1939. Germany was clearly superior to Britain and France in air power, but in 1938 she possessed neither the bomber strength nor the bases in Western Europe necessary for successful bombing operations against Britain.

The question as to whether or not Britain should have fought in 1938 rather than 1939 is academic; but it does seem that Britain would have done no worse had she done so.

It has been argued that Chamberlain was stalling in 1938 to gain time. The facts rule otherwise because appeasement and complacency continued for some months after Munich. And even if it had really been his intention to delay the issue through appeasement, he did not gain time (in terms of relative arm strengths) anyway. On this issue Hugh Dalton wrote: "Taking all into account, I have lit-

191. Ibid., 277.

tile doubt that we lost a precious year."

There is another, perhaps more important, consideration here. The Anglo-
French Conversations in September revealed little British concern over relative
arm strengths. Although it must be conceded that some feelings, fears, and
motivations do not always manifest themselves in written documents, the follow-
ing indictment by McCallum is perceptive:

"What degree of armament would have been sufficient to make
them (France and Britain) act? How many more ships, tanks,
and aeroplanes did they require before they could approve of
Great Britain's entangling herself in the obligations which the
Covenant of the League implied? Would an increase of thirty,
of sixty, of a hundred percent have been enough, or is it pos-
sible that contempt and misunderstanding of the League system
was so deep that they would never have moved at all?"

It is very likely that they would not have, so convinced was Neville Chamberlain
that the only way to peace on the Continent of Europe was through the appease-
ment of Nazi Germany.

In September, 1938, as before, Hitler acted with full confidence, not so
much that Germany was much stronger militarily than the Allies, but that the
latter did not have the will to react. He was willing "to play [them] a game
which [would] inevitably have [had] to be played one day." The British were not.

(2) Some British historians attempt to burden France with the responsibility
for the loss of honor from Berchtesgaden to Munich. A.J.P. Taylor is a prominent
example; he claims that France's loss of fibre led to the "decline of morality"
at Berchtesgaden, that Britain later (at Godesberg and Munich) became trapped
by French insistence on a guarantee (of the new borders of Czechoslovakia), that
Daladier thereby gave Great Britain the push "which landed her in the Second

193. Ibid., 204.
195. Ciano Diary, 161.
World War. 196

But it must be remembered that Chamberlain was almost single-handedly determining British-French policy in 1938 (partially, it is true, because France had "lost fibre"), especially during the September tri-Conference period. Daladier had chosen to play the role of follower; and although he might argue with Chamberlain (as he did at the British-French meetings following Berchtesgaden and Godesberg), he always gave in sooner or later. The Taylor assertion therefore seems ill-founded.

The implication that Great Britain was committed to Eastern Europe and ultimately war simply because she guaranteed Czech borders is open to considerable debate. Firstly, Britain never lived up to her guarantee; she actually entered the war on behalf of Poland, whom she pledged to protect nearly a year later. Secondly, it may be argued that Britain, the prey of the blackmailer, would probably eventually come into violent conflict with that blackmailer, regardless of commitments to Eastern Europe, that it was only a question of time and place.

(ii) What is probably most dubious in Neville Chamberlain's conduct of foreign policy during the Czech crisis period culminating in the Munich decision is his absolutely dogmatic insistence, to the very end, upon the very letter of his appeasement policy and his unwillingness to consider or to explore alternative procedures or policies. He had made up his mind, and nothing could change it. Even after Godesberg, where Hitler made a lie of Berchtesgaden, Chamberlain publicly reaffirmed his belief that Hitler was a "man of his word." In this regard, consider two major possibilities which might have been exploited:

(a) As we have seen, on August 18, 1938, Herr von Kleist was granted interviews with Vansittart, Lloyd George, and Churchill; he made it plain to all

that the German officer class was unqualifiedly opposed to war but that it needed help from the outside (Britain) if it was to be able to foil Hitler. His suggestions were summarily brushed aside by the British Prime Minister.

This is revealing on two counts. In the first place it shows the apparent pro-Hitler slant of British policy in that Chamberlain had immediately "sided" with the Führer against Von Kleist; he trusted Hitler more than he did the latter. Secondly, it adds fuel to the allegation that Chamberlain would not even consider new proposals.

Other Germans at the time lent support to Von Kleist's statements regarding the internal situation in the Reich. Years later evidence of an army plot against the Nazi leadership was bared, proving that there was a strong opposition factor ready to act. Chamberlain could not be expected to have known of the specifics in 1938; but he had more than an inkling of what was afoot and simply brushed the opportunity aside. He wanted no part of "Jacobites" and dared not deviate from the appeasement path.

(b) As was the case with the Von Kleist effort, Chamberlain turned deaf ears on pleas emanating from Litvinov andMaisky for collective action involving cooperation with the Soviet Union. Dalton says that "it was not clever to cold-shoulder the Russians in order to curry favor with the Germans." This is a supportable objection. Although the purges in Russia and the menace of Bolshevism were legitimate grounds for proceeding cautiously in dealing with the Soviet Union, they were not substantial enough to warrant Russia no consideration at all from Chamberlain, especially in view of the consistency with which Litvinov had maintained his position. Chamberlain would not even confer with the Russians. He would not even think of causing Hitler distress by talking with Russian represent-

atvies; and this may have been a serious mistake, for evidence or rumors of Anglo-Russian intrigue might well have caused Hitler to modify his demands. But this is simply conjecture. The echoes of this policy may be seen in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939. What is important and obvious again here is Chamberlain's desire to placate Hitler in every way possible and his unwillingness to deviate from his previously-set course. --- whatever the perils and whatever the possibilities offered by an policy shift.

(4) Many proponents of appeasement and many who simply saw no other alternative to appeasement argued that Great Britain had nothing to gain by going to war in 1938. I have already attempted to show that the lack of clear policy left the British people so confused that it was no wonder that they expressed little desire to fight for Czechoslovakia. What was not made clear (and was probably not even seen) by the Chamberlain Government was that it was not really for Czechoslovakia that Britain and France should have fought in 1938. John W. Wheeler-Bennett gets at the root of the issue when he insists that fighting would not have been for Czechoslovakia in 1938 and was not for Poland in 1939 - but rather for a principle of far-reaching implications. This concept is expressed by Duff Cooper:

"In defense of this principle we have fought many times in the past and must be prepared to fight again in the future, for on the day when we are not prepared to fight for it we shall have forfeited our liberties, our independence, and all the hopes and ideals which we have ever cherished." 198

The British and French, says Wheeler-Bennett, could not make up their minds as to what their "vital interests" really were.

198. Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich, 7.
They did not - or would not - realize that they themselves were menaced by the rearmament of Germany, by the occupation of the Rhineland, by the unilateral abrogation of the Treaty of Locarno - by the annexation of Austria or by the crippling of Czechoslovakia. [Only when it was too late did Britain and France come] fully to realize that German ambitions constituted a direct threat to their own most vital interest of all - their way of life, their tradition of liberty and decency, their "deathless attachment to freedom;" when they had so realized, they fought - but for France it was too late.199

On September 19 Hugh Dalton had warned Chamberlain of this, adding that "...at each stage you will have fewer friends and weaker allies to support you in any stand you may, at some late hour, decide to make."200 In this regard George F. Kennan says that Munich demonstrates that it usually pays "to stand up manfully to one's problems," even when no certain victory is in sight.201

"Honor" may certainly be over-stressed. And dealing with Russia in itself would not have been particularly "honorable." But it seems that Britain had a large stake in what was happening on the continent of Europe, regardless of "honor." Britain had something to lose by fighting a war; but she had more to lose by fighting a long, uphill war. Action in 1938 might have resulted in an early end in view of Czech military strength, anti-Hitler feeling within Germany, the Reich's lack of capacity for sustaining a full-scale war effort involving two fronts, etc. War in 1939, when the Czech army and defenses were gone, the German military machine was much stronger, and when Russia was on the side of Germany, was probably going to be a much more costly one for Great Britain.

Was war inevitable in September, 1938, and if so could this have been recognized at the time? The answer to both parts of the question is quite definitely

199. Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich, 6,7.
201. Kennan, G.F., Russia and the West, 323.
yes. Churchill thought so and said so; Dalton and Cooper were of the same
opinion; even Daladier predicted this in no uncertain terms. Their estimate
of appeasement's results may well have been expressed as General Douglas
MacArthur did in 1951:

History teaches with unmistakable emphasis that appeasement
but begets new and bloodier war. It points to no single
instance where it has led to more than a sham peace. Like
blackmail, it lays the basis for new and successively greater
demands until in the end, as in blackmail, violence becomes
the only other alternative. 202

(5) This leads us to the question of public opinion in Great Britain.
Could Britain have gone to war in September, 1938, with the support of public
opinion? The answer to this question would lie in the hands of the governmental
leadership. The government, by making its position clear to the people, by
emphasizing that the British would be fighting not so much for Czechoslovakia
as for the security of the British way of life, by acting with conviction, would
probably have been followed courageously by its people. And it could have been
accomplished most easily between September 24 and 28 when public opinion - as
has been shown - had "hardened" in favor of honor and support of the Czechs -
when, I must add, few of the people had been made aware of the fact that there
was more at stake than Czechoslovakia itself. It may be concluded, therefore,
that public opinion would not have been a serious barrier to a change in Bri-
tish foreign policy during the Munich week.

(6) Finally, if Germany should have been stopped in 1938, how should this
have been attempted? What alternative was there to appeasement?

As early as 1937 Neville Chamberlain had been convinced that the League of
Nations was a failure, that the ideal of collective security must be abandoned.

Chamberlain decided that the only way to appeasement (peace) in Europe was personal (Chamberlain) contact with the dictators. Hence, collective security was never considered by the Prime Minister. The formulation of power blocks, he said, would inevitably spell war.

This may have been true, and even Litvinoff, advocate of collective security under the League, admitted that rearmament and alignment probably meant war. But what the proponents of this viewpoint sought was to avoid a major, drawn-out conflict.

As late as September 14, military expert Liddell-Hart expressed his belief that a firm British policy "might still line up Poland, Rumania, and others, to our side," that Italy - in the face of collective Allied strength - might be nudged into neutrality. Certainly the implementation of the balance of power concept would have changed the circumstances for Hitler. A positive decision by Britain, France, and Russia, along with Czechoslovakia, to stop Hitler unless he agreed to plebiscites under Anglo-French jurisdiction granting the Czechs rights to removal of military and some economic installations, and an agreement to have the League settle Polish and Hungarian minority disputes with Czechoslovakia would have preserved the integrity of the West and made war less likely. Had war followed, Czechoslovakia almost certainly would have been overrun; but the prospect of ultimate German victory would not have been as bright as it was in 1939. Germany could not have successfully coped with pressure from two sides. Furthermore, Poland and Rumania might have seen hope for Western victory and acted accordingly - assuming that they were likely to hop on the bandwagon which seemed to offer the best advantages. Russia could have and quite likely would have provided air support. Italy was not ready for war.

203. Dalton, H., 175.
and might well have backed out, when faced with substantial resistance; Mussolini's confidence was the direct result of what he saw as cowardice on the part of France and Britain.

Collective security could have been realized through the machinery of the League of Nations. The principal reason for its abominable failures in previous crises is directly traceable to Britain's (and France's) reluctance to lead. A Britain under Churchill and Eden, for example, would have written a different history of the 30's. Action through the League rather than outside it would probably have been preferable since it would have made it possible to label Germany the aggressor (Article XI of the Versailles Treaty) within the technical framework of international law.

Not only did Chamberlain not consider such a move, but - as Cooper stated in his resignation speech on October 3 - Britain never even declared that she was prepared to fight until the last minute - and then uncertainly. Under such circumstances why would Hitler not make increasingly greater and greater demands? Why would he not make the most of the opportunity?

Finally, appeasement might not have been an incorrect policy; it was the correct moral course if interpreted and put into effect realistically. Churchill's words allude to such an interpretation of appeasement: "I have always held that the maintenance of peace depends upon the accumulation of deterrents against the aggressor, coupled with a sincere effort to redress grievances."

And Wheeler-Bennett crystallized the issue: "Appeasement - a necessary and invaluable card in the game of diplomacy - must be played from strength and never from weakness."205

204. Great Britain, H.C. Debts 5s, 339, October 3, Col. 31.
205. Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich, Introduction.
Munich represents, as Havighurst puts it, the end of Britain as a first-class power. It also rendered inevitable the most destructive war that the world has ever known - one from which Britain certainly did not emerge a winner. Circumstances might have been different — victory might have been what the term implies — had England taken the initiative during the crisis over Czechoslovakia. The results would most certainly have been different had her leadership been other than what it was.

Many mistakes were made well before Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister, most important of which was the failure of the victors to establish peace terms commensurate with Wilsonian principles. Article 231 of Versailles, which laid most of the guilt for World War I at the door of Germany, and the peacemakers' failure to effect the realization of the self-determination principle certainly facilitated Hitler's task and created tremendous problems and responsibilities for the Prime Minister who was there when the boomerang came back — the unfortunate Neville Chamberlain. But Chamberlain was neither realistic, nor perceptive, nor sensitive to honor when he practiced appeasement from a position of weakness, involving acquiescence to the dictator's every demand, simply because he lacked faith in collective security.

Although it may be argued that these conclusions are drawn in retrospect, it is no less true that there were voices in the '30's which said substantially what I write here; their warnings may be found throughout this paper.

PRIMARY SOURCES

(a) Books


(b) Public Documents


(c) Newspapers and Periodicals


SECONDARY SOURCES


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