AN ANALYSIS OF WHETHER IT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER FOR ENGLAND TO GO TO WAR IN 1938 INSTEAD OF 1939

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Dave Miles
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Dave Miles

Approved by Committee:

Robert Granby
Chairman

Henry Borgo

C. Walter Clark Jr.

Dean of the Graduate Division
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

On September 29, 1938, Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, flew to Munich for a four power conference with the heads of states of France, Italy and Germany. Adolf Hitler, the chancellor of Germany, had been demanding territorial concessions from Czechoslovakia. These four men—Chamberlain, Hitler, Benito Mussolini of Italy and Edouard Daladier of France—had come to Munich to reach a settlement. Agreement was finally reached at 2:30 a.m. on September 30. Czechoslovakia was betrayed and handed over, gagged and bound, to Hitler's mercies; the Czech representatives were called into the conference room after the dictators—Hitler and Mussolini—had left, and told to accept the terms; no comments were expected or allowed.¹ Hitler had got all he wanted, and without firing a shot: Czechoslovakia was ruined, Britain and France were humbled before Germany and Hitler himself was raised to a pinnacle of power and success among his own people.

Chamberlain came back to England to be greeted by a tremendous ovation starting at Heston Airport and reaching its climax at the Majesties' private apartments at

Buckingham Palace. While Chamberlain received the royal congratulations the crowd beyond the gates of the palace was chanting, "We want Chamberlain!" Eventually the king and queen, with the Premier and his wife, appeared on the balcony. There they stood, under the beam of a searchlight, listening to the cheering throng sing "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow." Then the king motioned Mr. Chamberlain forward, and he stood alone in front, acknowledging the acclamations. It was a scene that recalled Armistice night at the end of World War I.¹

It was during this intense chanting, cheering and joyful period that Neville Chamberlain under a tremendous stress of emotion allowed himself to use those famous phrases—"Peace with honour" and "Peace for our time." But Munich was neither "peace with honour" nor "peace for our time." In fact, it was only peace for eleven months and those famous sentences used just after Munich grated harshly on the ear and thought of man.

By March 1939, Hitler had completed his rape of Czechoslovakia. Having occupied Prague, he was able to stand in ecstasy at the windows of the Hradcchin Palace and survey the ancient city beneath. Czechoslovakia no longer existed. And in England the mighty thanksgiving that had

¹News item in The Illustrated London News, October 8, 1938.
greeted the Munich Settlement had long begun to give way to a more sober examination of the price at which peace had been bought. It was then that there began in earnest that bitter controversy which was nourished by a deep sense of shame and the word "Munich" became a gage of battle. The Munich agreement gave to the word "appeasement" a new and disagreeable meaning. No longer is "soothing or pacifying" an adequate definition. Appeasement now implies inadequacy and a lack of determination to defend one's rights against aggression. Powerful arguments, both at the time and for years afterwards, were leveled against the Munich Settlement. Today there can be little dispute that Munich was a shameful chapter in the history of France and England. It was "a disaster so great as to deprive France of the dignity of a Great Power and it set her feet upon a road of servility and panic concession that eventually led to Vichy."¹ England was scarcely less heavily involved for Munich came to stand in the English language as a symbol for national humiliation and betrayal.²

Yet when all is said, the question in the end resolves itself into a simple issue. Would it have been better to


²P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), p. 149.
fight in 1938? It is the purpose of this paper at least to clarify and set down the various positions that can be taken on this question if not to answer the question itself. To answer the question with a simple "yes" or "no" is a difficult job indeed. War is an essentially unreasonable and illogical pursuit. It cannot be "qualified" because there are too many human and other imponderables involved. And on neither side of this question—would it have been better to fight in 1938?—were the arguments free from dishonesty and special pleading. Passions ran high, thus objectivity was in abeyance. Today as well as yesterday, there are those who defend Munich by ignoring facts inconvenient to their case; while at the same time there are those who attack Munich by adducing circumstances which were not known at the time and cannot fairly be used against the British government. The betrayal of Czechoslovakia was an unmitigated wrong, and as such some who revolted against it found themselves in the grip of such a sense of moral outrage that they were unable to achieve the detachment necessary to place themselves in the position of the government and ask themselves with complete honesty: "what they would have done if the responsibility had been theirs?" Thus it is apparent that with the passionate and emotional connotation that is connected with which the question of when to go to war is a difficult one to answer.
Immediately after Chamberlain's return from Munich the House of Commons debated the settlement. For four days (October 3-6, 1938) the speeches poured from the members with eloquence, grace, and force. On the first day as Chamberlain entered the Chamber the members took to their feet and cheered.^1 Chamberlain and his team of advisors--Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare and Sir Thomas Inskip--placed their defence on the fundamental issue of war and peace. "I feel convinced that by my action I did avoid war,"^2 said Mr. Chamberlain. And then he added, "I feel equally sure I was right in doing so."^3 "It was on this note of challenge that Chamberlain asked for his vote of confidence--without consideration of non-essentials."^4 Sir John Simon took to the floor and asked the members of parliament:

How many of those among us are there who, if we could undo what was then done, would reject the settlement to which the Prime Minister put his hand on Friday, and instead--because it was the only alternative--would fling the world into the cauldron of immediate war?^5

Duff Cooper, who only a few days before resigned from


^2 Wheeler-Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

^3 Ibid.

^4 Ibid.

^5 Ibid.
his office of the First Lord of the Admiralty in protest of Chamberlain's policy at Munich, registered regret. In a speech of high oratory and great courage, in the face of an unsympathetic and impatient audience, "at the moment of Mr. Chamberlain's overwhelming mastery of public opinion, he thrust his way through the exulting throng to declare his disagreement with its leader."¹ In giving an explanation of his resignation Cooper pointed out that if war had come over Czechoslovakia it would have been as in 1914, to prevent one country from dominating the continent "by brutal force. For that principle to fight for it we forfeit our Empire, our liberties and our independence."² Cooper further on in his speech said, "The Prime Minister had believed in addressing Herr Hitler through the language of sweet reasonableness. I have believed that he was more open to the language of the mailed fist."³

These same doubts of Duff Cooper were again echoed in the House of Commons by Richard Law, the son of a former Prime Minister. Law could not see any strong grounds for


³Churchill, op. cit., p. 325.
Chamberlain's statement that he had brought back "Peace with Honour." In the words of Mr. Law:

We have now obtained, by peaceful means, what we have fought four wars to prevent from happening, namely, the domination of Europe by a single Power. I see those ideas which most of us, I think, value in England, ideas of decency and fairness and liberty, at a discount in the markets of the world.1

Clement Atlee, before the House of Commons, "condemned the settlement as one of Britain's greatest diplomatic defeats and a bitter humiliation; a gallant and democratic people had been 'betrayed and handed over to a ruthless despotism'; brute force had triumphed, and Hitler had won dominance over Europe without firing a shot."2 Churchill at last got the floor and with a certain bluntness he foretold doom. "'We have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat,' the fruits of five years of 'uninterrupted retreat of British power.'"3 And then in an epitome of eloquence, Churchill concluded his speech by saying:

   And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless, by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for Freedom as in olden time.4

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2 Charles Lochowat, *Britain Between the Wars 1918-1940* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1939), p. 120.
3 Ibid.
4 Churchill, op. cit., p. 328.
Winston Churchill spoke with dignity, at length and with interest. But his arguments fell for the most part on the deaf ears of most Members of Parliament. For the majority of the Members, of all parties, shared the sentiments expressed by Mr. Victor Raikes: "There should be full appreciation of the fact that our leader will go down to history as the greatest European statesman of this or any other time." After the opening day the Prime Minister registered boredom at the debates. And at the end he asserted that the charge of betraying Czechoslovakia was "simply preposterous," and that he had "saved" Czechoslovakia. It was Chamberlain's contention that he was opening a new era which had begun at Munich. He told the House:

The path which leads to appeasement is long and bristles with obstacles. The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous. Now that we have got past it, I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity.

Chamberlain asked the House for a decisive support of his policy and on October 6, 1938, he was accorded it by a vote of 306 to 114.  

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1. Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 185.  
2. Schuman, op. cit., p. 448.  
3. Ibid., p. 449.  
4. Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 188.  
After the debates in Parliament over Munich ended, the government turned toward a policy of rearmament. This can not be considered anything less than remarkable considering that Chamberlain had said that he had brought back "peace for our time." Harold Nicolson, a member of Parliament--a writer and a wit--had this to say: "It is difficult to say, 'This is the greatest diplomatic achievement in history: therefore we must redouble our armaments in order never again to be exposed to such humiliation.'" Thus it was apparent that the government was inconsistent in having gone from appeasement to rearmament. And on this point of rearmament there was complete unanimity of opinion in the House of Commons. Churchill, Attlee (head of the Labour Party) and Duff Cooper urged it for the opposition, and Chamberlain and his chief lieutenants pledged it on behalf of Government.

Actually Britain had been following a haphazard policy of rearmament since 1934. In that year she began in a very modest way to enlarge her air force; rearmament of the air force became an official policy in 1935, and this policy was translated into practice in 1936. But these

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2 Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 187.
3 Nowat, op. cit., p. 625.
years before Munich achieved little. Nothing was done for the improvement of the army and navy. Rearmament was thought of as a deterrent to aggressors, not as a preparation for war. Treasury control exercised its normal restraints; various branches of the armed forces had to compete for the pound; and the government felt that rearmament must not lead to the sacrifice of British commerce.¹

The Air Force began to make the main progress in enlargement and re-equipment between 1936 and 1938. New types of aircraft began to appear: the Wellington, Hampton and Blenheim bombers, the Spitfires and Hurricane fighters. But even these developments between 1936 and 1938 were slow in producing results. A new and warlike temper was needed and it finally appeared after the Anschluss. After the Anschluss came an expansion of aircraft factories and the sub-contracting of work on planes and their armaments. A new program of production was approved on April 27, 1938, that provided for 12,000 new planes in two years (the figure was raised to 17,500 just before the war).² The potential of the aircraft industry so increased that in 1939 deliveries exceeded expectations. Britain, in April 1939, ordered


²Postan, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
planes from the United States. Thus with all the hustle and bustle of activity and construction in the airplane industry, by the time war came, the R.A.F. was better prepared than the army or navy. Progress in rearmament was much slower in land and sea forces. The real expansion of rearmament in those two services did not come until after the Munich crisis. The navy had begun a modest program of expansion in 1935. This expansion was slightly accelerated in 1936.

It was the army that was the most neglected of the services. The regular army consisted of five divisions, of which one (divided into two in 1938) was mobile. Only two of these divisions were fully equipped by October 1938. Mechanization was more of a theory than a practice. It was not until 1938, that the army possessed its peacetime complement of wheeled vehicles and half the needed number of tracked vehicles. The army's primary objective was to provide for home defence and for imperial garrisons, not to serve as an expeditionary force to support commitments and obligations on the continent of Europe. This limitation, among other things, meant that the main effort in its

\[\text{footnote}{1}\text{bid.}\]
\[\text{footnote}{2}\text{bid., pp. 2-4, 36-47.}\]
\[\text{footnote}{3}\text{bid., p. 6.}\]
re-equipment was devoted to its tasks in anti-aircraft defence. Nevertheless, there was an important expansion of the arms industry after 1936--private arms factories were built, the stockpiling of strategic materials was begun and the enlargement and re-equipment of the army went on.¹

These measures of rearmament were large and indeed unprecedented in their cost in peacetime. But the fact is--they were much less than those of Germany. "In 1938 Germany was spending £1710 millions, or a quarter of her national income, on armaments, Great Britain £358 million, 7 per cent of her national income. The increase in expenditure on armaments in Great Britain, great as it was (250 per cent more than the figure for 1934), was less than Germany's (470 per cent); ..."²

"The war-scare over Czechoslovakia revealed to the public some of the deficiencies in the country's defences."³ In October 1938, there was only forty-four of the larger (3.7 inch) anti-aircraft guns available.⁴ Leslie Hore-

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¹ Ibid., pp. 6-8, 26-30, 36-47.
² Nowat, op. cit., p. 628. Churchill said, "In 1938/39 British military expenditure of all kinds reached £301,000,000, and Germany was at least £1,500,000,000." (The Gathering Storm, p. 336).
³ Nowat, op. cit., p. 629.
⁴ Ibid. Sir Samuel Hoare said there were no A. A. guns available on October 1938; found in Viscount Templewood,
Belisha, Secretary for War, declared in front of Parliament that the anti-aircraft equipment during the September crises was in an utterly chaotic state. He noted that some of the guns "were without dials because the firm which made them went bankrupt." ¹ He pointed out that guns had become separated from their instruments, some gun units did not have enough anti-aircraft shells and some of the shells were found deficient. ² There were not even sixty fire pumps in the whole of London. ³ Also the city needed 30,000 volunteers for auxiliary fire-fighting service but only 4,200 had volunteered by September 24, and of the 5,000 women needed for driving fire trucks and ambulances only 800 had enrolled their services. ⁴ During the war-scare of September 1938, the Government did distribute 30,000,000 gas masks to the public and helped dig miserable little trenches in which one million Britons could have huddled during air raids. But thousands received gas masks of the wrong size. There were

grave doubts whether the gas masks would be effective against mustard gas. Most of the trenches were pathetically shallow and inadequate and also there was profiteering in sandbags and shovels.¹

In the year of peace which remained after Munich many deficiencies were made good—more or less. The R. A. F.'s programmes were now being achieved in full measure. The navy was in the process of constructing trawlers and escort vessels for protection against mines and submarines. A list of occupations to insure the proper husbanding of man-power was drawn up in January 1939. Financial restraints on defence measures started to disappear. A Ministry of Supply was created in April 1939, to maintain rearmament progress in the navy, army and air force.² Yet all these preparations for war still fell short of the full mobilization of the country's resources. The rearmament was based on the supposition that resources could be built up over two years; thus by the summer of 1940 Britain would be ready for war but before then she must begin no premature military action.³

There was one great change in the structure of the military and that was in the conception of the army's

¹*Time*, XXXII (November 14, 1938), 25.
²Postan, *op. cit.*, pp. 58, 78, 81-82, 96.
³Ibid., pp. 53-54.
function. The idea of "limited liability" was dropped early in 1939, thanks to the War Secretary, Leslie More-Ellins, and foreign minister, Lord Halifax. Now the defence was understood to involve the defence of France. Military conversations were resumed by the French and British on a serious level.¹ Britain was to prepare a force for the defence of France. It was to consist of nineteen divisions and two cavalry divisions.² The final measure in the reorganization of the army was the introduction, for the first time during peace, of conscription.³

The actions of the government in reorganizing the army were impressive, but unfortunately the changes lacked substance. In June 1939, More-Ellins confessed in Paris that if war came immediately he would be able to send at once to France "not more than six divisions." Then when he was asked about his difficulties in building up the British army he replied: "Conscription is all well and good, but for the moment it is more a formula than a reality. I cannot call up the men who have registered because I have neither equipment to give them nor officers to train them."⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 70-71.
²Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 325.
³Postan, op. cit., p. 72.
war finally did come three months later, Hore-Belisha was able to send only four divisions. In 1918 it took eighty-five British divisions plus the help of much of the rest of the world to keep France from defeat.

Just how far did the progress of rearmament after Munich justify the settlement on the ground, of which its apologists came to make so much, that the time gained was greatly, even indispensably, to Britain's advantage? It is true that the number of rifles, guns and tanks increased. In October 1938, only two army divisions were fully equipped. By September 1939, there was equipment for five. Industrial mobilization had an extra year to pick up momentum. Anti-aircraft guns increased four-fold; and a chain of twenty radar stations was completed. In 1938, radar protection covered only the Thames Estuary; now protection stretched from the Orkenys to Land's End. The extra year also gave England time to set up searchlights and balloon barrages for all the main strategic points. In 1938, there were only 1430 searchlights out of the 4128 required, and only a hundred and forty balloons out of four hundred and fifty

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1Wheeler-Bennett, *op. cit.*, p. 325.
needed. Also the number of Britain's modern planes of necessary speed and fire power increased in number. In September 1938, the R.A.F. had five squadrons of Hurricanes and one of Spitfires; but "as the Hurricanes were without heating for their guns, they could not fight above 15,000 feet, even in summer." Thus, according to Home Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare, there were "less than a hundred eight-gun fighters against more than a thousand German bombers." A year later the R.A.F. had twenty-six squadrons equipped with either Hurricanes or Spitfires. Britain's expansion of the air force was beginning in 1938, the expansion of Germany's air force was nearly complete. The disparity between the two was therefore reduced in the year which followed Munich as far as quality of planes was concerned, though the disparity in the size of the two forces still increased in Germany's favor. If anywhere, "it was in the strengthening of her air power that the breathing spell afforded by Munich was of supreme value to Great Britain." How what was lost by not fighting in 1938? The

1 Ibid.  
2 Ibid., p. 332.  
3 Ibid.  
4 Postan, op. cit., p. 108.  
5 Ibid., pp. 107-108.  
6 Bowat, op. cit., p. 630.
Allies lost the services of "thirty-six Czech divisions, and the fact that at that time Germany had only thirteen divisions on her western front." In fact General Wilhelm Adam, the commander of the German forces in the West, declared to Hitler on August 29, 1938, "that despite all the fanfare about the west Wall he could not possibly hold it with the troops at his disposal." A year later Germany could dispose most of her forces in the West after the fall of Poland and by that time the Siegfried Line was greatly strengthened. "In 1938 Germany had between 21 and 51 fully equipped divisions, by 1939, 106; yet in that year French strength had not increased and that of the British army not very much." Whether the Munich year was a gain or a loss for England depends on one's judgement of the value of an extra year that Britain had to prepare for war. The facts need now to be taken into consideration.

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CHAPTER II

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Czechoslovakia was, in 1938, "a state of many peoples and some internal disharmony." It consisted of "7.5 million Czechs, 3.2 million Germans, 2.3 million Slovaks and smaller numbers of Magyars, Ruthenians and Poles."¹ Her 54,250 square miles could support her population of 15,000,000 more than adequately. Within her frontiers could be found all the important minerals except platinum. Her farm lands produced more than enough wheat, rye, barley, potatoes and cattle for her people.² Czechoslovakia was also one of the six most important industrial states in Europe (Germany, England, France, Italy, Belgium and Czechoslovakia). Her production of war industries were greater than Italy—in 1937 she produced ninety per cent more raw iron and fifteen per cent more steel than Italy. Czechoslovak industry was able alone to provide adequate war material to Rumania, Yugoslavia and even to some other states.³ Her armaments factory was comparable to that of a Great Power. The Skoda

¹Mowat, op. cit., p. 605.
works production alone was, in 1936-1939, "nearly equal to the output of the British arms factories."¹ In fact, the Bren light machine gun made by Czechoslovakia was so good that the British army used it to replace their own Lewis gun.² In 1938, Czechoslovakia exported 14.3 per cent of the arms exports of the world.³ Thus there was good reason for the Germans to call Czechoslovakia the "armory of the world."

Czechoslovakia was the strongest and best-governed of the new states which came into being after 1918. It occupied a strategic position in central Europe. It jutted right into the German flank and presented a formidable bastion barring the way of an aggressor to the Danube Basin, the Balkans and the Black Sea. Its diplomacy, under Edouard Beneš—its foreign minister and now (1938) its president—had won for it treaties of mutual assistance with France in 1925, and Russia in 1935. The mutual assistance treaty with France pledged each party to come immediately to the support of the other in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany. The mutual assistance treaty with Russia brought the Soviet Union to the aid of the Czechoslovak State


immediately after France came to her aid. With Germany, Czechoslovakia had an arbitration convention dating from 1925, and explicitly continued by Hitler, but it had refused all offers of a non-aggression pact from Hitler. Thus it was apparent that Czechoslovakia preferred to place her faith in the multiple guarantees of France, Russia and the League of Nations rather than upon the word of Hitler.

Czechoslovakia, besides having the support of the military might of France and Russia behind her, had a standing army of fourteen divisions which, in case of war, could be increased to thirty-six. This army was certainly formidable on account of its thoroughly up-to-date equipment and good training. Her defences "on the German frontier were in excellent order." A miniature Maginot Line had been constructed here by which the Czechs were confident they could hold up the German attack anywhere from six weeks to three months. Jan Masaryk, the Czechoslovakian ambassador to London, stated that the General Staff believed that even without outside help they could hold out for at least a month, possibly two. President Beneš believed that he

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2 Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 29.

could hold off a German attack for three weeks at the first line of defence and then hang on another three months more by falling back to a second defence line.¹ General Faucher, head of the French Military Mission in Prague, said:

Even in the hypothetical event of Czechoslovakia standing alone against Germany, I am of opinion that it would have been possible to prolong the struggle for some months. You must bear in mind that the Czechoslovak Army had forty good divisions; in other words, as compared with the whole of the German forces, the differences would have been no greater than that which existed between the French and German at Verdun.²

Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. T. Stronge, the British military attaché in Czechoslovakia, was also of the opinion that "there are no shortcomings in the Czech army, . . ., which are of sufficient consequence to warrant a belief that it cannot give a good account of itself." He went on to point out that the "greatest disadvantage vis-à-vis Germany is the hard fact of numerical inferiority, which, . . ., may be as much as 1:4.5." The British military attaché felt the fortifications were well advanced and even in the weakest section they had "some defensive value."

Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge saw a Czech advantage in their interior lines. In summing up, Lieutenant-Colonel Stronge saw:

¹Time, XXI (June 27, 1938), 18.
²Hipka, op. cit., p. 297.
... no material reason why they should not put up a really protracted resistance single-handed. It all depends on their morale. If that gives way, the war cannot last more than a week or two. If it holds, it may drag on for months. The fall of Prague should not be vital.

The Czechoslovak Air Force was quite remarkably powerful. Figures on the number of airplanes ranged from 550 first-line planes to 800 first-line planes; and with the second-line planes, which were exactly the same quality as the first-line planes, this number could easily double. These second-line planes could have been brought into action with very little delay. Czechoslovakia had an annual productive capacity of over a thousand planes. General Faucher, head of the French military mission in Prague, pointed out that the Czechoslovakian air force:

... might amount to between one hundred and fifteen hundred machines. The Czechoslovaks were quite well supplied with fighters; they had very good pilots who distinguished themselves during the war. In France, in 1939-1940, we had nearly a thousand Czechoslovak airmen, nearly all of them pilots, and they fought very well. The machines were not bad, either. There were a few medium bombers that came from Russia; they were

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the best in the world, . . . . The Czechoslovaks had a highly-developed aircraft industry, . . . .

Not only did Czechoslovakia have the airplanes but they were also an air base wedged in the midst of many important German cities. General Faucher, in regard to aerial assistance from Czechoslovakia, pointed out that "the Czechoslovak aerodromes were so exceptionally well-situated from a strategic point of view that it would have been possible to achieve considerable results with very little material." Czechoslovakia's planes could have reached Berlin, Vienna, Dresden, and Breslau (the principal industrial centers of Eastern Germany) in "only a few minutes." General Faucher ended by saying: "Thanks to this fact, Czechoslovakia held an important trump card in her hands."

Then there are those who did not give so fully an optimistic view of the Czechoslovak defences. Colonel P. M. Mason-MacFarlane, the British military attaché in Germany was "extremely doubtful whether in fact the Czechs would be able to resist a German offensive, and am of opinion that . . . [the] Czech confidence is largely

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2Ripka, op. cit., pp. 296-297.
artificial, . . . ."¹ Sir Nevile Henderson, the British ambassador to Germany, wrote an exceptionally discouraging report of the morale of the Czechoslovak troops. "Cain general impression Czechs' morale not very good. Certainly not if forced to fight alone," he said.² But to this the British ambassador to Czechoslovakia was quick to answer. Ambassador Newton said:

..., my Military Attaché [Lt. Col. H. C. T. Stronge] does not consider morale of Czech army is low. He considers that they 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.³

Colonel Mason-MacFarlane was also of the opinion that the Sudeten population would give the Czechs "considerable trouble" and numerically, even with a hostile France, the Germans would be able "to put a much larger Army and Air Force into the field against the Czechs." Even with a French attack, the British military attaché in Germany felt

¹ Colonel F. N. Mason-MacFarlane, Military Attaché, found Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax, May 9, 1938, enclosure in No. 196, in E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (editors), Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1949), Third Series, I, p. 271. After referred to as DOBFP, I.

² Sir N. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax, September 20, 1938, No. 1113, DOBFP, II, p. 552.

³ Mr. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax, September 27, 1938, No. 1148, DOBFP, II, pp. 581-582.
that the "Germans may well prove to be capable of holding
their own on the defensive . . . , with comparatively small
forces, long enough to ensure the rapid overthrow of the
Czechs."\(^1\)

The above opinions are hard to judge one way or
another. The popular press at the time, The Times (London),
News for example, contended that the morale of the Czecho-
slovakian people was extremely high. The majority of the
Czechoslovakian people always seemed to show to most people
an overabundance of optimism.\(^2\) General Faucher felt that
Czechoslovakia had: "Excellent soldiers. Excellent
officers' corps. Excellent equipment. And in addition to
these, an intense patriotism and a will to defend to the
last their national soil. It was a marvelous army."\(^3\)
Colonel Toussaint, the German military attaché in Czecho-
slovakia, in a telegram dated September 27 reported: "Calm in
Prague. Last mobilization measures carried out . . . . Total
estimated call-up is 1,000,000; field army 800,000 . . . ."\(^4\)

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\(^1\) Colonel F. N. Mason-MacFarlane, Military Attaché,
found in Sir H. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax,

\(^2\) Time, XXXII (October 10, 1938), 18; J. E. R. Cseye,
op. cit., p. 4E; Harold Denny, "Soviet Credits Czechs With
Curbinc Hitler," The New York Times, May 29, 1938, p. 4E.

\(^3\) Ripka, op. cit., p. 296.

\(^4\) William L. Shirer, op. cit., p. 401.
As it turned out, these were more men than Germany had for two fronts. "Together the Czechs and French outnumbered the Germans by more than two to one."\(^1\)

Much has been written about Czechoslovakia's undefended border with Austria, through which German troops could flow. In March 1938, Hitler sent his tanks rolling into Austria. Austria had been regarded as a friend and ally by Czechoslovakia, but was now the enemy. Only a lightly fortified border separated the two. Special measures were immediately taken to ensure her protection.\(^2\) As early as the same month of the Anschluss Lt. Colonel H. C. T. Stronge reported from Prague:

> On the Austrian frontier things are less satisfactory and work is proceeding day and night to improve the situation. . . . The Assistant C. G. S. considered that an attack on this sector by Armoured Forces could only be delayed temporarily but he certainly did not envisage the possibility of a clear run through.\(^3\)

When General Faucher was questioned on the alleged inadequacy of the Czechoslovak fortifications of the Austrian frontier he replied:

> It is true that the fortifications of that frontier

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\(^1\)Ibid.


\(^3\)Lieutenant-Colonel H. C. T. Stronge, Military Attaché, found in T. Newton (Prague) to Viscount Halifax, March 29, 1938, enclosure in No. 120, D8394, 1, p. 106.
were less substantial than those on the other frontiers, but even before the annexation of Austria very serious work had been undertaken. After the Anschluss, ... they have been materially strengthened by works in reinforced concrete, by anti-tank obstructions and by a comprehensive system of trenches. The line was a solid one.¹

The chief of the German Staff, General Franz von Halder, voiced a disapproval of attacking Czechoslovakia through Austria. He explained, "it was practically impossible for a German army to attack Czechoslovakia from the south. The single railway line through Linz was completely exposed, and surprise was out of the question."² Thus it seems that the Austria border with Czechoslovakia was not the key to open her defences and if war had come Czechoslovakia would have stood firm in the south.

The German military experts felt that the Czechoslovak army was in equipment, technique, training and morale superior to any other in Central Europe.³ Unanimously the German generals agree that Germany would have lost if war had come in 1938.⁴

General Wilhelm Keitel, the chief of the OKW (the High Command of the Armed Forces), stated at the Nuremberg

¹ Ripka, op. cit., p. 296.
³ Ripka, op. cit., p. 290.
⁴ Shirer, op. cit., p. 423; Lardner, op. cit., p. 520.
trial:

We were extraordinarily happy that it had not come to a military operation because . . . we had always been of the opinion that our means of attack against the frontier fortifications of Czechoslovakia was insufficient. **From a purely military point of view** we lacked the means for an attack which involved the piercing of the frontier fortifications.¹

Field Marshal Fritz von Manstein, who became one of the most brilliant of the German field commanders, had this to say on the German position at the time of Munich:

> If a war had broken out, neither our western border nor our Polish frontier could really have been effectively defended by us, and there is no doubt whatsoever that had Czechoslovakia defended herself, we would have been held up by her fortifications, for we did not have the means to break through.²

General Alfred Jodl, the so-called "brains" of the OKW, explained it this way:

> It was out of the question, with five fighting divisions and seven reserve divisions in the western fortifications, which were nothing but a large construction site, to hold out against 100 French divisions. That was militarily impossible.³

And when the Germans entered their newly acquired land after Munich, the Czech systems of fortification won praise from the Germans. One officer was reported to have said: "Though aided by constant pounding with heavy artillery and supported by tanks, even the German Army would

¹Shirer, *op. cit.*, p. 423.
²Ibid., p. 424.
³Ibid.
have found this fort almost impregnable."\(^1\) The German artillery and bombers pounded experimentally at sections of the "Czechoslovak Maginot Line." The Prague papers boasted: "The results of the artillery bombardment have been almost nil and only one out of 60 shelters bombed by the airplanes have been destroyed."\(^2\) And to top this all off, Hitler himself said, "What we were able to see of the military strength of the Czechoslovaks greatly disturbed us; we had run a serious danger."\(^3\)

The German generals concede that Hitler's army lacked the means of penetrating the Czech fortifications. Whether their viewpoint was right will never be known. But what is true is that the allies lost a valuable and irreplaceable ally. By the time of the final settlement of November 20, 1938, Czechoslovakia was forced "to cede to Germany 11,000 square miles of territory in which dwelt 2,800,000 Sudeten Germans and 800,000 Czechs.\(^4\) With this settlement Czechoslovakia lost all her vast fortifications. The whole "system of rail, road, telephone and telegraph communications was

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\(^1\) News item in The Illustrated London News, October 15, 1938.

\(^2\) Time, XXXII (November 7, 1938), 16.


\(^4\) Shirer, op. cit., p. 421.
disrupted." The German figures pointed out that "the dismembered country lost 66 per cent of its coal, 80 per cent of its lignite, 86 per cent of its chemicals, 80 per cent of its cement, 80 per cent of its textiles, 70 per cent of its iron and steel, 70 per cent of its electric power and 40 per cent of its timber. A prosperous industrial nation was split up and bankrupted overnight."¹

In terms of European strategy, Germany deprived the Western Powers of an ally who possessed a highly efficient army of 1,500,000 men and 2,000 planes. The Czechs' munition factories and other war industries could no longer be used for the support of France and her allies. This would now be added to the German side of the ledger. In short, the allies lost thirty to thirty-five divisions in the event of war and the loss of an airbase within striking distance of key industrial centers in Germany.² Germany no longer had to fear the Czech divisions or her airbases. Before Munich it would have taken from "forty"³ to "sixty to sixty-eight"⁴ divisions to defeat Czechoslovakia. After Munich "ten divisions" were enough to immobilize her.⁵

¹Ibid., p. 422.
Captain Hart, the military writer for The Times (London), wrote that the Germans gained a "release of forces" and a "release from the anxiety" caused by Czechoslovakia's potential as an air base. The French lost "a powerful distraction to the German power." Now instead of "the prospect of a fairly even balance, the French see themselves facing heavily adverse odds." Germany changed the balance of power in Europe without firing a shot.

CHAPTER III

POSITION OF OTHERS

It has already been mentioned how Russia was bound by treaty to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany only if France did the same. As the Munich crisis developed, the Soviet government reiterated, with impeccable correctness, its readiness to meet its treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia, if France likewise would come to the aid of Czechoslovakia. The Soviet Union voiced its solidarity to stand behind Czechoslovakia at Geneva before a League of Nations Assembly, in private sessions with influential members of the House of Commons, in communiques to the foreign secretary of Britain, before British and French ambassadors, and in the press.

To some people there was no doubt that Russia would fulfill her obligations under the Pact of Mutual Assistance against

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1See page 20.

unprovoked aggression. On the other hand, many felt Russia, in spite of what she said, had no intention of ever going to the aid of her "little Slav brother."

The diplomatic corps of Britain was especially leary of the Soviet Union's assurances. "Personally, I do not attach very much importance," said the British ambassador to Russia, "to the somewhat half-hearted assurance which my Czech and French colleagues from time to time extract from M. Litvinov,..." 2 Mr. Vereker, a British diplomatic aid in Moscow, voiced again the opinion, "... that it is unlikely that Soviet Union will go to war in defence of Czechoslovakia,..." 3 And according to the British ambassador in France even the French foreign minister, Georges Bonnet, felt that Russia was showing "much more caution... than she wishes others to show." 4

Such responses from the British foreign service are hardly surprising. A long history of rivalry and antagonism

1 Churchill felt the Soviet Union would fulfill her obligations. (The Gathering Storm, pp. 304-305); For an official Soviet point of view see Potemkin, et al., Istoriia Diplomatii, found in Gordon Wright and Arthur Lejia, Jr., An Age of Controversy (New York: Dodd, Head & Company, 1965), pp. 328-329.

2 Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax, September 4, 1938, No. 761, DOBFP, II, p. 229.

3 Mr. Vereker (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax, May 22, 1938, No. 270, DOBFP, I, p. 346.

rather than friendship formed the background of Anglo-Soviet relations. It was only a common fear of German expansion that drew Britain and Russia together. It was this fear that made them allies before World War I. The Soviet government looked on any approchement (Locarno and Munich for instance) between Britain and Germany as a start for forming an anti-Bolshevist coalition. And when there came signs of German-Soviet cooperation (Treaty of Rapallo of 1922 and Treaty of Berlin of 1926, for instance) these were viewed with apprehension by the British.

Relations between Britain and Soviet Russia were dominated by the shadow of the Bolshevik Revolution. The Bolsheviks had signed a separate peace treaty with Germany in 1918. Great Britain intervened against the Red Army and gave arms and men to the White Russian armies after World War I. The Bolsheviks voiced a policy of World revolution. Britain on her part feared Bolshevism and the Soviet Union, on her part, feared a "capitalist plot" to overthrow her government. Thus the situation bred suspicion and ill-feeling between the two countries and to many it seemed quite impossible to gain a working arrangement between Britain and Russia. Joachim von Ribbentrop, the foreign minister of Germany, was reported to have said to Hitler, "You need never fear England until you find her mentioning
Russia as an ally. Then it means she is really going to war!"1

In 1938 Britain was not mentioning Russia as an ally. In fact Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister, is alleged to have said that it would be "disastrous if Czechoslovakia were to be saved by Soviet help."2 Whether or not he actually said this is unimportant. What is important is that the phrase corresponded very exactly to the outlook of an important section of the British Cabinet and it could have been the reason that the Western Powers did not commit themselves to military conversations which Russia asked for months before Munich.3

Sir Eric Phipps reported to the British Foreign Office that the American ambassador in France—William C. Bullitt—"feels that Russia's great wish is to provoke a general conflagration in which she herself will play but little part, . . . after which she will arise like a phoenix, but out of all our ashes, and bring about a world revolution."4 M. Bonnet, according to Sir Eric Phipps, was also of the

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1 Nicolson, op. cit., p. 367.
opinion "that Russia's one wish is to stir up general war in the troubled waters of which she will fish." Thus it becomes apparent that the Western Powers were not truly actively moving toward a working alliance with the Soviet Union.

Now comes speculation on what Chamberlain was trying to do during the Munich crises in regard to Russia. It is apparent that Britain, as well as France, was aware of the possibility that Germany's rising power might be offset or balanced by that of the Soviet Union. It is on this point that some apologists of Munich dwell. Perhaps Chamberlain was playing a supremely cunning game, and was attempting to do what so many have since maintained should have been done—that is, turn Germany to the east, where it would become involved in a war with the Soviet Union, a war which would have eliminated both the major totalitarian powers of the world. If this was what Chamberlain was doing it was a stupid policy indeed. This concept of the "isolated balance of power" between Germany and the Soviet Union had three serious flaws.

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1Sir E. Phipps (Paris) to Viscount Halifax, September 2, 1938, No. 751, DOFP, II, p. 220.

(1) Germany and the Soviet Union were not neighbors. A German drive to the East would not immediately affect Russia, but it did involve Britain and France, who were committed, if not by treaty, at least morally, to prevent German acts of unprovoked aggression against the lesser states in Central Europe. Thus Britain and France would be the first to bar a German move to the east while the Soviet Union would stand by. And this is actually what happened in 1939; Britain and France went to war to bar a German thrust eastward by coming to the aid of Poland while Russia sat back.

(2) Another flaw in the turning of Germany on Russia was that it was too obvious. It was quite apparent to all principals involved that Britain was attempting to throw all the burden of Germany's rise in power onto Russia. Therefore, it served as an invitation to the Soviet Union to try to reverse Britain's plan and promote conflict between Germany and the West. And with Russia's Non-Aggression Pact with Germany and the war of 1939, it appears that this is actually what she did.

(3) The last flaw to such a policy comes into play if Germany and Russia would have actually, somehow, gone to war without the Western Powers participating. What validity is there to a belief that a life and death struggle between the two totalitarian monsters would have resulted
in death for both? There is a good possibility that if such a conflict had occurred, the West could have been faced with a more super sinister power than before.

It was certainly true that the Russians were snubbed by Britain and France in 1938. The Western Powers were against a meeting suggested by Russia for the "peace-loving Powers" to co-ordinate resistance against the aggressor. They were not even invited to attend the Munich conference. Throughout the whole Czech crises, "the Prime Minister was disposed to discount the Russian pledges of support to Czechoslovakia." It was his belief that Russia, as has already been mentioned, "would like nothing better to see than the capitalist states at each other's throats," or, if she did fight, would not, by reason of her armaments and the difficulties of logistics, be able to offer little of value in assistance.  

Logistics was indeed a problem. The Soviet Union had no common border with Czechoslovakia, and there was a question whether Rumania and Poland would allow Soviet troops to cross their borders in order to help her "little Slav brother." The Foreign Minister of Rumania, in talking to a member of the United Kingdom Delegation in Geneva, gave the impression Rumania would allow Russian troops to cross her border.

1Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., pp. 105-106.
He [the Foreign Minister of Rumania] gave me to understand there was no definite agreement between Russia and Rumania but that, in case of war, supplies would probably pass through Rumania to Czechoslovakia and he thought there would be no difficulty in such a case allowing transit, especially for aeroplanes. He stressed immense geographical difficulties which stood in the way of easy transit of men and materials across Northern Rumania. There were no convenient railways; a single line railway entailed 500 miles of devious route to borders of Czechoslovakia.1

When M. Litvinov was pressed to state how the U. S. S. R. would intervene in defense of Czechoslovakia he replied "means would be found."2

One thing is for sure—there was no military planning between anyone for a passage of Russian troops across Rumania or Poland. In fact, both these countries feared a movement of Russian troops onto their territory as much as they feared a similar movement by the troops of Hitler. Thus, if war would have come, then the Western Powers and Czechoslovakia would become immediately engaged, "whereas any Russian action would still have to await clarification of the Soviet right of passage across [the] intervening countries." The Soviet government thus "had a ready-made excuse for delay in meeting its obligations of mutual assistance"—they just could not get their troops there to

1Lord de la Warr (Geneva) to Viscount Halifax, September 15, 1938, No. 698, DORFP, II, p. 355.

2Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax, March 17, 1938, No. 92, DORFP, I, p. 65.
help. "The Russian expression of readiness to help Czecho-
slovakia if France did likewise was a gesture that cost
Moscow very little."¹

It's quite debatable whether Russian troops would
have gotten to the Czechoslovak borders. Winston S. Chur-
chill, in 1938, a member of Parliament and soon to be prime
министр, believed they would have.² If they would have,
we encounter the debate of just how much help would they
have been. Was it geographically impossible for Russia to
send troops into Czechoslovakia? Churchill felt the rail-
roads to Czechoslovakia "might well have supported Russian
armies of thirty divisions."³ George F. Kennan, who himself
got his information from "no less an authority than the
German military attaché in Prague," thought "that the physi-
cal characteristics of the Rumanian railroad network were
such that, even had the Rumanians permitted the passage, it
would have taken the Soviet command approximately three
months to move a division into Slovakia over this primitive
and indirect route."⁴ This topic therefore seems at a
standoff. It should be remembered, though, that many people

¹George F. Kennan, Russia and the West Under Lenin and
²Churchill, op. cit., p. 305.
³Ibid.
⁴Kennan, op. cit., p. 324.
felt that Czechoslovakia could hold out for three months.

There is considerable mention that the great purge of Russian officers greatly affected the efficiency of the Russian army. Colonel Firebrace, the British military attaché in Moscow, gave as his opinion "that the purge, which has accounted for no less than 65 per cent. of the higher ranks, cannot but have a disastrous effect on the morale and also on the efficiency of the Red army."¹ Winston S. Churchill gave a figure of five thousand officers and officials above the rank of captain were "liquidated" with a heavy cost to its "military efficiency." All resulted in the "bias of the Soviet Government" being "turned in a marked manner against Germany."² But the great purge also resulted in hysteria and fear which undermined "all forms of organized life."³ This disorganization in Soviet production, distribution and transport would certainly prove detrimental in time of war. Thus it is no wonder that the conclusion reached by the British diplomatic mission in Moscow was:

¹Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax, April 19, 1938, No. 148, DOBFP, I, p. 161.
²Churchill, op. cit., p. 289.
the Red army, though no doubt equal to a defensive war within the frontiers of the Soviet Union, is not capable of carrying the war into the enemy's territory with any hope of ultimate success or without thereby running the risk of endangering the régime, and that it would therefore be contrary to reason for the rulers of this country to involve the Soviet Union in war unless vital national interests were involved.\(^1\)

The point is made that if the intersecting states closed their borders to Russian troops, the Soviet Union still could have contributed by sending airplanes. It has already been stressed how Czechoslovakia was within easy air range of many of Germany's industrial centers. The Russian air force could have used Czechoslovakia as an airbase jutting in the heart of Germany. It is true Russian and Czech aircraft were not standardized, but certainly they could have been some help.\(^2\)

When all the above is taken into consideration we still return to the question of whether the Soviet Union would actually fight if it came to it in 1936.\(^3\) "Even with the best will in the world, . . ., Russia could have brought but meagre assistance at the outset. Nevertheless

\(^1\)Viscount Chilston (Moscow) to Viscount Halifax, April 19, 1936, No. 148, DODFP, I, p. 161.

\(^2\)Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 106.

\(^3\)Max Beloff, op. cit., pp. 143-155, 166 demonstrates that Russia, notwithstanding Litvinov's speeches, showed no signs of preparing to take military action during the crisis, though ready to denounce Chamberlain's policy.
it was vitally important to have even this meagre assistance thrown into the proper balance of the scale rather than left neutral or hostile."\textsuperscript{1} Chamberlain quite literally ignored Russia. Perhaps a little more catering on his part could have improved British-Soviet relations. George F. Keenan summed it up best when he said, "It is fair to say that had the Czechs decided to resist, there was, for various reasons, a good chance that they might have been saved. It is hardly fair to say that they would have been saved by the troops of the Soviet Union."\textsuperscript{2}

It has already been mentioned in this paper that excited thousands of Englishers lined Chamberlain's five-mile route from the airport to Downing Street after he came home from Munich.\textsuperscript{3} The exuberance of the crowds that gathered to welcome the Prime Minister after signing the Munich agreement was "tumultous."\textsuperscript{4} To many, this exuberance exuded by the masses of the people of England showed an unwillingness to fight.\textsuperscript{5} Ciano, the foreign secretary of Italy, had the impression that, "people are kneeling and

\textsuperscript{1}Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 106.
\textsuperscript{2}Keenan, op. cit., p. 324.
\textsuperscript{3}See page 1.
\textsuperscript{4}News item in The Illustrated London News, October 8, 1938.
\textsuperscript{5}For an example see Letter from Raymond Postgate to the Editor of The New Republic, LXXXVI (November 2, 1938), 367.
praying for peace in the streets in England."\(^1\) For a further example of lack of English backbone, Ciano wrote that when Mussolini accepted Chamberlain's request for a twenty-four hour delay of action from Italy, a quivering red eyed Ambassador Perth burst into "a sobbing laugh" and rushed back to tell his Embassy.\(^2\)

It was no wonder that the British people were scared. War would no longer be fought on fields of "glory." Modern science and the march of progress had changed war by 1938 from a tingling new adventure to a macabre aberration. What would now dominate war would be hideous wholesale slaughter. Financial ruin and sudden death faced every man, woman and child in England. And suddenly in the face of this threat, "the clouds dispersed, the sky was blue, the sun shone. There was to be no war, neither now nor at any future date." And the people gave credit for this miracle to one man, and one man only--"the aged Prime Minister of England had saved the world."\(^3\)

Some defenders of the settlement have taken the events following Munich and said that the people of England were not willing to fight. British Foreign Secretary Halifax

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\(^1\)Ciano, op. cit., p. 162.

\(^2\)Ibid., p. 165.

\(^3\)Cooper, op. cit., p. 243.
felt that an extra year "convinced [the country] to the
foundation of soul and conscience that every conceivable
effort had been made to find the way of sparing Europe the
ordeal of war, and that no alternative remained."¹ Sup-
posedly now, the broken promises of Hitler over Munich and
the extra year were at last to convince the people of
Britain as they were not convinced before that they were
fighting for "a cause to be just."² The extra time afforded
by Munich, according to some of its defenders, gave the
British peoples "a faith in victory that would not waver in
the darkest days."³ "Who can doubt," they go on to say,
"that this complete moral equipment sprung from the convic-
tion that our hands were clean, that the war was forced on
the world by the evil ambitions of bad men and our statesmen
had done everything in their power to bring matters in dis-
pute to the arbitrament of reason and justice?"⁴

Thus it seemed that the British people wanted nothing
to do with war in 1938. But what it seemed and what it
actually was are two different things. Certainly there

¹ Lord Halifax, *Fullness of Days* (New York: Dodd,

² W. W. Hadley, *Munich: Before and After* (London:

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.
were crowds that came out to flock Chamberlain on his return and certainly they cheered when he uttered "peace with honour" and "peace for our time." Why wouldn't they cheer, sing and dance in the streets? Chamberlain had swept everything clear. He had spared Britain from bombs, gas showers, and death and the people were thanking him for it. But rejoicing at a delivery from war and not being willing to fight are two different things. "There had, in fact, been a hardening of public opinion since September 19 against Chamberlain's readiness to sacrifice Czechoslovakia in the cause of peace."1 The people, without speeches, without illusions, were preparing themselves for war.2

"The public was bewildered by the crisis and was not kept well-informed either by the press, or the B.B.C., thanks to Chamberlain's secretive diplomacy."3 But what they did know they did not like.

As early as September 7, the Labour Party came out undeniably for war rather than surrender. In a manifesto entitled Labour and the International Situation: On the Brink of War, the Labour Party expressed their views.

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1 Howat, op. cit., p. 613.


3 Howat, op. cit., p. 613.
... the time has come for a positive and unmistakable lead for collective defence against aggression and to safeguard peace. 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 upon Czechoslovakia.¹

Thus it is apparent that the British Labour movement was quite unequivocally in favour of resistance to the Nazis with perhaps the possibility of an immediate world war.

On the 22nd of September, "A vast procession was marching down Whitehall crying 'Stand by the Czechs' and 'Chamberlain must go!" wrote Duff Cooper who was still the First Lord of the Admiralty.² Harold Nicolson, a member of Parliament, wrote:

... We have all been fitted for gas-masks and a trench has been dug in the calf-orchard. Everyone is calm, resolute and cheerful. One hears more jokes than ever, although they all realise quite well what it means. I do respect the English, for all their faults: I do not know whether you have found the same psychological experience going on in yourself as I am finding during these dreadful days: a sort of strange calm and resignation, a mood which scarcely fluctuates at all save in brief moments of human weakness. I feel almost exalted, and most strangely part of a corporate body called England, and not merely 'England', but of all whose ideals and principles are at this moment similar. I might put it like this: that the strings of one's being are tuned up to their finest pitch.³

²Cooper, op. cit., p. 232.
³Nicolson, op. cit., p. 368.
By the 26th of September, the press was supporting a strong stand against Hitler's demands. The Daily Telegraph on that day described the text of the Godesberg Memorandum as an attempt to exact "an abject and humiliating capitulation." The Telegraph was joined in her protests by The Times, the Observer and the Manchester Guardian.¹

Public opinion was rallying to the support of the Czechs. Duff Cooper was sure "popular opinion would eventually compel us to go to the assistance of the Czechs."² At Oxford, the feeling among all parties was against surrender.³ Of course there were those in public life and in the press who minimized the differences between the terms separating Britain and Germany.

But these were in a minority. The bulk of the British public were deeply shocked at the rapacity of the German demands and were united in applauding their rejection by the British Government. With reluctant determination, the British man-in-the-street again faced the prospect of war and did not flinch from it.⁴

The fact is--the majority of the British peoples were ready, resolved to go to war. But along came Chamberlain alighting from his airplane like a fairy godmother, and announcing to his people that they were fools for their

¹Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 144; Nowat, op. cit., p. 613.
²Cooper, op. cit., p. 234.
³Ibid., p. 235.
⁴Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 141.
pains. That now instead of fighting fascism they were going to support it. While they rejoiced "at being delivered from war" "they [at the same time] felt the need of weapons acutely." ¹ Duff Cooper, after resigning his post in the Admiralty over Chamberlain's policy at Munich, received over four thousand communications of which ninety per cent were congratulatory. ² The feeling of events was best summed up by Arthur Bryant, "It was only the next day, when the price was considered, that the mood of that hour was realized to have been, ... , 'a most lamentable exhibition of mass hysteria.' The price was, of course, too high." ³

There is another point to be considered in regard to this discussion. Did not Britain and France have a moral obligation to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia? France was committed by treaty to aid Czechoslovakia. Britain was not bound by treaty obligations but she was deeply involved. And the record shows that the British government not only acquiesced but encouraged the French government in her fatal course. It does not appear that anyone goes so far as to claim that the French and English were able, on the moral


² Cooper, op. cit., p. 245.

plane, to derive any sort of advantage from Munich. They lost prestige and gained an uneasy conscience. It was a matter of "honour." Here was a time when "... Honour pointed the path of Duty, and when also the right judgment of the facts at that time would have reinforced its dictates."¹ The Munich Settlement could have been one of those events that ruins the moral fiber of a country. Books such as Disgrace Abounding, Europe and the Czechs, and The Guilty Men came out calling the Munich Settlement a great national disgrace and a moral injustice. One historian called the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia "a sin."²

The moral fiber, the backbone of England was certainly being affected in a bad way. Chamberlain had toyed with the national character—a character that pictured itself as doing right. In 1938, the British people felt they had done wrong and they were constantly reminded of it. The government perhaps should not have put the British people in such a position. And the thing that pulled the English people up from this embarrassing position and gave them back their pride was the war a short year later. Now they "saved" themselves by going to war for Poland instead of, as they perhaps should have done, going to war for

²Nowat, op. cit., p. 620.
Czechoslovakia. Surely there must have been some Englishmen who felt that their lonely ordeal in 1940-1941 was punishment for their abandonment of Czechoslovakia in 1938. In this sense, war in 1939 was a God-send which pulled Britain from a feeling of moral decadence.

One of the issues often stated for Britain’s appeasement at Munich was the lack of support from the Commonwealth. The Dominions were, according to Sir Samuel Hoare, "... unwilling to go to war on the issue of Czechoslovakia." Their "... opinion was at the time overwhelmingly against a world war. This opposition was continually on our minds." Evidently as early as March 18, 1938, the British government was told that South Africa and Canada would not join in a war to prevent "certain Germans from rejoining their Fatherland." Thus the government was faced with the question of what would happen to the British Commonwealth if any or all the Dominions would remain neutral. That question might have been the cause that made the British government hesitate in going to war.

To some it indeed seemed that the Commonwealth would

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1 Templewood, op. cit., p. 323.
2 Ibid.; Kennedy, op. cit., p. 192.
have remained neutral. 1 "There had been no more fervent supporters of Mr. Chamberlain's thesis of appeasement than those who directed national affairs in Ottawa, Canberra and Pretoria, . . . ." 2 South Africa was definitely opposed to war over Czechoslovakia. In fact, "a shift of about twelve votes in her Parliament in September 1939," would have kept her out of war even then. 3 Australia and New Zealand were hesitating to get involved mainly because of a war so close to their own doorstep—in China. 4 W. L. Mackenzie King, prime minister of Canada, wrote to Chamberlain right after Munich.

The heart of Canada is rejoicing to-night at the success which crowned your unremitting efforts for peace. May I convey to you the warm congratulations of the Canadian people, and with them, an expression of their gratitude which is felt from one end of the Dominion to the other. 5

There are those also who make little of the argument for appeasement just because the Dominions supported it. Duff Cooper wondered if Britain could ever expect all the Dominions to be united on the prospect of a European war. It was his contention that: "They were not necessary to us for the conduct of the war. We began the last one with

2 Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 184.
3 Kennedy, op. cit., p. 192.
4 Young, op. cit., p. 23.
5 Templewood, op. cit., p. 324.
South Africa in a state of revolution.\textsuperscript{1}

One historian is of the opinion that the Dominions "had little chance to do otherwise" than support the policy of appeasement. "Their acquiescence was an effect rather than a cause of the policy it served to excuse." The Dominions were followers--not leaders. Britain was doing the leading, and if she would have taken a "hard-line" path chances are the members of the Commonwealth would have followed Britain's example. But Britain followed a path of appeasement and the Dominions found it quite easy to applaud Chamberlain's policy. "Uninstructed as to the course of a personal and secretive diplomacy, . . . , they naturally opposed involvement in war and rejoiced that appeasement was keeping the threat of war at a distance."\textsuperscript{2}

Whether the Commonwealth would have followed Britain to war in 1936 is still very debatable and perhaps unanswerable. But perhaps, in 1936, Great Britain did not need their help.

The position of the United States in 1936 gave no signs of encouragement to Britain or France. The American people were determined to avoid international commitments and participation in all future wars and Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration was refusing to run perhaps fatal

\textsuperscript{1} Coopera, op. cit., p. 239. \textsuperscript{2} Nowata, op. cit., p. 592.
risks by flouting this popular will. Isolationism, one of the oldest traditions and perhaps then the dominant ideological force in America, along with the Nye committee report and writings by revisionist historians like Charles A. Board, Walter Millis, and Charles C. Tansill set off a virtual wave of hysteria among thousands of thoughtful Americans. They were resolved never to come to aid Europe again. In April 1937, a Gallup Poll showed that nearly two-thirds of the people questioned felt that American participation in the First World War had been a mistake.\(^1\) In such an environment, it is small wonder that neutrality legislation was passed. The majority of the American people wanted little to do with Europe.

The American public were, though, certainly outspoken on the European crisis. They were nearly solidly against Hitler, and almost as solidly in opposition to Chamberlain's judgment in giving way to him. William C. Bullitt was said to have told Göring that "opinion in the United States was almost unanimously anti-German." When Bullitt was asked if this anti-German feeling implied a likelihood of the United States entering a war at an early stage, Ambassador Phipps said he replied "that not only did it not imply that, but

that it did not even imply any alteration of the Neutrality Act favourable to Powers fighting Germany, ... .

The United States did little but hope for peace during the September crisis. Roosevelt did respond to promptings from Paris and London by appealing on September 26 to Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler and Beneš to compose their differences peacefully. On the twenty-seventh the American President suggested an immediate conference of all nations directly interested, implying that if war broke out the world would hold Hitler responsible. He did not indicate whether an American representative would attend such a conference, but he did say in any case "the Government of the United States . . . will assume no obligations in the conduct of the present negotiations." Americans were certainly in a quandary for what to do. They were quick to criticise the actions of Chamberlain and Daladier. But they would not actively aid Britain and France in a war against Hitler. The United States wanted nothing to do with war. Verbally,


2Link, op. cit., p. 479; Shirer, op. cit., p. 400.


the United States would support the "democratic" countries. But words were all the United States would offer. Europe could go on its way without America.

Thus Britain could not count on the military support belonging to the United States. But she could have indeed counted on nearly one hundred per cent pro-British sympathy from America if war had begun in 1938. And just sympathy from the United States—a great power—was something of importance for Britain to consider.

France appeared to gain no benefit whatsoever from the extra year Munich afforded. When France was finally attacked by Germany in 1940 after waiting through a long succession of wet, dreary days of meaningless Sitzkrieg for it to come, they were taken completely by surprise. The German armor broke into France at Sedan north of the Maginot Line and once this decisive break had been made, they were free to fan out behind the French lines and thoroughly disorganize their rear. General Gamelin and aids were overwhelmed; accustomed as they were to the sleepy routines of the phony war, they could not adapt to the German Blitzkrieg. Before long, confusion and panic prevailed. Army communications and the chain of command broke down. The Germans dominated the air. Everything was in retreat. The Maginot Line remained intact but useless since it was out-flanked. The miracle of Dunkirk came. In mid-June 1940, Paris fell—
undefended and abandoned by the government. Despair began to grip both military and civilians. The German attack had broken into France on May 12; by June 17, France sued for peace. On June 22, the Germans imposed their will on the vanquished in the same railroad car at Compiègne in which France had handed her armistice terms to the Germans in November, 1918. France had succumbed to the power of Germany after scarcely more than a month of fighting. It is hard to believe that things could have been worse for France in 1938.

Georges Bonnet, the foreign minister of France during the time of Munich, felt the military situation would have been worse in 1938. In a letter dated October 25, 1961, which was written to the editor of The New York Times, Bonnet pointed out that: "In 1938 our military authorities stated that defeat was a certainty." Bonnet reported that the chief of air force declared, "Within a fortnight there will be nothing left of the French Air Force," and the artillery chief was reported to have said, "there would be no modern guns available before a year." Bonnet said statements by our allies were equally disappointing. "Great Britain said: 'For the first year of war, a hundred aircraft and two divisions without any modern equipment.' 'Not one man, not one cent' was Roosevelt's reply to our Ambassador's request for assistance." Bonnet was of the
opinion that U. S. S. R. would have not been able to aid Czechoslovakia, and Czech military authorities informed him that "they were in no position to resist an attack by the German Army. . . ." "It was unanimously felt," said the former Foreign Minister, "that the military and diplomatic situation was disastrous" during the Munich crisis.

By 1939 he felt that French international relations had improved. "Since Munich we had signed agreements with Rumania and Turkey. Also, Poland which at the time of Munich was against Czechoslovakia, eventually fought on our side." M. Bonnet felt the lapse of time was on the side of the allies. The Royal Air Force which provided a vital factor in bringing victory to the allies, was built between 1938 and 1940. Also neither Britain nor the Empire could have or would have gone to war in 1938. M. Bonnet ends his argument by quoting Hitler—"We should have gone to war in 1938."1

M. Bonnet was one of the most controversial and probably the most criticized foreign minister of France. Neville Chamberlain himself remarked, "Bonnet . . . is clever, but ambitious and an intriguer. The French are not very fortunate in their foreign secretaries."2

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2Keith Feiling, op. cit., p. 353.
Sir Lewis Namier, a savage critic of the Munich Settlement, wrote in retrospect that: "It is difficult at any time to define M. Bonnet's policy: first, he would give way to pressure in a ready, complacent manner; next, he would reassert himself, and try to regain detachment and independence; and he would then change colour, till he seemed to have none of his own."¹ M. Bonnet, in his argument defending the Munich Settlement, used only information vital to his point of view. Most of the information on the military situation paints a different picture.

The Chief of the French Air Staff, General Joseph Vuillemin, had returned from Germany in July 1938, and indeed gave a terrifying report of German preparedness in the air.² General Gamelin though, the Chief of Staff, said that in the event of war "the democratic nations would dictate the peace." He consented that France was weak in the air but "it is the whole and not the part that counts."³ And it is the whole that has to be considered. It has already been mentioned that Germany had but twelve divisions on the Western front. Gamelin had nearly one hundred divisions to attack a German defence of nothing more than earth.⁴

¹L. D. Namier, op. cit., p. 66.
³Pertinax, op. cit., p. 3.
⁴Shirer, op. cit., p. 425.
A hundred divisions against twelve—with those odds there seemed little doubt of the outcome.

France granted to Hitler concessions that were vital to her national interests. After Munich, France's military position in Europe was destroyed. France at one blow lost her entire system of Continental alliances. She had spent the last twenty years building up alliances with Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Rumania—which, united, had the military potential of a Big Power—in order to outflank and control Germany. Now after Munich how could France's remaining allies in Eastern Europe have confidence in her written word? Of what value now were alliances with France? The answer in Warsaw, Bucharest and Belgrade must have been; not much. While there was still time, there was an immediate scramble in these capitals to make the best deal possible with the Nazi conqueror. France was perhaps the big loser at Munich. And it is quite obvious what France's situation meant to England. Before Munich England was tied to a France which was respected and feared because of its military might. After Munich England was tied to a France which was becoming a second-rate power in Europe.¹

The major participants of the Munich crisis have now been mentioned. There are others that had parts to play

¹Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 137.
during the Munich crisis. Italy is one of those states. In reading the speeches given by Mussolini during the September crisis, it seemed as though Italy would certainly side with Hitler, especially if England entered the war. But such was not actually the case. Italy was not really a great power. In fact "the size and strength of the Third Reich made too formidable a friend for Italy." She could very well have sunk from an ally to a satellite of Germany and she knew it. Italy in 1938 was expensively overextended in Ethiopia and Spain. In war Italy would have been vulnerable to the French and British fleets and to fight just to promote Germany's European ambitions would have been a foolish folly. And as the likelihood of a conflict seemed near, Mussolini became "perceptively less enthusiastic at the prospect of a war waged in alliance with Germany against an Anglo-Franco-Russian combination." On September 27, 1938, the German military attaché in Paris sent a telegram marked "Very Urgent" and it was addressed not only to the Foreign Ministry but also to the OKW and the General Staff.

1 Ciano, op. cit., pp. 157, 161.
2 Cooper, op. cit., p. 211.
4 Wheeler-Bennett, op. cit., p. 162.
The German officer informed Berlin that "the Italians were doing absolutely nothing to pin down French troops on the Franco-Italian frontier. Mussolini, ... , seemed to be letting Hitler down in a crucial hour."¹

As the September crisis drew on most nations seemed to regard any Italian military role as unimportant. The chances were Italy would have adopted a "wait-and-see" attitude as they did in 1939.

Then, of course, there needs to be taken into consideration a number of smaller eastern European states which had a direct interest in Munich—Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Rumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia were members of the Little Entente. All three of these countries were ready to support Czechoslovakia but only if France had taken the lead.² There were large demonstrations of support for Czechoslovakia from all three of these countries.³

Harold Nicolson, in the second half of April, 1938, went on a speaking tour under the auspices of the British government to the cities of Bucharest, Sofia and Belgrade. He discovered that his visits to Rumania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia were used as occasions for pro-western demonstrations in

¹Shirer, op. cit., p. 400.
²Anne O'Hare McCormick, "Europe," The New York Times, September 26, 1938, p. 16.
³Ripka, op. cit., pp. 143-145.
the three capitals. As it stood, the Western Powers in 1938 could count on some kind of constructive help by these three countries. Such was not the case in 1939. What they were waiting for was decisive leadership from the West. But it did not come as France and Britain gave in to the demands of Hitler. So after Munich they all began to make the best deals possible in a Europe with a new balance of power.

Poland had always been an advocate of preventive military action against Hitler. But ever since Hitler entered the Rhineland they began to draw away from the Western Powers and to gain the best deal they could with Hitler. When the crisis began Poland played a silent role. She was in a difficult position. Poland would be weakened if Germany succeeded, yet Poland could hardly play an active role against Germany with the reluctant attitude of France and Britain. "Had the Western Powers shown firmness in the summer of 1938, they might have had Poland with them. But France and Britain consented to the items demanded by Hitler. And as the Western Powers' policy of appeasement began to unfold, Poland withdrew to herself and began to make her own demands against Czechoslovakia."

1Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 334-338.
2Namier, op. cit., p. 162.
3Kauoias, op. cit., p. 8; News item in The Illustrated London News, June 18, 1938.
Thus for France and Britain their international situation had deteriorated greatly in the year following Munich. The Soviet Union after Munich began to pave the way for a new foreign policy. Potyomkin, the assistant commissar, made this quite clear when he said to a French diplomat: "My poor friend, what have you done? For us I see no other way out than a fourth partition of Poland." Whether the Soviet Union would have gone to war for Czechoslovakia is questionable. But there is no question over what she would do a year later. The Western Powers did not get any aid whatsoever from Russia in 1939.

The United States was still as neutral in 1939 as she was a year before. Most Americans would have liked to isolate themselves from Europe; but they were by no means sure if it was possible to isolate Europe. The United States, in the year separating Munich and the invasion of Poland, changed very little, if any, their foreign policy with Europe.

France gained little if anything by the extra year. When war came she was overrun, humiliated and forced to sign a peace treaty. Britain had little if any advantage in having France as an ally.

As for the smaller Eastern European states, they, after Munich, began to side or follow a policy of "no

1Taylor, op. cit., p. 327.
alienation" with Germany. To these states the wave of the future and success was rolling with Hitler and they certainly were not going to buck it.

So as it stood, nations began to desert Britain and France after Munich. Where once they were ready to give military or verbal support to Britain and France, now they would only stand by. Only the British Commonwealth came actively to the aid of Britain and France in 1939. Overall, the international picture looked worse in 1939 than in 1938 for the French and British.
CHAPTER IV

GERMANY

Militarily, Germany almost certainly could not have won in 1938. On the western front she had twelve divisions facing one hundred French divisions and the military men felt Czechoslovakia would have been extremely difficult to conquer. Also the German Air Force, like the army, was concentrated against Czechoslovakia. Only a few bombers could have been spared to attack London and Paris and these would have to go in without fighter protection. Their fighter bases were too far away from their targets.¹

The morale factor was also against Germany in 1938. The majority of the Germans did not want war and this was reported in the newspapers, by diplomatic officials, and confessed by German brass. Göring said that "he knew from Hitler that two reasons had moved him to choose peaceful methods: first, doubts as to the warlike disposition of the German people; and second, the fear that Mussolini might definitely leave him in the lurch."² One British diplomatic official wrote: "Public opinion is much alarmed at German

military measures... "It is true that the prospect of war involving England and France is terribly unpopular in Germany," wrote the British military attaché in Berlin.\(^2\) Even with public opinion against war, each of these Englishmen thought Germany would march if war did come. William L. Shirer, a newspaper reporter in Berlin, and Sir Nevile Henderson, British ambassador to Germany, were both sure the majority of the German people were dead set against war.\(^3\)

When the crisis was finally ended at Munich on September 30, 1938, the German people celebrated the whole night through. Surely they were joyful that Germany had obtained the Sudeten areas but there was also a feeling of tremendous relief and a thanking for peace.\(^4\) As Hitler on October 1, 1938, drove through the streets of Berlin more than a million people waved German, Italian, French, and British flags in honour of the Powers who had reached a peaceable agreement at Munich.\(^5\) As Mussolini made his way

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1Sir G. Ogilvie-Forbes (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax, September 11, 1938, No. 830, DOBFP, II, p. 289.
2Colonel F. N. Mason-LacFarlane, Military Attaché found in Sir W. Henderson (Berlin) to Viscount Halifax, August 25, 1938, Enclosure in No. 692, DOBFP, II, p. 163.
5Ibid.
back to Italy by train, Germans lined the tracks and waved showing "their joy at the event which is in the air."\footnote{Ciano, op. cit., p. 166.}

And as Chamberlain left, their joyous faces seemed to say: "Thank you, dear old Chamberlain, for having preserved peace for us."\footnote{Dr. Paul Schmidt, R. H. C. Steed (ed.), Hitler's Interpreter (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1951), p. 113.} Dr. Schmidt, the German interpreter at Munich, believed:

... these obviously spontaneous and unorganised ovations for Chamberlain implied a certain criticism of Hitler. When a crowd in an Authoritarian State so demonstratively applaude, not its own godlike dictator, but a foreign statesman from the democratic West with an unheroic umbrella, this constitutes a very definite expression of public opinion. . . .

Instead of showing delight at the prospect of taking arms against the enemy, the populace of Berlin and Munich had demonstrated in no uncertain manner its aversion from war and its joy at the maintenance of peace.\footnote{Ibid.}

It seemed that the Germans were not in the best state of morale for war in 1938.

One other point needs to be taken into consideration. This is the wavering of the German generals. The generals were wavering on the grounds that Germany was not yet strong enough to take on the Western Powers and perhaps Russia as well. General Beck, chief of the German army General Staff, contended that Germany's "military-economic situation is
worse than it was in 1917-18" when the Kaiser's armies began to collapse.\footnote{Shirer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 367.} And he said that the hopelessness of the military situation "is shared by all the higher officers of the General Staff."\footnote{Ibid., p. 368.} General Wietersheim, chief of the staff of the Army of the West pointed out to Hitler that "Germany was defenseless in the West and would be overrun by the French."\footnote{Ibid., p. 370.} Generals von Rundstedt, von Reichenau, Adam, Halder, von Stuelpnagel, von Hanneken and von Leeb saw only a German military folly in 1938.\footnote{Wheeler-Bennett, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 161; Shirer, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 378; Churchill, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 312-314.} In fact "it was the unanimous opinion of the Führer's advisors that a political retreat was necessary."\footnote{Wheeler-Bennett, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 58.} This view was voiced with great vehemence by the General Staff. Discontent, disharmony, dissatisfaction were running so rampant within the ranks of the hierarchy of the army that an overthrow of the government was actually seriously considered by the officers.\footnote{For an analysis of the conspiracy see Shirer, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 372-384, 404-414. John W. Wheeler-Bennett, \textit{The Nemesis of Power} (New York: St. Martin's Press Inc., 1954), pp. 414-429.} Such an environment within
an army of a country is not conducive for fighting a war. There is no doubt that the German General Staff had a definite defeatist attitude toward a 1938 war which could only be considered an advantage to the Western Powers and to Czechoslovakia.
an army of a country is no CHAPTER VI
There is no doubt that the German General
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS
definite defeatist attitude toward a war
only be Now it is time to wrestle with the question: would
it have been better for England to go to war in 1938
instead of 1939? Who can really tell about war? It is
filled with uncertainties. Victory covers a multitude of
political and strategic errors. But looking in retrospect
it probably would have been better to go to war in 1938
instead of 1939. What the Allies lost on the military
plane between 1938 and '39 was incalculably great.

To begin with there was the Czechoslovak bastion.
Behind outstanding fortifications stood a well-trained, well-
equipped army of more than a million men; an air force of
between a thousand and fifteen hundred planes; and an ultra-
modern war producing capability. The Czechoslovak fortifi-
cations involved considerable envy from the German military.
Even the border with Austria could be protected. And as
Chapter II pointed out, the German generals could not fore-
see a decisive break through here. It seemed that the
English foreign secretary was wrong when he said "... once
the Austrian Anchluss had taken place, ..., Czechoslo-
vakia was no longer a defensible proposition."

1 Halifax, op. cit., p. 200.
Czechoslovakia represented a holding-force against the Germans. The Munich Settlement made it disappear and now the Danube valley and the way to the Balkans was open to the Germans. Germany overnight found herself the dominant power in the great corn-growing area of central Europe and now she was less than two hundred miles from Ploesti and the Rumanian oil.

It is important to remember that the Western Powers not only lost war material, well-equipped factories and a faithful ally, but Germany also gained them. Without firing a shot Germany gained five Czechoslovak armored divisions to be incorporated into the Wehrmacht.\(^1\) Instead of a German air force of thirty-five hundred or four thousand planes it now numbered six thousand.\(^2\) Hitler was now free to concentrate in the west the divisions she would have used to conquer Czechoslovakia. The Western Powers were certainly hard put to replace what was lost to Germany in Czechoslovakia.

Russian action in 1938 is debatable. Even though she was tied by treaty to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia in war with Germany, there was a question of logistics. Would Soviet men and supplies be able to reach Czechoslovakia in

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\(^1\)\textit{Cortinax, op. cit., p. 4.}

\(^2\)\textit{Ibid.}
time to prevent her defeat? The arguments are good on both sides. What can be pointed out though is that in 1939 the Soviet Union had decided to withdraw from a European conflict. In 1938, the Soviet Union was definitely pro-British; eleven months later, she definitely was not. This in itself has to be counted as an allied loss resulting from Munich.

How did the extra year help Britain? Was there actually some realism in Britain's appeasement policy in that it postponed the war until the country could at least protect itself from a quick knock-out blow? It seems not. Germany was spending more on military expenditures between 1938 and 1939 than Britain. Only in air power did Britain seem to improve its military situation over Germany. "But making up for the planes that were captured intact on the Czechoslovak airfields and at once taken over by the Luftwaffe was something else again." And of course her anti-aircraft facilities were improved; but in 1938 she needed not fighters, balloons, or anti-aircraft guns to protect her. German planes were concentrated in the east and German air bases were situated too far from England's cities. In 1938 Germany had not the power to invade and hold the Low Countries and France. It was here on the coast

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1Naguères, op. cit., p. 386.
of Normandy that Germany had to build her air bases for the bombing of England. In 1936, her army could not have won this area thus there would have been no Battle of Britain.

Britain was also said to be psychologically unready for war in 1936. But there are signs that say the reverse was true. British newspapers became anti-appeasement and more for war as the crisis wore on. Crowds gathered and voiced approval for a hard-line attack against Hitler. After Munich, books and newspaper articles appeared condemning the settlement. Psychologically, the British were ready for war. The peace of Munich received by the crowds in London with almost unbelievable enthusiasm did not mean that English men would not fight. They were ready to face a terrible war with air raids, poison gases, and with wives and children being the victims. Chamberlain spared them this and for this they were thankful. There are those who misinterpret the crowds surrounding Chamberlain on his return as a British anti-war posture. Such was not the case.

The Dominions in 1936 were not convinced of the reality of the German peril. It was extremely doubtful if Britain could have secured from the Commonwealth an immediate and general assent to war on the Munich issue. A year later Britain entered the war with complete Commonwealth unity. This was certainly an advantage for Britain but
there was a very likely possibility that Britain would have not needed her Dominions in 1938. Britain, along with France and Czechoslovakia, had the odds for victory in 1938.

The United States position remained practically static for the whole year. They were always free with the words but would not become committed in European affairs. The American people were pro-British and for neutrality in policy.

France was perhaps the biggest loser at Munich. General Gamelin, Commander-in-Chief of the French armies, when asked if France would be meeting the test of arms under circumstances less favorable to her than had prevailed before the Munich agreement replied: "There can be no doubt about it. The balance sheet of Munich is against us." The Germans in 1938 had facing the French five regular and seven reserve divisions. Time after time Gamelin assured Daladier and the others during the Munich crisis that if war came "the democratic nations would dictate the peace." The Siegfried lines in 1938 were nothing more than field works. A year later they were strengthened with concrete and steel. French industry between 1938 and 1939 was still working on military designs. German war industry in that same time was

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1 Pertinax, op. cit., p. 4.
2 Shirer, op. cit., p. 425.
working at full capacity. War did not come for France until it was too late. André Maurois, French literary giant and newspaper man, said:

Today one can say that war was lost, so far as France was concerned, at the very moment it was begun. It was lost because we did not have enough airplanes, or enough tanks, or enough anti-aircraft guns and because we did not have enough factories to build what we lacked. It was lost because our Ally had only a tiny army and did not possess the means of expansion which would have permitted him to take quick advantage of his immense reserves of men and riches.

Things had changed after Munich. "France at one blow . . . has lost her entire system of Continental alliances, and is in danger of becoming a second-rate power in Europe," wrote one writer after the Munich agreement. The smaller Eastern European States now distrusted France and turned toward the enemy's camp. The Little Entente ceased to exist, the Balkan states withdrew to a position of nervous detachment, and Poland tried to gain maneuvering room in a very dangerous situation. Britain and France did nothing else than proclaim their désentêtement in Eastern Europe. The balance of power was upset and a void appeared in Eastern Europe that needed to be filled. It appears quite apparent that France gained nothing at Munich.

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1 Pertinax, op. cit., p. 5.
2 Maurois, op. cit., pp. 24-25.
3 Seton-Watson, op. cit., p. 137.
It looks as if Germany gained the most in the extra year before war. "In armaments, the advance of the Western Powers was 'petty' during the year compared with that of the Germans."\(^1\) Not only did Germany gain the Czechoslovak resources but also her own war production hit full capacity. In 1938 Germany had between twenty-one and fifty-one fully equipped divisions.\(^2\) Several of these divisions were insufficiently trained and lacked capable officers.\(^3\) In 1938, France had one hundred divisions, Britain could have supplied at least two more, and in the East stood a strong Czechoslovakia with thirty-six divisions. Altogether stood an Allied army of at least 138 divisions against a German army of no more than fifty-one divisions. Eleven months later the German army, by intensive training in the field, had gained in quality.\(^4\) Not only was there an improvement in the quality of the German army, but there was also an increase in the quantity of the German army. In September 1939, there were 106 German divisions.\(^5\) To the three armored divisions of 1936 was added seven more in 1939.\(^6\)

\(^1\)Namier, *op. cit.*, p. 161.
\(^3\)Pertinax, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
\(^4\)Ibid.
\(^6\)Pertinax, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
The extra year saw no increase in French military strength. "Churchill claimed that in 1936 France still possessed military superiority over Germany; by 1939 the reverse was true." The Allies' losses were Germany's gains. Thus it looks quite apparent that Germany was stronger vis-à-vis the Western Powers in 1939 than at the time of Munich.

Munich was the time and the place to stop Hitler. The Allies had the strength, world support, and a moral right to come to the defence of Czechoslovakia. They allowed Hitler to gain his demands. With this mistake and the extra year before war started, the Allies nearly lost everything. It was by a narrow margin that the Western powers won the war that began eleven months after Munich. Their victory was much too close for comfort. Looking back in retrospect, it probably would have been better to go to war in 1936.

1 Howat, op. cit., p. 61
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