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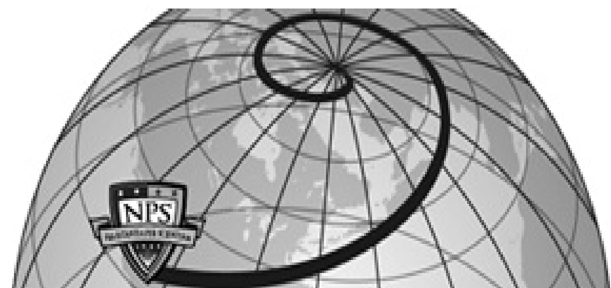

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BRITAIN ADRIFT: THREE ASPECTS OF HER FOREIGN POLICY IN THE LATE THIRTIES

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The dissertation of Richard S. Cloward entitled

Britain Adrift: Three Aspects of Her Foreign

Policy in the Late Thirties

submitted to the department of History in partial

fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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A Dissertation
submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Georgetown University
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degree of
Master of Arts in History

by

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CHAPTER ONE

TO THE EVE OF PRAGUE

> Q. What is the difference between Chamberlain and Hitler?
> A. Chamberlain often takes a weekend in the country, while Hitler often takes a country in a weekend.
>
> --popular Nazi joke

That the Munich agreement represented a radical departure from traditional British policy is today almost a commonplace. Yet, in a sense, the seeds of that change had been long previously planted.

To a great degree, Neville Chamberlain was merely reaping the beginning of a bitter harvest that he, and Stanley Baldwin before him, had sown. It is with part of this harvest that this thesis is concerned, yet the events before the occupation of Czechoslovakia are so vital to any analysis of what followed that a short review seems essential.

British foreign policy in the inter-war years has been called "among the most unsatisfactory in the long record of the British government."[1] A quick glance at the record would tend to confirm Professor Northedge's comment. Britain had failed to achieve agreement on disarmament, failed to bring Germany into the European balance

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[1] F. S. Northedge, The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (New York: Praeger, 1966), p. 617.

of power as a stable partner, and failed to develop any concepts of collective security until it was too late for collective security to be effective against the dynamism of Nazi Germany. Britain seemed to take the path of making a decision and then sitting back to wait for the appropriate consequence to ensue in the international system. Too often, though, the consequences were anything but appropriate. The British government "seemed to have a curious knack of waiting until it had been maneuvered into humiliating positions from which it was forced to extricate itself by decidely clumsy expedients."[2]

Clearly, foreign policy is not a unilateral exercise. Whatever the right and wrongs of British foreign policy in Europe, it should not be forgotten that it was played against the ambition (or, in some cases, lack of it) of three major powers -- Germany, France and Russia -- and a host of smaller ones, most notably Poland and Czechoslovakia. Thus, the traditional British policy of a minimum of interference on the continent consistent with British interest was diluted by the web of intrigue and initiative the various European states and successor states sought to weave. Additionally, with the advent of the "New Diplomacy",[3] policy-framers could no longer ignore

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[2]W. N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy since Versailles, 1919-1963 (London: Methuen, 1968), p. 194.

[3]Gordon A. Craig, "The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austen Chamberlain", in Gordon A. Craig and Felix Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats, 1919-1939 (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1953), pp. 15-48.

public opinion or domestic considerations.

So, when Chamberlain arrived at Munich, he was -- given the foregoing and the unprepared condition of the British military -- in a considerably weaker position than, say, Castlereagh at Vienna in 1815. The Prime Minister who had accumulated all the power of policy making from the Foreign Office could do no more than argue form with Hitler. Yet for a time that would appear sufficient.

At Munich, Neville Chamberlain could well have reflected upon his father's words of 40 years before that, "We have no allies. I fear we have no friends."[4] France might be counted as partly both, although Britain by the mid-Thirties was only beginning to trust the French, whom they had long suspected of aspiring to Continental hegemony. Additionally, France was stricken with internal disorders, seeming to confirm the English view of that country as in perpetual chaos. As late as January of 1939, the English and French were still trying to reconcile themselves, this time on the pages of Foreign Affairs.[5]

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[4] J. L. Garvin, The Life of Joseph Chamberlain, Vol III: Empire and World (London: Macmillan, 1934), p. 282. The incident was the so-called "long-spoon" speech of May 13th, 1898, in which Joseph Chamberlain also said, "We gain all our strength from the confidence of the people....You must tell the people what you mean, and where you are going, if you want them to follow." (Ibid.)

[5] Harold Nicolson, "What France Means to England" and Andre Geraud, "What England Means to France," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 17, no. 2 (January, 1939), p. 351.

Britain's hostility to Communism made Russia seem, in 1938, a most desirable ally. The feeling was reciprocated, each suspecting the other's interest in any form of collective security to be nothing more than a ploy to avoid personal responsibility for deterring German aggression.

Italy tempted Chamberlain. He seemed to have a certain fascination with her, especially after the idea of Anglo-German talks broke down in the fall of 1937. At that point, Chamberlain turned to the idea of Anglo-Italian talks as a means of isolating Germany. Even as late as the summer of 1939, Chamberlain considered that peace or at least the localisation of war might well depend on Italy.

> I am thinking of making a further proposal to Mussolini that he should move for a 12 months' truce to let the temperature cool down...As always I regard Rome as the weak end of the Axis, and we should always be trying to bend it.[6]

Yet it would seem that he was under no illusions as to Italy's ranking as a power.

By a process of elimination, Germany was in the forefront of possible allies to secure the European balance of power. Understanding this helps to explain much of the British government's actions in foreign policy, especially towards Hitler. That Chamberlain underestimated Hitler is also today a commonplace, but it seems safe to

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[6] Keith G. Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London: Macmillan, 1946), p. 413.

say in this he was in the majority. What Chamberlain sought was an understanding between the great powers based on the recognition of their interests.[7] Securing the interest of the two greatest powers, Germany and Britain, would provide the foundation for a European settlement and an enduring peace. As a later chapter will show, Chamberlain's underestimation of Hitler was not one of stupidity or short-sightedness, but rather of an almost blind insistence on ascribing to Hitler the ambitions that he, Chamberlain, so dearly held.

By 1938, British foreign policy had come to mean the views of Chamberlain posited against the ambition of Hitler. Not that Chamberlain had come to guide British foreign policy by accident. In reality he had made no secret of his desires to be at once the Prime Minister and framer of foreign policy. In a November, 1938 diary entry, perhaps elated by Munich, he wrote:

> In the past, I have often felt a sense of helpless exasperation at the way things have been allowed to drift in foreign affairs, but now I am in a position to keep them on the move, and while I am P.M., I don't mean to go to sleep.[8]

In his desire to control foreign policy he was not particularly innovative. The shift in policy making from Whitehall to Number 10 Downing had begun with Lloyd George and the advent of the "New

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[7]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 481.

[8]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 387.

Diplomacy." Chamberlain, with a mandate and complete control of his party, merely accelerated the shift and made it nearly complete. The consequence was a British diplomacy that "came to be characterized by dangerous defects of coordination as well as a high degree of amateurishness, imprecision, and feckless opportunity."[9] Diplomacy being the vehicle of foreign policy, it takes little to assume that the formulation of policy must have been in about the same stage of disrepair.

Within a year of becoming Prime Minister, Chamberlain had almost complete control of major foreign policy formulation. He had surrounded himself with like-minded advisors -- Hoare, Halifax, Simon and Wilson -- and replaced several ambassadors with ones more pliant to his wishes. Although Feiling held that "any notion that he [Chamberlain] aimed at capturing one key position after another [in the Foreign Office] is baseless,"[10] it is hard to look at the record and think otherwise. By the time of Anschluss, Chamberlain supporters were in all important decision-making areas and in key embassies. More importantly, the opposition was not only out of cabinet, but almost out of earshot. Eden was on a back bench, Churchill loud enough but unliked and Vansittart in a mostly ceremonial foreign office job.

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[9]Craig, "The British Foreign Office", p. 17.

[10]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 327.

Yet if Chamberlain could dislodge personalities, he had to face higher realities in attempting to change the direction of foreign policy. Tradition had dictated that Britain's search for security -- the aim of any foreign policy-- could be most successful in attempting to seek equilibrium in Europe at the least cost to British interests. After World War I, the British sought to revive, knowingly or unknowingly, the Concert of Europe.

Britain felt that by encouraging the powers to accept a status quo suitably modified to remove the worst errors of the peace treaties several goals could be gained. First among these, the powers could avoid turning Europe into armed, divided camps. This done, a vigorous effort to achieve the disarmament essential to economic recovery could be made. Finally, acceptance of a status quo would allow Britain the freedom to again concentrate on her Empire.[11]

In taking this course, Britain was acting in a tradition anchored in the Congress of Vienna and beyond. In 1815, Castlereagh had believed British security could best be obtained in both general and specific terms. "In general, he [Castlereagh] believed in a system of a 'just equilibrium' or balance of power upon the Continent, and it is this belief which explains the immense efforts he devoted to the settlement of the Polish and Italian problems, neither of which could be

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[11]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 396.

described as a direct British interest."[12]

By the early 20th century, traditional British foreign policy could best be summed up in the words of Sir Eyre Crowe. At the beginning of the New Year in 1907, Crowe wrote:

> The equilibrium established...is technically known as the balance of power, and it has become almost a historical truism to identify England's secular policy with the maintenance of this balance by throwing their weight now in this scale and none in that, but ever on the side opposed to the political dictatorship of the strongest state or group at a given time.[13]

Hitler of course, could only gain by appeasement. He had upset traditional British policy so far in two distinct ways. First, he was unwilling to accept partnership in a stable European Concert. This was so because his easy successes in striking off the restrictions of Versailles had earned him a widespread following, especially among the German lower middle and farm classes.[14] The mass of public opinion being either for or -- as important -- not against his policies, he

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[12] Harold Nicolson, The Congress of Vienna (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), p. 205. Poland would still be a problem for Chamberlain. Castlereagh would no doubt have been shocked to hear Czechoslovakia described as: "...a faraway country [with] people of whom we know nothing." (Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 372).

[13] As quoted in Frank Ashton-Gwatkin, The British Foreign Service (Syracuse: Syracuse Univ. Press, 1950), p. 83.

[14] Hajo Holborn, The Political Collapse of Europe (New York: Knopf, 1951), p. 147.

could act with more latitude than a British Prime Minister.

Second, in the reaction of the other two leading powers -- France and Italy -- Britain found herself between two equally unacceptable policies. On the one hand, Britain could have placed herself "...alongside France and Italy in resistance to the German revival; this would have meant acceptance of 'partial alliances' almost unanimously condemned by British opinion."[15] Indeed, by doing so British policy would have been in conflict with the idea of the mutual reconciliation of the Great Powers. On the other hand, Britain could attempt to satisfy Hitler with timely concessions in hopes of one day satiating him and coercing him to accept his place in the British concept of the European Concert. It was this seemingly unacceptable policy that became the framework of appeasement. Once implemented by the Chamberlain government, "there was hardly a point short of total humiliation towards which this course led."[16]

Thus, when Chamberlain took office, he inherited a long-practiced, traditional British foreign policy of a minimum interference on the Continent linked with the desire to maintain a just equilibrium. But he inherited it at a time when Hitler's actions or threats were calling this policy into question. Chamberlain had the political power

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[15] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 396.

[16] Ibid.

and skill to move in a new direction in foreign policy and chose to do so. But until Munich he did not abandon the traditional policy. Indeed a case could be made that appeasement was an attempt to continue a traditional policy that had confronted a most untraditional opponent in Hitler.

It was not Chamberlain who invented appeasement. Briand had some years before coined it as something possible and desirable.[17] Given the mood of the Thirties in which the bulk of educated opinion felt that war was an ultimate evil whose avoidance was worth any price, appeasement seemed logical and justifiable. Chamberlain was the most dedicated practitioner of appeasement and as such is most identified with its failing. But it must be remembered that, until shortly after Munich, he was reading public opinion only too correctly, as would have any politician of his acumen. His miscalculation was not in espousing appeasement but in clinging to it in spite of overwhelming evidence that it was not accomplishing the purpose he had in view.[18] Indeed if one is to believe most accounts -- including Mr. Taylor's -- appeasement was a reasonable and sane policy.[19] To Chamberlain,

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[17] Raymond Sontag, A Broken World, Vol. 19 of The Rise of Modern Europe, ed. by William Langer (New York: Harpers, 1971), p. 314.

[18] William R. Rock, Neville Chamberlain (New York: Twayne, 1969), p. 212.

[19] A. J. P. Taylor, The Origins of World War Two (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 135. Also Rock, Chamberlain, p. 115 and Northedge, Giant, p. 481.

appeasement meant -- if one can evoke a precise definition -- the making of timely concessions to disgruntled powers in a hope that concessions would conciliate, calm and restore order. International tension could be reduced by a methodical removal of the principal causes of friction among nations.[20] On paper it was an eminently workable idea; in reality it could not be challenged until it failed. And it was not until the aftermath of Munich that it became somewhat obvious that it was failing. Then and only then could opposition to appeasement coalesce.

To Chamberlain's credit, he put an end to Baldwin's sceptical, easy-going policy of drift. He set out to implement his policies in a dynamic and forthright manner. In the words of Raymond Sontag, "He moved without doubt or hesitation. Opposition at home he treated with impatience which quickly changed to contempt, whether the opposition came from the Labor Party, from dissidents in his own party, like Churchill, or from the Foreign Office."[21]

The opposition, on the other hand, suffered from lack of cohesiveness or organization. More important, it lacked factual evidence to prove the failure of Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. In brief,

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[20]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 115.

[21]Sontag, A Broken World, p. 317.

if appeasement hadn't been tested, it also had not failed and the probabilities of its success or failure rested in a largely unpredictable future. Thus the opposition to appeasement was only in principle, a weak argument given Chamberlain's popularity and tight rein of party and Foreign Office. William Rock points out that a section of the British press opinion was consistently sceptical of Chamberlain's foreign policies, but the papers cited are those that were of lesser importance, regional press and the like.[22] In the final analysis, opposition to appeasement to late 1938 was scattered and ineffectual with the majority of Englishmen preferring almost anything to war. William Rock's arguments that opposition was more important than previously realized seem to go to ground on his inability to cite proof of the effects of the opposition on Chamberlain. That Prague changed policy and vindicated the opposition is one thing, but the changes in British foreign policy came as a result, in this instance, of external rather than internal pressures.[23]

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[22] William R. Rock, Appeasement on Trial ([Hamden, Conn.]: Archon Books, 1966), pp. 155-8.

[23] Rock, Appeasement, p. IX. For a thorough study of Conservative Opposition to Appeasement, see Neville Thompson, The Anti-Appeasers (Oxford: Clarendon, 1971). Mr. Thompson calls Conservative discontent "sporadic and discontinuous" and made up of "individual critics and small cliques, but no cohesive group." This hardly provided the framework to force change upon the politically secure Chamberlain. And it was the Conservative Opposition that was the closest to the Prime Minister.

In 1938 Chamberlain's foreign policy moved from theory to practice. The resignation of Anthony Eden and Anschluss marked the first half of the year. These two events were played out, almost simultaneously, against the backdrop of steadily deteriorating German-Czech relations in regard to the Sudeten question.

Whether or not Chamberlain was bent on removing Eden is a still unresolved question.[24] If one accepts the idea that "as early as 1936 [Chamberlain] seems to have reached a decision to secure for himself a dominant position in the formulation of British policy,"[25] then the eventual removal of Eden would seem almost inevitable. Yet it appears that Chamberlain was aware of Eden's popularity and, as a skillful politician, the former would not have driven him out of the government on a trivial issue. Also, the two men were closer on most

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[24]That Chamberlain actively sought to force Eden's resignation is discussed in Rock, Appeasement, p. 20 and Margaret George, The Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy 1933-1939 (Pittsburgh: Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 1965), p. 176. Thompson, The Anti-Appeasers, p. 140 and Northedge, Giant, p. 488, feel the issue was forced on both sides. Feiling, Chamberlain, sheds little light on the question. Thompson has a lucid chapter in Anti-Appeasers that skillfully probes the differences between Chamberlain and Eden (pp. 134-155).

[25]Marion L. Kenney, "The Role of the House of Commons in British Foreign Policy during the 1937-1938 Session.", in Norton Downs, ed., Essays in Honor of Conyers Read (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 138. Kenney also takes the line that Chamberlain sought to exclude the House of Commons from debating Foreign Policy questions as part of his policy to concentrate Foreign Policy formulation in his own hands.

issues than later events would have us believe. But conjecture aside, the fact that remains is that at the first real test of Chamberlain's policy, the Anschluss, effective opposition no longer existed within the government. Eden had gone, the split forced on both sides rather than developed as part of a Chamberlain master plan,[26] and Chamberlain now had a totally free hand in the execution of his policies.

Eden even refrained from attacking Chamberlain's policies in his resignation speech. In part this was due to the confidential nature of the question over which the two men split[27] and in part it was due to party loyalty. Too, it might have been in his mind that his resignation might bring a government collapse and his own call to the Prime Ministry. In that case he would not have spoken out for fear of losing his place in the queue. Whatever the cause, his Parliament speech on the 21st of April, 1938, was a whimper rather than the expected bang. In the words of Harold Nicolson, it was, "too restrained in parts and then too unrestrained. Either he should have confined himself to the distressed colleague point-of-view or launched into an appeal for decency in foreign policy. He fell between two stools."[28]

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[26] Thompson, Anti-Appeasers, p. 140.

[27] Rock, Appeasement, p. 22-31 offers a good synposis.

[28] Nigel Nicolson, ed., Harold Nicolson: Diaries and Letters, 1930-1939 (New York: Atheneum, 1966), pp. 324-5.

Although Eden did not start a back-bench revolt, he at least opened the way for more criticism of appeasement in Commons. By and large, though, the average Conservative M.P. was less concerned about the principles at stake than about the possibility of losing their seats in the possible election that the cabinet crisis had momentarily posed. The majority obeyed instructions to rally behind the government and so, once again, the Whips office, and a touch of apathy prevailed.[29]

Hard on the heels of Eden's resignation came Anschluss. Hitler had rightly guessed that the omens were favorable for Germany's move to annex Austria. Many Britons, suffering an excess of conscience over the inequities of Versailles, thought the Austro-German union not only logical but moral. In the mid-thirties, Austria's external protectors had faded away and the most she could count on were British, French, Hungarian and Italian agreements to consult if her integrity was endangered.[30] Austrians themselves had not overcome the ambivalence of being both German and Austrian.

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[29]Rock, Appeasement, pp. 37-7.

[30]Christopher Thorne, The Approach of War, 1938-39 (New York: St. Martins Press, 1968), p. 37.

The struggle and events surrounding Anschluss are ably recorded.[31] Over the night of March 11-12, 1938, the first coup d'etat by telephone was accomplished, with Goering orchestrating events from Berlin. The British reaction was a protest note, "His Majesty's Government feel bound to register protest in the strongest terms against such use of coercion, backed by force, against an independent State, in order to create a situation incompatible with its national independence."[32] Thin gruel indeed, and doubly so when one considers that within hours of the 9 a.m. dispatch of the protest, Ribbentrop was the guest of honor at a luncheon at the Prime Minister's Downing St. residence.

British reaction seemed as improvised as the Anschluss. At first, the British government cast around for explanation. Chamberlain wrote, "It is tragic to think that very possibly this might have been prevented if I had had Halifax at the Foreign Office instead of Anthony

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[31]To cite but a few sources: Survey of International Affairs, 1938, Vol 1, pp. 179-256; Northedge, Troubled Giant, pp. 489-96; Rock, Appeasement, pp. 46-65 and Chamberlain, pp. 129-32; Medlicott, British For. Pol., pp. 173-7 as well as P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, 1954), pp. 130-51.

[32]Great Britain, Foreign Office, Documents on British Foreign Policy, Third Series, Vol 1, no. 39, 12 March 1938. (Hereinafter referred to as D.B.F.P. with document number and date, as all quotations are from Third Series).

at the time I wrote my letter to Mussolini."[33] Later, speaking in Parliament, he refuted statements that Britain had given her assent to Germany to absorb Austria into the Reich. (Though he did not speculate on the effects of Britain's lack of opposition).[34] Chamberlain admitted that Anschluss caused "a damaging effect upon general confidence in Europe."[35] But he went on to say that one must face facts and:

> The hard fact is...that nothing could have arrested this action by Germany unless we and others with us had been prepared to use force to prevent it.[36]

Chamberlain closed by saying that the government had decided on a fresh review of defense policy. But the hour was late and the vacillations of British policy-makers only encouraged Hitler. The Chancellor had dropped the first shoe and now the world awaited the other.

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[33]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 342.

[34]Great Britain, Parliament, Parliamentary Debates (House of Commons), 5th ser., Vol. 333, col. 51. (Hereinafter referred to as Parl. Debates with volume and column numbers).

[35]Parl. Debates, Vol. 333, col. 52.

[36]Ibid.

British reaction, at first noisy, quickly subsided.[37] Except among the Parliamentary Opposition and some sections of the press, most could somehow find refuge in Neurath's statement that the, "... form of relations between the Reich and Austria can only be regarded as an internal affair of the German people which is no concern of the Third Powers."[38] In any event, the presentation of a Nazi fait accompli in Austria destroyed what was left of British intentions towards firmness.

The press was more antagonistic, both towards Germany and Chamberlain's foreign policy. The normally pro-government Sunday Times questioned government policy and suggested, of all things, the possibility of return to collective security.[39] If one is to believe Rock's analysis, there was a widespread press groundswell for a return to collective security, together with suggestions that the government should support Czechoslovakia against future German aggression.[40]

Yet, for all the commotion, for all the debate in Parliament, the question of Anschluss was soon overtaken by events in the Sudeten region of Czechoslovakia; the second shoe was about to drop. In the

[37] Rock, Appeasement, pp. 49-58.

[38] D.B.F.P., Vol. 1, no. 56, 12 March 1938.

[39] As quoted in Rock, Appeasement, p. 50.

[40] Rock, Appeasement, pp. 56-7.

face of new fears, it became easier to rationalize away the absorption of Austria into Greater Germany. Winston Churchill accurately captured the tenor of British opinion when, speaking in Commons on the 24th of March, he said:

> My right hon Friend the Prime Minister will perhaps repeat what he said a few weeks ago that the tension in Europe is greatly relaxed. The Times will write a leading article to say how silly those people look on the morrow of the Austrian incorporation who raised a clamour for exceptional action in foreign policy and home defense and how wise the government were not to let themselves be carried away by this passing incident.[41]

But, as Hitler became more self-confident, "statesmen elsewhere began to doubt [his] good faith. Even those who still hoped to appease him began to think also of resistance. The uneasy balance tilted, though only slightly, away from peace and towards war."[42]

In the days that followed Anschluss and Eden's exit, appeasement became the leading edge of British foreign policy. In Central Europe, Germany continued to menace Czechoslovakia. Throughout the uncertain spring of 1938, the steady escalation of the Sudeten problem brought Britain closer to war while dimming hopes of reconstructing a just

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[41]Parl. Debates, Vol. 333, col. 1453.

[42]Taylor, Origins of WW II, pp. 149-50.

equilibrium in Europe. The descent to Munich and Prague had begun.[43]

Goering gave fulsome assurances to all who would listen that Germany desired nothing more than to improve relations with Czechoslovakia.[44] In spite of this, it seemed almost patently obvious that the now nearly-encircled successor state was next on the list of Nazi aggression. On the 15th of March, the British chargé at Prague, Mr. Newton, saw Germany's "next item on their program" to be Czechoslovakia. Although it appears his personal sympathies were with the Czechs, the chargé felt that due to Czechoslovakia's geographical position, her history and the racial divisions, her present political situation appeared untenable and for Britain, "it would be no kindness in the long run to try to maintain her in it."[45] He went on to say that if changes were to be made in Czechoslovakia, they should be done while favorable conditions obtained.

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[43]In addition to those sources mentioned in footnote 31, the following are of interest in tracing the events surrounding Berchtesgaden/Godesburg/Munich: Wheeler-Bennet, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy; Survey of International Affairs, 1938, Vol 2 and Feiling, Chamberlain, pp. 347.382.

[44]D.B.F.P., Vol. 1, no. 63, 12 March 1938. Goring, with his usual pompousness, had assured the Czech minister in Berlin by saying, "Ich gebe Ihnen mein Ehrenwort" (I give my word of honor), a statement that could well be in the running for bankrupt promise of the century.

[45]D.B.F.P., Vol. 1, no. 87, 15 March 1938.

Chamberlain had, as early as November of 1937, thought a good way to bargain with the Germans was to say: "...give us satisfactory assurances that you won't use force to deal with the Austrians and Czechoslovakians and we will give you similar assurances that we won't use force to prevent the changes you want, if you can get them by peaceful means."[46] By early March, 1938, Chamberlain had abandoned any ideas of giving guarantees to Czechoslovakia, or for that matter, the French in connection with any obligations to the Czechs.[47]

In mid-May, British policy could be summarized as seeking to preserve peace by restraining France and Czechoslovakia, ignoring Russia and accommodating Germany.[48] Chamberlain continued to view the problem as one of Sudeten demands, while for Hitler the Sudetenland was merely a talking point. For the Führer the real aim was to crush Czechoslovakia and gain control of her resources and strategic position. Still it would be unfair to say that Chamberlain did not recognize the ramifications of the Sudeten question. That he chose momentarily to ignore them was due in great part to a renewal of interest in the Mediterranean. His attention was drawn back to Central Europe

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[46]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 333. A diary entry of 26 November 1937.

[47]Ibid., p. 348.

[48]Charles L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 605.

only as the Anglo-Italian talks and debates over Britain's role in the Spanish Civil War wound down.[49]

When he did turn to the Czech question, it seems apparent that he felt appeasement to be a still untested idea. Czechoslovakia offered an ideal testing ground, especially as his attitude finally came to rest on a belief that the stakes in Czechoslovakia were not sufficiently high to warrant the horrors of war. The Newton telegram referred to above offered an opening towards a view that war for the sake of something that was unviable in peace was foolish and futile. In an off-the-record press interview in early April, Chamberlain came to the logical conclusion of his reasoning: Britain would not fight for Czechoslovakia.[50]

The May crisis offered proof of this.[51] Halifax began by taking a strong line towards the threat of a Nazi coup in Czechoslovakia. He told Ribbentrop "...not to count upon this country being able to stand aside if from any precipitate action there should start a

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[49]Rock, Chamberlain, pp. 133-7.

[50]The May crisis began on May 19th, 1938, when reports of German troop movements, followed by a border incident in which two Sudeten Germans were shot, aroused fears of a putsch in Czechoslovakia. The Czech government ordered a partial mobilization. For a brief moment, it appeared that Britain, France and Russia were ready to act to protect Czechoslovakia.

[51]D.B.F.P., Vol. 1, no. 264, 22 May 1938.

European conflagration."[52]

The Foreign Secretary's action caught both Hitler and Chamberlain by surprise. Hitler backed down. But in the long run this was so much the worse for the Czechs. Operation Green was summarily redrafted to include a statement vowing Hitler's "...unalterable intention to smash Czechoslovakia by military action in the near future."[53] Chamberlain, too, backed down from Halifax's statement, persisting in his belief that appeasement would satiate Hitler in the long run. In abandoning the idea of a guarantee to Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain sought an alternative. Nevil Henderson, from Berlin, thought that, "Prevention is better than cure and I honestly believe that the moment has come for Prague to get a real twist of the screw."[54]

Within a few days, the twisting was begun. Halifax with Chamberlain's approval floated the idea of sending a British observer into the Sudetenland to report directly on the situation. Almost simultaneously, Hitler was meeting with his advisors in Munich, where a decision to avoid a coup was made.[55] As the threat seemed to fade, the united front that had risen against Germany rapidly dissipated.

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[52] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 140.

[53] Thorne, Approach of War, p. 63.

[54] D.B.F.P., Vol. 1, no. 512, 18 July 1938.

[55] Medlicott, Brit. For. Pol., p. 183.

The net result was confirmation of Czechoslovakia's isolation.

In the final analysis, it is, as J. W. Wheeler-Bennet points out, of secondary importance as to whether the Germans actually intended to invade Czechoslovakia or not. The point is that the rest of Europe believed that the Nazis harboured such intentions.[56] British reaction had been for once, nearly unequivocal and, to the outside observer, it could appear that the anti-Nazi forces might have begun to lay the bases for a, "...rudimentary and emergency form of collective security."[57] As with all other British initiatives, this firm line towards Germany quickly dissipated in the face of Chamberlain's continued advocacy of appeasement. As [illegible] seen, he settled for the sending of a mediator when bilateral Czech-Sudeten talks collapsed in mid-July without resolving what was clearly an explosive situation. At this point the Sudeten question again emerged from being an internal Czech problem into the question of wider European politics.

The announcement of the Runciman mission was made to Commons during the last debate on foreign policy in the session, October 3, 1938.[58] Lord Runciman was to be a mediator, who would try to acquaint

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[56] John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy (New York: Duell, Sloane and Pearce, 1948), p. 60.

[57] Manchester Guardian, 27 May 1938, as quoted in George, The Warped Vision, p. 187.

[58] Parl. Debates, Vol. 338, col. 2957.

himself with all the facts and the views of both sides and to, "... perhaps later on...make some proposals...which will help them."[59]

Chamberlain envisioned no solutions from the Runciman mission, but rather hoped that it would result in informing public opinion and hopefully making seemingly intractable issues less so. It was not a high goal to say the least. Yet in the solution of the Czech problem lay the future of appeasement:

> If only we could find some peaceful solution of this Czechoslovakia question, I should myself feel that the way was open again for a further effort for a general appeasement --an appeasement which cannot be obtained until we can be satisfied that no major cause of difference or dispute remains unsettled.[60]

In the end, even the modest goal of the Runciman mission was not to be achieved. Four settlement plans gained four rejections. By the end [illegible] t, Runciman was discouraged and, at the same time, aware of the drift towards war.[61] The Czechs would give up to the point that they felt their national security and integrity were threatened, while this appeared to be the point where the Sudeten Germans wished to begin bargaining. Aground, the Runciman mission marked time until

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[59] Parl. Debates, Vol. 338, col. 2958.

[60] Parl. Debates, Vol. 338, col. 2959.

[61] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 723.

September.[62]

As the crisis deepened, Chamberlain found his foreign policy repeatedly called into question by the press and the Opposition. Public opinion seemed to move against surrender. On the other hand, Chamberlain had long been aware of British military deficiencies. While some improvements in rearmament had been made, they were modest ones. Chamberlain still relied on the opinion given by the Chiefs of Staff in the Spring that war with Germany over Czechoslovakia must be avoided at all costs until rearmament had gotten further along.

[illegible] the stage was set for the last attempts, this time by personal diplomacy, to appease Nazi dynamism. Chamberlain had thought of an expedient "so unconventional and daring that it rather took Halifax's breath away."[63] He would see Hitler face to face.

Chamberlain's three September journeys to see Hitler mark the high-water of appeasement. Numerous accounts, for and against, good and bad, are available.[64] It remains here to touch at the highlights in an attempt to show how Chamberlain clung to appeasement in the face of reality and how, gradually, opposition to government policies

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[62] Rock, Chamberlain, pp. 140-42. See also Medlicott, British For. Pol., pp. 184-5.

[63] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 357.

[64] Some of the better sources include: Wheeler-Bennet, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy; R.G.D. Laffan, The Crisis over Czechoslovakia in Survey of International Affairs, 1938, Vol II; Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott, The Appeasers (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1963); Keith Eubank, Munich (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1963) and Thorne, The Approach of War.

coalesced during the Munich Winter of 1938-39.

Reading the Foreign Office dispatches that cover the period of September the 13th and 14th, it is difficult not to become infected with optimism. Only in Paris was there some displeasure: M. Daladier had hoped for conversations "a trois", claiming that it had been suggested to him several times to meet with Hitler but that he had always refused as he had felt a British representative should be present.[65] In spite of French absence, from all reports the meeting with Hitler at Berchtesgaden was friendly and more successful than either had expected.[66] Chamberlain was accompanied by Sir Horace Wilson and not by any Foreign Office representatives. The meeting lasted about three hours. As it developed, Chamberlain found himself, knowingly or otherwise, cast as the representative of one sovereign power negotiating the fate of another sovereign power. After listening to a long monologue by Hitler, (and noting that the Chancellor did not exhibit any traces of insanity), Chamberlain sought to draw Hitler out on the Sudeten question:

> So I said, 'Hold on a minute; there is one point on which I want to be clear...you say that the three million Sudeten Germans must be included

[65] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 883, 14 September 1938.

[66] Taylor, Origins of WW II, p. 174.

> in the Reich; would you be satisfied with that and is there nothing more that you want'.[67]

Hitler responded that all he wanted were Sudeten Germans and that he had no desire to dismember the Czech nation. He said that if the British were prepared to accept the idea of Sudeten self-determination, Hitler was prepared to talk. Chamberlain, by his own recollection "...didn't care two hoots whether the Sudetens were in the Reich or out of it, but I saw immense practical difficulties in a plebiscite."[68]

The meeting completed, Chamberlain hurried back to London and pro[illegible]lled the Cabinet together. He sought their approval as well as that of Lord Runciman and the French to a plan for [illegible]deten secession. As to the Czechs, they hadn't been consulted yet, so why spoil a perfect record? The Cabinet and Runciman yielded easily, the French less so, but in the long run, no less definitely. The advice given to the Czechs was to avoid a plebiscite, but to cede those a[illegible]as containing 50 per cent or more German population. But on the British side a remarkable concession was made: Britain agreed to join in a guarantee of what remained of Czechoslovakia after the secession of the Sudeten areas.[69] This action marked the first

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[67] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 895, 15 September 1938.

[68] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 367.

[69] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 937, 19 September 1938.

reversal of Britain's consistent refusal to be committed in Central and Eastern Europe. In the light of events the following spring, it takes on considerable significance. The action was not devoid of irony: having failed to assist Czechoslovakia when she was a formidable ally, Britain now sought to guarantee her when she was a helpless nation.

The Czechs, for their part, questioned the Russians and the French as to whether they would honor their pledges. The Russians replied in the affirmative on the 20th.[70] During the same evening, the Czech government refused the Anglo-French proposals.[71] They felt the proposal would not realize the object of peace. They further objected to not having been consulted and stated that Czechoslovakia "...would be mutilated in every respect."[72]

Within the hour, though, another cable arrived from Mr. Newton, the minister at Prague, that the Czech reply should not be regarded as final. Newton felt that, "If I can deliver a kind of ultimatum

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[70]Thorne, Approach of War, p. 75. Russian assurances, operative only after the French acted, were never put to the test.

[71]D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 979, 20 September 1938.

[72]D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 978, 20 September 1938. The reply went on to say that the question of frontiers could not be decided without Parliamentary consultation and that the Anglo-French proposal would not, in reality, solve the minority problem while it would most certainly destroy the balance of power.

to President Benes, he and his Government will feel able to bow to force majeure."[73]

In view of Newton's dispatch (and a similar exchange between the French ambassador and his government), an Anglo-French demarche was made to President Benes at 2 a.m. on September 21st. Both ambassadors urged Benes to reconsider the Anglo-French proposals. Benes at first demurred, but gradually it seemed to sink in on him that he was receiving an ultimatum. He said as much to the Ambassadors, who replied that it was an ultimatum in the sense "that it represented final advice of our government(s) and in their view the last possible moment for acceptance of their advice, if this country was to be saved."[74]

At mid-day on the 21st, the Czech government accepted, unconditionally, the Anglo-French proposals. Chamberlain then went to Godesberg to again consult with Hitler. Chamberlain had gained Hitler's objective for him yet found to his utter surprise that the ante had been upped. Hitler now demanded the immediate occupation of the Sudeten regions by German troops, an act that would clearly lead to hostilities and bring the Franco-Czech alliance into force, leading

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[73] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 979, 20 September 1938.

[74] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 1007, 21 September 1938.

to a European war.[75] Hitler had been deprived of a military victory and his disappointment was obvious. In the conversations with Chamberlain, the Chancellor vented his pique in a variety of ways.[76] After the usual exchange of niceties, Hitler proceeded to lead Chamberlain down the primrose path. Hitler pictured 120,000 refugees had the opposition of the English to Germany's vital interests. Chamberlain countered with worries about public opinion. At this point, Ribbentrop, who had been handed a message, "...announced in a portentous tone that M. Benes had ordered general mobilization."[77] Hitler [illegible] that in that event things were settled. Briefly displaying anger, Chamberlain asked who had mobilized first? After hearing Hitler say Czechoslovakia, Chamberlain retorted that Germany had mobilized first. "Hitler replied that when mobilization [illegible] ordered... Mr. Chamberlain would see the difference between the peace and war

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[75]Medlicott, British For. Pol., p. 190. A.J.P. Taylor holds that Hitler's actions were merely to buy time. He feels that Hitler saw Czechoslovakia breaking to pieces. When that happened, Germany could then play a role as a peacemaker, rather than being the creator of a new order. (Origins of WW II, p. 179). In view of the multitude of Foreign Office dispatches detailing German military preparations against Czechoslovakia, Taylor seems to have flown in the face of reality.

[76]D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 1073, 23-4 September 1938. A must for any student of the Chamberlain style in diplomacy. See also Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol. 2 (Washington: GPO, 1949), pp. 898-908.

[77]Ibid.

strength of the German army."[78]

Further on, Chamberlain protested that the German memorandum appeared more like an ultimatum. Hitler noted that the paper carried the heading "memorandum". Chamberlain said he was more interested in the contents than the title. And so it went. With the underlying issue of the future of Czechoslovakia already decided, the two men quibbled over details. At Godesberg, as before at Berchtesgaden and later at Munich, the Czech question was not debated so much as the methods of dismemberment. Hitler had ascertained early on that Czechoslovakia was alone; he could have what he wanted, when he wanted and in the manner he wanted. It seems he probably preferred a bloodless military occupation, showing power on the cheap. A political solution could not guarantee firm Nazi control, only occupation would do this. Thus the military role was cast.

Munich, for all that has been written, seems almost a footnote to Berchtesgaden and Godesberg. Again orchestrated by Hitler with Mussolini as concertmaster, Hitler gained what he wanted. In the interim between Godesberg and the Munich Conference, war seemed always but hours away. The British government made an attempt to so sound out the Russian position, held talks with the French and quietly mobilized the Fleet. Still searching for a peaceful solution,

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[78] Ibid.

Chamberlain sent Sir Horace Wilson to talk with Hitler. Wilson managed to see Hitler shortly before the Chancellor was scheduled to address a huge rally at Berlin's Sportpalast. There was no polite talk to begin; indeed Hitler began by saying that there was no use in talking at all. Sir Horace persisted, but Hitler left little room for discussion and Wilson left with Hitler's epithets -- so bad, we are told, that they "could not be repeated in a drawing room"[79] -- ringing in his ears.

At about the same time in London, Lord Halifax issued a press communique stating that in the event of a German attack on Czechoslovakia, France would be bound to come to Czech assistance, and Great Britain and Russia would certainly stand by France.[80] Yet the door was not yet completely shut. Even in the Sportpalast speech, Hitler did not go beyond demanding the Sudetenland by October 1st. He left it to Chamberlain to decide whether to continue his efforts to get the Prague government to go along.[81] This was enough for Chamberlain. Again he sought a solution in personal diplomacy, but this time it was in quadrilateral talks. The conference at Munich had all the

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[79] D.B.F.P., Vol 2, no. 1118, 26 September 1938.

[80] D.B.F.P., Vol. 2, no. 1111, 26 September 1938, (Footnote 1).

[81] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 538.

organization of a kindergarten outing. What did emerge was, stripped of frills, an affirmation of the Godesberg memorandum, except that the occupation would take place in stages rather than one fell swoop. Admittedly, it was a more tasteful document, but again none-the-less definite. As before, Czechoslovakia was not represented. The British and French had abdicated responsibility as the price of a respite. Italy was the hand-maiden of Germany. So it was Hitler who called the tune.

Returning from Munich, Chamberlain seemed satisfied that Hitler's last minute retreat from intransigence had wider significance. Obviously, Hitler wanted to avoid war.[82] Chamberlain had gambled on this from the beginning. Now the gamble was nearly up unless Hitler would abide by the Munich accords. It was a slim hope, at once the apogee and the beginning of the end for his policy of appeasement. The initiative was still in the hands of Hitler and the British were made to appear to have given away something that wasn't theirs to give.

The debate at the time was acrimonious and remains so.[83] Chamberlain argued in Parliament that he had sought at Munich to substitute an orderly for a violent method of carrying out an agreed

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[82] Medlicott, British For. Pol., p. 193.

[83] See Wheeler-Bennet, Munich: Prologue to Tragedy; Survey of International Affairs, 1938, Vol III.

decision. The differences between the Munich accord and the Godesberg memorandum of September 23 would show to what degree he and Daladier had been successful.[84]

There exists a point by point comparison of the two documents in the 1938 Survey of International Affairs, Vol. III that concludes:

> The detailed comparison of the terms of Godesberg and Munich shows the nakedness of the former was but thinly covered by the cloak of some ambitious verbiage and the provision for international procedure contained in the latter. The general effect of the Munich Agreements was to register acceptance of the terms dictated at Godesberg.[85]

The author goes on to say that the peace was saved because Britain and France demanded nothing more of the Germans than to go through the motions of international consultation. In reality, it would seem that peace was saved because of the Czech willingness to go along with the Munich Agreements. As Attlee said, "It is the Czechs who kept the peace of Europe; it is their sacrifice which has averted war."[86]

Chamberlain found opposition for Munich widespread. Yet, as in the past, "the various dissenters were unable to work together, formulate a common policy or decide on a clear line of action."[87] Duff

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[84] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, cols. 40-50.

[85] Survey of International Affairs, 1938, Vol III, p. 6.

[86] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, col. 53.

[87] Thompson, Anti-Appeasers, p. 175.

Cooper resigned from the Cabinet, arguing in his resignation speech that Hitler had introduced a new language, a new morality and new methods into Europe. The old diplomatic methods would no longer suffice. The language that Hitler understood was that of the "mailed fist", language not forthcoming from Chamberlain.[88]

Yet attractive as Cooper's arguments were, they depended on strength, specifically military strength, in which England was deficient. Chamberlain, for his part, was willing to make large sacrifices to gain a lasting settlement in Europe. Whether or not having a position of greater power from which to deal would have altered his methods is open to conjecture.

As for the rest of the opposition, their silence has moved one writer to ask: "What happened to those who had sided with Duff Cooper throughout September?"[89] They could not have helped being caught up in the vast sense of relief that seemed to sweep the country. Certainly the desire for unity, which implied a sense of security, was stronger to some than the need to call attention to the defeat suffered at Munich. Whatever reasoning, whatever justification, it remained for the press and not the parliamentary opposition to voice concern for

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[88] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, col. 34.

[89] Rock, Appeasement, p. 140.

the future of British foreign policy.[90]

Still the debate in Parliament was not without some strong attacks upon Chamberlain. Nicolson, Attlee, Geoffrey Mander, Viscount Craneborne and others castigated the Munich Agreement in varying degrees. On October 6, Chamberlain closed the debate by contending that Britain still must seek to avoid war and that the best method to do this was analyze the roots of conflict and try to settle them by collaboration and good will. He again stated that he felt public opinion backed his policy of appeasement and, in any event, "we had no treaty obligations and no legal obligations to Czechoslovakia..."[91]

Chamberlain went on to mention rearmament and a defense review, but closed by reiterating his belief in his policy -- "to obtain the collaboration of all nations, not excluding the totalitarian States, in building up a lasting peace for Europe."[92]

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[90] Ibid.

[91] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, col. 545. A Foreign Office paper circulated shortly after Munich suggested that the guarantee to Czechoslovakia should be kept "as innocuous as we can" and as "little likely to come into operation as possible." (Great Britain. Public Record Office, Foreign Office, Series 371, paper C14471/42/18, 9 November 1938. Referred to hereafter as "F.O." plus paper numbers and date.)

[92] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, col. 552.

The House then voted on two motions, one to approve the government's action at Munich and supporting its effort to secure a lasting peace and the other to not support the government. The latter failed 150 to 369, while the motion to support gained a 366 to 144 victory.[93] But the voting had cut across party lines. Each dissenter had his reasons, sometimes widely at variance with others, but perhaps the one thing that linked them was their common fear that the Chamberlain government was ignorant of the larger implications in Central Europe and, as a consequence, refused to take the measures necessary for the maintenance of European security.[94]

Besides showing the breadth of opposition to the Munich Settlement, the debate in Parliament brought the issues back into focus. In doing this, it served its best purpose. The question of "winners" and "losers" could now be examined, and some Englishmen found it strange that Munich should be received with more enthusiasm by the "losers" in Paris and London than by the "winners" in Berlin and Rome. And what of Czechoslovakia? Clearly now, in the British conscience, there was room for guilt to co-exist with the sense of relief. The public became aware of the nearness of the abyss and the failures of

[93] Parl. Debates, Vol. 339, cols. 554-8.

[94] Rock, Appeasement, p. 15(.

the policy that nearly pushed them over the rim. This is not to say that public opinion swung quickly away from Chamberlain. There was widespread relief at the Munich settlement. But what developed in the days after Munich might best be described as "a powerful under-current of anxiety and concern..."[95] In the final analysis, as A.J.P. Taylor says: "What was done at Munich mattered less than the way in which it was done; and what was said about it afterwards on both sides counted for still more."[96]

In the next weeks, as Germany, dominating the International Commission, proceeded to grab more of Czechoslovakia than had been proposed, even in the Codesberg Memorandum, British opinion hardened, both against Germany and appeasement.[97] Chamberlain, for his part, turned away from Central Europe -- the fate of appeasement there was no longer in his hands. Instead, he sought to reestablish ties with Mussolini, recognize Franco in Spain and sought to expand Anglo-German economic ties.[98]

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[95]Rock, Appeasement, p. 155.

[96]Taylor, Origins of WW II, p. 191.

[97]Rock, Appeasement, p. 159.

[98]Ibid.

Even as Germany, Poland and Hungary carved territory from the Czech state, a familiar pattern began once again to show itself. Reports from European posts began to talk of Hitler's next move. Hitler, for his part, sought to minimize the impression that he might have turned reasonable by remarking in October that it would be well "if England would free herself from certain arrogances left over from the Versailles epoch."[99]

But behind the talk, Hitler seemed to care little for what either Britain or France felt. The parceling up of Czechoslovakia went on until November. At that time the acting Chairman of the International Commission proposed dissolution of the commission as the final delimitation of the Czech-German border had been made. The British representative opposed this move and the Commission's life was extended until December.[100] Yet from beginning to end, the Commission was nothing more than a rubber stamp for German wishes. As Ogilvie-Forbes, the British delegate (and Chargé at Berlin during Henderson's illness) put it, "all questions arising out of the Munich agreement have been and will be at German Nazi dictation."[101] In

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[99]Medlicott, British For. Pol., p. 195.

[100]D.B.F.P., Vol 3, no. 275, 22 November 1938 (Footnote 2).

[101]D.B.F.P., Vol 3, no. 397, 3 December 1938.

his opinion, the Commission might as well be dead for all the use it was.[102]

Chamberlain and the Government, meanwhile, continued to put new emphasis on the Anglo-Italian connection. Chamberlain had long sought to separate Italy from Germany. Though after Munich, the wisdom of such a move (or, indeed, the value) was open to question, the Government pressed forward in the face of little Parliamentary opposition.[103] The Anglo-Italian agreement of 16 April 1938, so long on ice, was brought into effect in November.

As 1938 closed, travel was in the air. Ribbentrop had scuttled off to Paris in early December to sign a Pact with the French which was, in form, much like the personal agreement signed by Chamberlain and Hitler at Munich, except that it also included a pledge of mutual respect for frontiers.[104] Meanwhile, Chamberlain and Halifax, hopeful of securing an atmosphere of detente with Mussolini, were packing to go to Italy in early January. Finally, Col. Beck, the Polish Foreign Minister, was preparing for a trip to Berchtesgaden. And

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[102] Ibid.

[103] Rock, Appeasement, pp. 157-8.

[104] Le Livre Jaune: Documents Diplomatiques 1938-39 (France: mprimerie Nationale, 1939), p. 38

those who weren't traveling were talking, save Hitler, who was doing neither, but true to form was acting. In early November, a German diplomat in Paris was murdered by a Polish exile Jew. In Germany this resulted in a well-orchestrated pogrom in which anti-Jewish violence reached new extremes. As the murder had come in the midst of an anti-British press campaign in Germany, attempts were made to link British politicians with the crime.[105]

Ogilvie-Forbes, with more character than Henderson seems able to have ever dredged up, reported to London that the persecution was of a severity unprecedented in modern times. In a particularly prescient statement he said: "[The German Jews] dwell in the grip and at the mercy of a brutal oligarchy, which fiercely resents all humanitarian foreign intervention...[they] are, indeed, not a national but a world problem, which, if neglected, contains the seeds of a terrible vengeance."[106]

Much of Ogilvie-Forbes' feelings seemed to be echoed in the British government. In Medlicotts view, the program destroyed the possibility of any Anglo-German settlements based on correction of

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[105] D.B.F.P., Vol 3, no. 302, 11 November 1938.

[106] D.B.F.P., Vol 3, no. 313, 16 November 1938.

what remained of German grievances.[107]

The pogrom , the German decision on 10 December to increase submarine tonnage to that of the British Commonwealth, an action that was sanctioned by the Anglo-German Naval Agreement of 1935[108], and the virulent anti-British press attacks all combined to harden British opinion. By the year's end, the spirit of Munich, if it had ever existed, was dissipated. The most widely feared question was: where next would Hitler strike?

The military attaché in Berlin felt that the German thrust would be eastward, though he did not think it would include the military occupation of Czechoslovakia to round off recent successes. As regarded the Ukraine and/or Poland, though no direct evidence existed, there were sufficient indications, and nothing to refute them, that Hitler's next thrust would be there.[109] Earlier, in reporting on the build-up of the German Army, the attaché, Col. Mason-MacFarlane, had predicted that the Army would reach a peak of efficiency in September of 1939.[110]

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[107] Medlicott, British For. Pol., p. 196.

[108] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 558.

[109] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 505, 26 December 1938 (Encl. 1).

[110] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 389, 30 November 1938.

The opinion in Whitehall followed that of MacFarlane. The most plausible assessment was that Hitler would begin agitating for an independent Ukraine so as to provide him with raw materials he professed to need to achieve autarchy. Britain could not hope to intervene in such a move.[111] As Ogilvie-Forbes pointed out in early January of 1939:

> If Hitler is determined to reach out for raw materials and to create a system of Central European vassal states in compensation for the lost German colonial empire, nothing in practice can stop him from demanding either complete surrender...or taking forcible action... [Britain] cannot guarantee the status quo in Central and Eastern Europe.[112]

Chamberlain had expressed these fears and a new one, that of a German air strike against Britain before hostilities with France were begun. Daladier assured Chamberlain that France would come to Britain's assistance, but he could not help wonder why Britain did not concentrate on building bombers to carry out retaliatory raids rather than improving anti-aircraft defenses. This he thought would be more impressive to the Germans.[113] Chamberlain seems to have had a tremendous fear of air warfare, especially bombing. He tended to

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[111] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 558.

[112] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 515, 3 January 1939.

[113] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 325, 24 November 1938.

blow out of proportion the possible effects of bombing, as did much of his staff, both civilian and military. In fact, the power of the German air force is consistently overplayed. This is perhaps understandable in view of Britain's insular position, but if it was a real fear, it was also exaggerated, as the post-war strategic bombing surveys would show. Still, Chamberlain had to take these threats into consideration in carrying out his policies between Munich and Prague. As a result, a certain ambivalence crept into his outlook. Efforts had to be made in defense. Yet the long-term goal was still to secure peace and stability. British attempts to rearm brought abuse from Hitler and talk of British war-mongering was heard in Germany. Chamberlain thus faced the dilemma of being unable to appease Hitler without leaving England more defenseless. If he were to take the latter course, public opinion would have probably defeated him. His appeasement policy was dying of reality.

Clearly, the post-Munich period would have been an opportune time for a decisive change in foreign policy. A new initiative would have probably been welcomed by the mass of British opinion. Chamberlain, in words he used to describe Hitler, "missed the bus" in the months after Munich. By ignoring or failing to realize the enormity of the Nazi threat, he projected a sense of security when, on all sides, reality was all too obvious.

The Italian trip in early January is a case in point. Ostensibly its purpose was to promote Anglo-Italian detente. Yet the talks were held without an agenda, and no headway was made in bending the Axis or even of obtaining an Italian guarantee of Czechoslovakia. As Rock puts it: "The conversations were drab and in no way decisive."[114] Chamberlain felt otherwise at the time. He returned to England with Halifax, "...fortified in our belief in Anglo-Italian friendship and in our hopes for the maintenance of peace."[115]

On the one hand Chamberlain wished to see appeasement steadily succeeding. On the other, he had to contend with new reports of an impending invasion of Holland by the Nazis.[116] Thus at Birmingham on January 28th. he told the Jewelers Association, "Let us continue to pursue the path of peace and conciliation, but until we can agree on a general limitation of arms let us continue to make this country strong."[117] The unreality is obvious -- he could not have it both ways, at least vis-a-vis Hitler. Yet either way Hitler would win. Were Britain to seek peace without rearming, Hitler could expand at leisure; were Britain to rearm vigorously, Hitler could justify his

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[114] Rock, Appeasement, p. 168.

[115] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 502, 14 January 1939 (Encl. 6).

[116] D.B.F.P., Vol. 4, no. 18, 26 January 1939.

[117] Rock, Appeasement, p. 189.

policy as self-protective. Again the post-Munich syndrome paralyzed Chamberlain: he could not abandon his outmoded policy, but had to accept its near uselessness. Thus he made partial concessions that satisfied no one and gave fuel to Hitler. What irony there is in the man of peace, confident of the success of appeasement going to Rome and inquiring of Mussolini what Hitler's next aggressive move would be![118]

Yet in spite of the continuing signs of the imminence of Nazi action, Chamberlain clung to his policy. The chance, it seemed, voluntarily to take a new initiative in foreign policy was rapidly passing. In early February, there was a false glimmer of hope that Nazi expansion might be put off. Henderson, back in his Berlin post, began filing his usual optimistic dispatches. In his opinion, nothing in the way of "adventures" was planned in the near future by Hitler. Memel would probably revert to Germany and Danzig too. Czechoslovakia might also be squeezed, but slowly. Henderson "believed in fact that [Hitler] would...like in his heart to return to the fold of comparative respectability."[119]

Meanwhile, back in the real world, plans were nearing completion for the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, the "Czechia" remaining from the Munich agreements. In Britain, the inner advisors

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[118] D.B.F.P., Vol. 3, no. 500, 12 January 1939 (Part 3).

[119] D.B.F.P., Vol. 4, no. 118, 18 February 1939.

of Chamberlain -- against the advice of Halifax and the Foreign Office[120]---were competing with each other to issue optimistic status reports concerning the tranquility of the European scene. Perhaps the height was reached on 10 March 1939 by Sir Samuel Hoare speaking to his constituency, spoke of a possible "golden age" and decried the inevitability of war.[121]

That same day, the British minister in Prague reported that various high government officials had been dismissed, that there had been demonstrations in Bratislava and that there was persistent propaganda for the complete independence of Slovakia under German protection. From Paris, a report was received of increasing military pressure by Germany. And most remarkable of all, a report from Henderson in Berlin was received in which he recognized that, "if Hitler seeks adventure the most obvious form which it would be likely to take would be some coup in Czechoslovakia."[122]

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[120] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 169.

[121] The Times (11 March 1939). Rock, Appeasement, footnotes that Hoares words were later mis-interpreted to be an unconditional prophecy. (p. 193).

[122] D.B.F.P., Vol. 4, nos. 198, 199, 200, 201 and 197 respectively. The last, Henderson's, was minutes in the Foreign Office, by Sir O. Sargent who noted: "Sir N. Henderson here for the first time recognizes the possibility that Herr Hitler may seek adverture..." He then compares the dispatch with Henderson's earlier, optimistic one. (no. 118, above).

The last few days before Hitler's "adventure" in Czechoslovakia were ones of confusion and rumor. Though trouble had been brewing for weeks and, after March 10, had reached crisis proportions, only a few expected a German take-over of Czechoslovakia. British policy remained rooted in appeasement, but at least the government was now belatedly committed to rearmament.

A Foreign Office memorandum on the 13th of March reviewed the crisis in Czechoslovakia and saw little chance of the State remaining viable and still less of British intervention to save it from German aggression, should it come to that.[123] In the long term, Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist at Munich. The events of the next few days would only serve to confirm this.

Yet appeasement as a policy did not tumble down when the Nazis marched through Prague, nor did a search for an alternative to appeasement begin promptly at 8 a.m. on March 16, 1939. Rather appeasement went bankrupt by degrees and, in some quarters, the search for a viable alternative became a function of those degrees of failure. That both the failure of appeasement and the search for a new policy were determined by the dynamism of Nazi expansion seems clear. Yet Chamberlain had to contend with other factors which put their own pressures on foreign policy formulation. Among these could be cited:

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[123] D.B.F.P., Vol. 4, no. 230, 13 March 1939.

the Spanish Civil War, the expansion of Japan in the Far East, and the desire of the Commonwealth nations to avoid a continental involvement. Domestic pressures were constantly with Chamberlain. He found increasing party discontent with the Cabinet's composition, especially after Munich. Farmers were upset about milk and grain supports as well. Additionally, William Rock cites information that shows by-elections afterward Munich tended to present a trend of opposition to Chamberlain.[124] Of prime importance was the inability of Britain's defenses to support a more aggressive foreign polccy.

Consistently, though, Chamberlain sought to look beyond these issues to what he thought was the key to British security: Anglo-German relations. His chosen method to secure lasting, peaceful relations was appeasement. The Prime Minister cannot, in truth, be faulted for having had the courage of his convictions. Still, in all, by blindly following appeasement, he perhaps abandoned all chances of finding alternatives when his policy began to fail. The chapters that follow examine some of the reasons why the government --and, in particular, Chamberlain-- could not or would not find alternatives to appeasement in the armed peace that followed the occupation of Prague.

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[124] Rock, Appeasement, pp. 200-1. He also warns with the words of The Economist (12 November 1938) that: "...the interpretation of isolated election results is an art akin to astrology."

CHAPTER TWO

THE ECLIPSE OF THE FOREIGN OFFICE

"...if only the Foreign Office will play up."

--Neville Chamberlain

When Chamberlain became Prime Minister in 1937, he inherited, among other liabilities, a Foreign Office w[illegible]ed by interwar years of neglect, public suspicion and the flouting of the normal processes of diplomacy by his predecessors, Lloyd George and Ramsay MacDonald.[1] Having fallen victim to the widely held belief that the "secret diplomacy" had been the principal cause of World War I, the Foreign Office in the years after Versailles did little to attempt to dispell this. As a result the Foreign Office was unable to reassert its position as the principal advisor to the Cabinet in matters of foreign policy. Additionally, policies came to be formulated outside the Office and only belatedly (or, in some cases, not at all) transmitted to it.[2] Also, the proliferation of overseas activities in economic and military affairs that came with the war were never successfully coordinated in the

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[1]Gordon A. Craig, "The British Foreign Office from Grey to Austan Chamberlain," pp. 47-8 in Craig and Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats. The authors believe that, "...the greatest disadvantage under which the British diplomatic establishment had to operate...was the persistent suspicion in which it was held by large sections of the British public."

[2]Ibid., p. 16-18.

one logical department, the Foreign Office, thus diluting the traditional Office powers even more. Put simply, the Foreign Office never recovered from the war. As a result, it was a pale shadow of its former self, content to carry on the day-to-day business of international relations, while the formulation of policy drifted, dependent on the interest of the Prime Minister.

It was Stanley Baldwin's disinterest in foreign affairs that first brought Neville Chamberlain into policy making. He participated in foreign policy decisions as early as 1934 and was soon so deeply enmeshed as to be considered as a possible replacement for Sir Samuel Hoare as Foreign Secretary (see Chapter 3).

By 1937, he had a working knowledge of foreign affairs and the Foreign Office. How deep a knowledge is open to question, but the fact remains that he had at least three years exposure to Foreign Office thinking. From all reports, he was determined to make substantive changes in the department.

It is probably not going too far to assert that:

> As early as the spring of 1936, he (Chamberlain) seems to have reached a decision to secure for himself a dominant position in the formulation of British policy.[3]

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[3]Marion L. Kenney, "The Role of the House of Commons in British Foreign Policy During the 1937-8 Session" in Norton Downs, ed., Essays in Honor of Conyers Read (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953), p. 138.

Still he distrusted the officials of the Foreign Office and was ready to circumvent them by his personal diplomacy, intervening, "... more than the usual and natural concern of the Prime Minister with foreign affairs would justify."[4] The initial confrontation was between a confident, aggressive Chamberlain and a Foreign Office that was depleted and without direction.[5] What opposition to appeasement there was in the office was in a handful of its leading personalities--Vansittart, Phipps, Eden and Kennard on the first level, Orme Sargent, Eric Beckett and a few others on the next level.[6] Chamberlain for his part had the backing of Geoffrey Dawson and the Times, his own Cabinet, the "Cliveden Set" and All Souls.[7]

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[4]Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, p. 593.

[5]Feiling, Chamberlain, Chapter XX outlines the Prime Minister's initial moves upon taking office.

[6]Sir Robert Vansittart, Permanent Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1930-38), Chief Diplomatic Advisor to the Government (1938-41).
Sir Eric Phipps, Ambassador to Berlin (1933-37), Ambassador to Paris (1937-40).
Sir Howard Kennard, Ambassador to Warsaw (1934-39).
Sir Orme Sargent, Assistant Undersecretary in the Foreign Office (1933-38), Deputy Undersecretary (1939).
Eric Beckett, Assistant Legal Advisor to the Foreign Office (1936-40).

[7]The role of Geoffrey Dawson and The Times in the formulation of British foreign policy is covered in John Evelyn Wrench, Geoffrey Dawson and Our Times (London: Hutchinson, 1955) and The History of the Times, Vol IV, part 2 (London: Printing House Square, 1952). The "Cliveden Set" was the name given to a group of people, including many government officials--though seldom Chamberlain--favorable to appeasement who participated in weekend gatherings at Cliveden, Lady Astor's country estate. The influence wielded by this group is still debated. As for the role of All Souls, see A. L. Rowse, Appeasement.

As with the political opposition to Chamberlain, those in the Foreign Office who opposed appeasement were divided and in some cases, as we shall see, worked against each other. Chamberlain, on the other hand, had the unity that years of patient work had brought. Too, the Foreign Office had been under attack so long that it was highly vulnerable. Even in 1936, as Eden became Foreign Secretary, the power he and the Office had to formulate policy was highly questionable. "Fleet Street, Whitehall, the fashionable little back streets of Westminister, the Common Room at All Souls and the terraces and library at Cliveden were the places in which foreign policy was perpetually discussed, and those who took part in these endless conversations were convinced that it was their duty and their right to influence up to the hilt and to manipulate if possible all major decisions on foreign affairs."[8]

In the weeks that immediately followed Chamberlain's assumption of the Prime Ministry, the final act in the transfer of the machinery for the formulation of Anglo-German policy from the Foreign Office to No. 10 Downing St. was played out.

As might be expected, Chamberlain set out to reform the Cabinet into something besides a repository for party politicians. The number of peers in ministerial jobs increased, removing the positions from the heat and dust of the House of Commons. As the Cabinet took shape, Chamberlain's ideas became more clear: he would be the chief

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[8] John Connell (pseud.), The Office (London: Wingate, 1958), p. 222.

policy maker and his colleagues would be primarily administrators.[9]

Leo Amery described Chamberlain as "...a general manager who wished to know what his departmental managers were doing, to discuss their problems with them and keep them up to the mark. What is more, he knew his own mind and saw to it that he had his way."[10] It was an attitude that seemed to be acceptable to all the Cabinet, even Eden.[11]

The position of the Foreign Office in the face of Chamberlain's attitude was ironic and eventually humiliating. Its gradual loss of the power to formulate policy in the interwar years had left it with executive duties, an antiquated administrative framework and a seeming incapacity to deal with the faster-moving world of the 1930's. Its hope rested with its leaders, particularly with Eden. But in spite of a superficial initial rapport between the Foreign Secretary and Chamberlain, it soon became evident that tension between the two men was on the rise.[12] Undeterred by any consciousness of his own inadequacy in the field of foreign affairs, Chamberlain set out with determination on the course of appeasement, a course which he had convinced himself was the correct one. If we are to believe Feiling, he hoped to

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[9]Thompson, Anti-appeasers, p. 139.

[10]Leo Amery, My Political Life, Vol III, The Unforgiving Years (London: Hutchinson, 1952), p. 225.

[11]Thompson, Anti-appeasers, pp. 139-40. See also Anthony Eden, Facing the Dictators (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), p. 501 and Templewood, Nine Troubled Years, p. 257.

[12]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 121-124.

win a "breathing space" or "...perhaps win peace too" by approaching the dictators directly and personally discussing grievances.[13] The decision to take this approach meant bypassing normal diplomatic channels and procedures. It also meant "...inevitably and logically rejecting the Foreign Office and the professional diplomatist, and it meant rejecting or suppressing the Foreign Secretary."[14]

Rejecting the Foreign Office could be easily enough done. Rejecting or suppressing the Foreign Secretary would be another matter. Some of Chamberlain's early gains were through errors in the Foreign Office. The first of these occurred just before Chamberlain took office and was to have repercussions to the eve of the war.

Early in 1937, it was decided to replace Sir Eric Phipps, the Ambassador in Berlin. Ironically, the choice of Sir Nevile Henderson was initially made by the Permanent Under-Secretary, Sir Robert Vansittart.[15] Although Connell suggests that Henderson's pro-German views influenced his selection, a logical conclusion, neither Vansittart nor Eden say this. In fact, each outdoes the other in claiming the dubious honor of having settled on the undistinguished Henderson.[16] Whoever

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[13]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 326.

[14]Connell, The Office, p. 247.

[15]Ian Colvin, Vansittart in Office (London: Gollancz, 1965), p. 143.

[16]Ibid. and Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 570.

was responsible, the title of Henderson's memoirs sums up vividly the course of his embassy at Berlin.[17] More important, the anti-German front in the Foreign Office was significantly weakened. The appointment of Henderson was the first step in the Office's loss of any chance to have a say in the handling of Anglo-German relations in the Chamberlain Government.

As Eden so openly puts it:

> It was an international misfortune that we should have been represented in Berlin at this time by a man who, so far from warning the Nazis, was constantly making excuses for them, often in their company.[18]

Phipps went to Paris, a locale that Eden called his "spiritual home."[19] For Henderson, the unlooked-for promotion near the end of an undistinguished career was disastrous, to him as well as to his country. The maneuvering behind Phipps' removal had been extensive. Of particular consequence was a series of talks in 1936 between Thomas Jones and Hitler and Ribbentrop. The talks took place in Munich, where Jones, who was secretary to Baldwin as he had been to Lloyd George, fell under the sway of the Führer and, more important, Ribbentrop. Upon his return to London, Jones took up the subject of Foreign Affairs with Baldwin.

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[17] Nevile Henderson (Sir), Failure of a Mission (New York: Putnam's, 1940).

[18] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 570.

[19] Ibid.

Week-ending with the Prime Minister, Jones relates:

> Before leaving, just before lunch on Sunday morning, I read to the P. M. in the study downstairs this epitome of my various harangues which I had written down in response to a sudden question from him, "What are we to do?"[20]

One of the "harangues" dealt with improving Anglo-German relations by replacing Phipps with "...a man of the D'Abernon or Willington type, unhampered by professional diplomatic tradition, able of course to speak German, and to enter with sympathetic interest into Hitler's aspirations."[21] Ribbentrop had worked well on Jones. Within a year, Phipps was gone. In the interim, Jones continued to press for his removal, at one point claiming that Phipps "...has no 'telephone line' to Hitler, who despises him."[22] Even the appointment of H[illegible]erson didn't seem to please him --perhaps because Jones did not know-- but he accepted without comment Baldwin's statement that the Prime Minister had gone into the matter with Eden and V[illegible]t and "...they could find no one in the Service better than Henderson, 'who was a man and a good shot.'"[23] So in April, 1937, Sir Nevile Henderson became His Majesty's Ambassador to Germany. "Sir Nevile has done his stint in

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[20]Thomas Jones, <u>A Diary with Letters</u> (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1954), p. 207.

[21]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 208.

[22]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 300.

[23]<u>Ibid</u>. p. 314.

South America. He shall have his reward," was Vansittart's comment on the appointment.[24]

Henderson, for his part, felt he "...had been specially selected by Providence with the definite mission of, as I trusted, helping to preserve the peace of the world."[25] Part of his mission, it became quickly apparent, was to circumvent the regular Foreign Office channels ahd ply the Prime Minister direct with letters and visits to give his views on the direction and form British policy towards Germany should take.[26]

Henderson's tenure in Berlin is well-covered by his own memoirs, Failure of a Mission, as well as by Craig and Gilbert in Diplomats (Chapter 17) and L. B. Namier in Europe in Decay (pp. 174-175). The picture that emerges is one of "...a tug-of-war between Henderson and his own Foreign Office rather than...a diplomat anxious to act as 'faithful interpreter' of the instructions received from London."[27] In time, his mission became an obsession [illegible] ought to carry through Chamberlain's policy. Thus, his identification with appeasement quickly became complete and, with it, his estrangement from the Foreign

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[24]Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 146.

[25]Henderson, Failure, p. 3.

[26]Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 146.

[27]Felix Gilbert, "Two British Ambassadors: Perth and Henderson" in Craig and Gilbert, eds., The Diplomats, p. 538.

Office.[28]

For the Foreign Office, 'the wire was down' between London and Berlin. Gradually they were cut off from a policy-making role in Anglo-German relations as the Henderson-Chamberlain connection became the channel of communication.

But Eden and Vansittart could afford to waste little time in agonizing over the decision to send Henderson on his mission. Vansittart, in particular, was in a precarious position. He was not liked by Chamberlain and Eden, sensitive to claims that he was "his master's voice", that is to say, an echo of Vansittart, began to entertain the idea of replacing Sir Robert as Permanent Under-Secretary.[29] Chamberlain apparently put some pressure on Eden and Eden himself was seeking someone more "...patient, quiet in his manner, more of a civil servant than...Vansittart."[30]

As with the Phipps-Henderson business, the removal of Vansittart had deeper origins. In both cases the changes were ostensibly internal Foreign Office matters. But upon closer examination, the hands of the

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[28] Ibid., p. 552. But Gilbert reminds us that, "a critical or objective approach would have made the reasons for his appointment futile; his mission would have been even less than the fulfillment of a routine function and would, indeed, have destroyed the foundations of the Chamberlain policy to which he was fully committed."

[29] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 590.

[30] Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 170.

appeasers appear. In the case of Vansittart's removal, an approach was made through Eden's newly-appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary, Mr. J. P. L. Thomas, in late May, 1937 that revealed the depth of antipathy felt towards Vansittart by the Chamberlainites.

Sir Horace Wilson, the Industrial Adviser to the Prime Minister, and Sir Warren Fisher, the head of the Civil Service, told Thomas that they "...were thoroughly dissatisfied with the Foreign Office and especially with Vansittart."[31] Fisher and Wilson went on to call Vansittart an alarmist and claimed he hampered "...all attempts of the Government to make friendly contact with the dictator states and that his influence over Anthony Eden was very great."[32] They said they had backed Thomas' appointment as Parliamentary Private Secretary in hopes of using him "...to build a bridge between 10 Downing Street and the Foreign Office and to create understanding between the two Departments. This might lessen the damage which had been done by the Foreign Office in general and by Vansittart in particular."[33]

Thomas refused to play up, replying that it seemed to him that Wilson and Fisher expected him to work behind the back of Eden. The next day, Wilson tried to back off to Thomas:

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[31] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 504.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid. And, incidentally, of course, help to strait-jacket the Foreign Secretary.

> ...Sir Horace spoke to me again and said that Sir Warren was rather impulsive and that he did not think that I had obtained a clear view of what was wanted of me. I replied that the view was only too clear.[34]

So the attempt to place an informer in the Foreign Office foiled.[35] But the implication was obvious: Vansittart was an obstacle to Chamberlain's policy and a thorn in the side of the government. He was thus in trouble from within and without. Meanwhile, as Vansittart's influence was waning, Chamberlain openly began bypassing Eden.

Perhaps most obvious was the dispatching of Halifax (under the guise of attending a hunting exhibition) to Berlin and Berchtesgaden in November of 1937 to sound out the German leaders. Yet, at first even Eden was not strongly against the move. When he first heard of the proposal, Eden's recollection was that, "...I was not eager, but saw no sufficient reason to oppose it."[36]

As it happened, the visit gained more significance in the public eye than was intended, the belief rapidly gaining currency that Halifax's trip signaled a fundamental change in British policy. Eden was aware of Chamberlain's desire for personal contacts and noted that the Prime Minister "...had the idea that the Foreign Office was unduly hostile

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[34] Ibid., p. 505.

[35] Neville Thompson states "...there is no evidence to suppose that Chamberlain even knew what Wilson was doing, though his advisers must have thought they were acting in the Prime Minister's interests." (Anti-appeasers, p. 142.)

[36] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 577.

to Hitler's Germany and that its methods were too slow for modern times."[37]

He made an approach to Chamberlain in the height of the tempest that had brewed up over the proposed Halifax visit, but stopped short of suggesting the visit be cancelled. At the same time his Parliamentary Private Secretary, J. P. L. Thomas, extracted from Wilson an admission that, although there was no question of jealously between Chamberlain and Eden, the former did feel his policy of personal diplomacy with the dictators was correct.[38]

Halifax's visit produced more light than heat while having the overall effect of weakening Eden's position in the Foreign Office, a fact later noted by the Foreign Secretary.[39] The talks themselves merely emphasized the wide gulf that separated British desires from German ambitions without proposing solutions.

Meanwhile, Vansittart now seemed aware of plans to remove him. When his Secretary, Clifford Norton, left to take up the post of Counsellor in Warsaw in November, 1937, Sir Robert confided to him:

> They are trying to get rid of me. They want a Permanent Head whom they can push around. They know I am quite independent of them. But I won't go.[40]

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[37] Ibid., p. 578.

[38] Ibid., p. 582.

[39] Ibid., p. 585.

[40] Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 170.

But go he did in January, 1938. "It wasn't that I had lost confidence in him," Eden later commented. "The fact is that Van had been a long time in his post and he was becoming ineffective--no longer getting along with the other heads of Departments in Whitehall."[41] Too, a new face stilled the murmurs of "his master's voice" often heard, we are told, when Eden sought to speak strongly on Anglo-German issues.[42]

Vansittart had earlier been offered Paris, where Eden felt he could "...exercise an exceptional influence," but had turned it down. Now he was "kicked upstairs," with Chamberlain's agreement, to a newly created office: Chief Diplomatic Advisor to His Majesty's Government. Supposedly the post was parallel to that of Sir Horace Wilson, who was Chief Industrial Advisor,[43] but in truth it was honorific and little else. Wilson was a member of the inner group of Chamberlain's advisors and constantly accumulated power, while Vansittart had the ground cut out from under him.

How much power Vansittart had lost became evident in late January when an Eden memorandum defined Vansittart's status and activities. Policy papers would go from the new Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Sir Alexander Cadogan, to Eden. Papers upon which

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[41] Ibid., p. 149.

[42] Ibid., p. 148.

[43] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 591.

the Secretary desired Vansittart's advice would be sent him by Eden. Generally speaking, he would no longer see papers until after action had been taken.[44]

Eden's triumph--if it may be called that--in freeing himself from Vansittart was short-lived. Even before the transfer Chamberlain was trying to bring Eden around to a supposedly more realistic foreign policy, especially towards Italy. He also tried to further circumvent the Foreign Secretary by taking into his confidence two former--and previous discredited--Foreign Secretaries, Sir John Simon and Sir Samuel Hoare. With the later addition of Lord Halifax, this small group came to dominate foreign policy formulation. This "Big Four"[45] plus Sir Horace Wilson cut across cabinet and parliamentary lines in their search for accommodations with the dictators.

Eden received at least one warning that he and Chamberlain were on a collision course. On February 7, 1938, Vansittart came to tell him that:

> ...from now on foreign affairs would be run by the Prime Minister, with the help of a small committee, of which the spokesman naturally would be a member, and that if I myself did not fall in with their wishes, I should follow Vansittart soon.[46]

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[44] Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 174.

[45] Henderson, Failure, chapter XXV, for details of how the "Big Four" was formed.

[46] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 654.

Eden confronted Chamberlain with the story. The Prime Minister reacted with astonishment, but Eden was not reassured.[47] He had good reason not to be, as the divergencies in the two men's thinking over the Italian question had come into the open some weeks before. When the issue of how to handle talks with Italy intensified, the gulf between the two men became more apparent. Eden came to believe that the Prime Minister was displaying immoderate haste in approaching Mussolini, while Chamberlain felt that the Foreign Secretary was obstructing his efforts to open discussions.[48]

By mid-February, the two men had reached a crossroads and the split emerged with suddenness and force. Chamberlain was determined to open up conversations with Mussolini. When the issue came to the Cabinet, the Prime Minister made it clear that they had to choose between him or the Foreign Secretary. Eden went. The aftermath was not the crisis some had expected (see Chapter 1) and Chamberlain quickly moved one of the "Big Four", Lord Halifax, into the Foreign Ministry.
The balance sheet of <u>Anschluss</u> showed Chamberlain had in fact taken the Foreign Office, at least at one level. But it must be noted that in the case of Sir Eric Phipps and Sir Robert Vansittart, the decisions were clearly internal Foreign Office ones. It is too much to accuse a mysterious "they" of engineering Vansittart's removal, as does Rowse.[49]

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[47] Colvin, <u>Vansittart in Office</u>, p. 172.

[48] Rock, <u>Chamberlain</u>, p. 122.

[49] Rowse, <u>Appeasement</u>, p. 66.

Clearly, Phipps' transfer was in part motivated by Thomas Jones' memorandum after the latter's visit to Hitler in 1936, but almost a year elapsed before the transfer was effected, giving it the suggestion of being in fact a more routine than cabalistic transfer. In both cases, the evidence seems to suggest that the moves were engineered inside the Foreign Office, rather than directly by Chamberlain.[50]

What of the replacements? As we have noted, Eden and Vansittart fall over themselves as apologists for having assigned Henderson to Berlin. It would seem that this was a windfall for Chamberlain, perhaps a better choice than he himself might have made.

Vansittart's replacement was Sir Alexander Cadogan, whose recently published diaries[51] cast new light on the man who was for the critical years between 1938 and 1945 the senior civil servant in the Foreign Office. (One could argue that Vansittart was, in fact, senior, but Cadogan held the post with power). Far from being "...colourless and ineffective,"[52] Cadogan appears to have, under the cloak of bureaucratic neutrality, operated effectively in the somewhat confused borderline between official authority and ministerial initiative. Rowse contends that Cadogan was promoted "...to run the Foreign Office in the

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[50]Indeed in the case of Phipps, Chamberlain was not yet Prime Minister, though he was certainly tied up in Foreign Affairs.

[51]David Dilks, ed., The Cadogan Diaries (New York: Putnams, 1972).

[52]O'Connell, The Office, p. 255.

interest of Chamberlain's disastrous course."[53] Yet the truth of the matter seems to be that he and Eden worked closely together and that he took Eden's side in the controversy that led to the Foreign Secretary's resignation.[54]

If we are to believe his diaries, Cadogan was as much an anti-appeaser as Vansittart, though less of an anti-Nazi. In fact, Cadogan went so far as, in the midst of the war, to blame Eden for appeasement:

> Does A. (Anthony Eden) realize that he is responsible for the great and tragic 'appeasement'--not reacting to German occupation of the Rhineland in 1936? How lucky he is--no one has ever mentioned that! and that was the turning point.[55]

What emerges from the diaries is a man who belonged to neither Chamberlain, Eden or Halifax. At first he leaned towards Chamberlain's policies, but in time began to recognize the bankruptcy of appeasement. As early as February, 1938, he could say half in jest, "Brave words butter no parsnips."[56] By 1939, though, the mood and words grew more grim. At the occupation of Prague, he called Chamberlain's initial decision to continue appeasement "fatal".[57]

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[53] Rowse, Appeasement, pp. 66-7.

[54] Eden, Facing the Dictators, p. 666 and p. 671.

[55] Dilks, The Cadogan Diaries, p. 415.

[56] Ibid., p. 55.

[57] Ibid., p. 157.

In the period just before Prague, he sought to minimize the glowing accounts emanating from Nevile Henderson. Henderson had gone so far as to say that, treated rightly, Hitler would become gradually more pacific. Cadogan meanwhile was commenting on having "...the profoundest suspicions of Hitler's intentions."[58]

As for Lord Halifax, Eden's replacement, his sympathies with Chamberlain are amply recorded.[59] Yet he was in the long run the most flexible of the "Big Four." He gradually moved away from Chamberlain's policy line. Even Rowse must admit: "To do Halifax justice, it seems that his approach to Munich was always more sceptical than that of the other three."[60]

Halifax had not wished to become Foreign Secretary and there is, perhaps because of this, an attitude towards Chamberlain's policy best described as pragmatic and tentative. He seems to have never been convinced as was Hoare or Simon that appeasement was the correct course. Too, he seems to have given Cadogan a great degree of latitude for action, reserving for himself actions on only the most important papers. If a judgement can be made by his minutes on Foreign Office documents, he had by 1939 unofficially rejected appeasement. One thing is clear:

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[58] Ibid., p. 152.

[59] Edward F. L. Wood (First Earl of Halifax), Fulness of Days (New York: Dodd, 1957), ch. X.

[60] Rowse, Appeasement, p. 85.

that his influence upon Foreign Office planning is far less evident than that of his predecessor. He seems to have preferred a more low-key role, leaving the whip hand to Cadogan. Thus it was Cadogan who was the buffer between the professional Foreign Office personnel and the political leadership. From above he was asked to implement appeasement, while from below a much different line was espoused.

The staff of the Foreign Office consistently opposed appeasement, consistently provided alternatives and consistently pushed for rearmament. The evaluations of the German threat were generally sound.[61] If we are to believe Lammers, fully two-thirds of the more prominent anti-appeasers were associated with the Foreign Office.[62] Yet their power was limited by their positions. Only Vansittart among the most commonly named opponents of appeasement in the Foreign Office was even in a policy-making position and his fate has been described above.

As for the other professional Foreign Office staff, their opposition was expressed mostly in the minutes to various reports, in particular those of Henderson from Berlin. A typical document, concerning

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[61] Though there seemed to be a widespread feeling that Germany was on the verge of economic ruin. F.O. C3938/3/18, 5 March 1939 and F. O. C2612/15/8, 3 March 1939 are two among many Foreign Office reports that predicted Germany's impending economic collapse and a role for Britain in rebuilding the German economy in return for Hitler's agreement to moderate his aims.

[62] Donald Lammers, Explaining Munich, pp. 52-2.

Anglo-German affairs would take about seven to ten days to circulate to the Foreign Secretary. From there it might be shown to Chamberlain, and, always afterwards, to Vansittart and R. A. Butler, the man who was, after Chamberlain, most called upon to defend Government policy in Parliament.

The comments of William Strang, the Central Area head, and Orme Sargent were consistently anti-appeasement, as were those of Vansittart. Henderson seems to have gotten consistent short shrift from all three and, from time to time, Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Parliamentary Undersecretary, and even the generally restrained Cadogan joined in.[63]

On Foreign Office position papers going the other way, as might be expected, strong stands were diluted as the paper percolated upwards. The anti-appeasement stand of the Foreign Office staff thus was rendered impotent by the inability to air their view beyond their own circle. There seems to be, in the docum[illegible], a tacit agreement of acceptance of this fact and while some of the proposals advocated by the Foreign Office staff bordered on what might be called "cuckoo-cloud land," there was little reality of their being accepted.

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[63] It should be noted that in all probability Vansittart's comments were seldom read by Halifax, as papers were seen by Sir Robert after the Foreign Secretary. Still, one cannot pass by such comments as Vansittart's upon Henderson's March 3, 1939 report predicting a period of relative calm in Czechoslovakia. Upon reading this a week or so later when the report reached him, Vansittart commented acidly that, "...this dispatch may stand as a monument to Sir N. Henderson's political foresight (F. O. C2533/8/18, 3 March 1939). Little wonder that as late as July 1939, the Nazis were still agitating for Vansittart's removal (F.O. C10165/15/18, 12 July 1939).

At the outset of this chapter it was suggested that it was probably not going too far to say that as early as Spring, 1936 Chamberlain had reached a decision to secure for himself a dominant position in foreign policy formulation. In the implementation of this decision, the role of the Foreign Office seems to have been one of acquiescence. The political leadership imposed upon the Foreign Office after Eden's resignation seems to have striven to put the best face on things until Prague, in spite of the wealth of lower-level information indicating the extent of the Nazi threat. Cadogan, for all his private railings against the dangers of Hitlerism, fulfilled exactly the role of a civil servant: he sought to carry out a policy as best as possible without allowing his personal scruples to interfere. His private feelings remained for his diary. Internal politics within the Office, especially the Phipps transfer and the Vansittart "promotion", muted the most anti-Nazi voices.

These factors, combined with Chamberlain's ernest desire to seek solutions in personal diplomacy (see Chapter 3) and his reliance on his inner cabinet, relegated the Foreign Office professionals to the role of observers in the formulation of British foreign policy, particularly Anglo-German policy.

Vansittart once wrote that "telling the truth about Germany has always been an unpopular exercise in England; it involves immediate

mental, and ultimate physical discomfort."[64] To its credit, the Foreign Office made genuine efforts to tell the truth about Germany. Its ability to convince was slight because of the factors mentioned above, compounded by the general suspicion of the diplomatic establishment that remained in the minds of large sections of the British public.

Thus, the Office was not credible and, as has been shown, there was considerable internal maneuvering that precluded a more agressive anti-German approach. It was sufficient for Chamberlain to install a compliant political leadership in the Foreign Office in order to wrest away control of Anglo-German policy-making. Once Eden was eliminated, control was assured.[65] The bureaucratic neutrality of Cadogan served to insulate Halifax and, more important, Chamberlain from the Foreign Office opposition to appeasement.

What emerges in the conflict between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office from 1938 is a political takeover by Chamberlain with the concomitant transfer of the all-important question of Anglo-German relations from the official to the ministerial side of the Foreign Office. Subsequent to Eden's departure, the lower levels of the Foreign Office seemed content to oppose Germany amongst themselves,

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[64]Colvin, Vansittart in Office, p. 346.

[65]A. L. Rowse quotes Eric Beckett as having said of Eden's departure: "It isn't only Eden, it's the Foreign Office that has been bumped off." (Appeasement, pp. 69-70.)

telling the truth to each other and giving vent to their rage in their diaries. Questions of degree aside, Chamberlain had neutralized still another sector of opposition to his policies.

CHAPTER THREE

CHAMBERLAIN REVISITED: THE MAN AS DIPLOMAT

> "The art of diplomacy, as that of water-colours, has suffered much from the fascination which it exercises upon the amateur."
>
> --Harold Nicolson

Of Neville Chamberlain, Lloyd George was once quoted as having said, "The worst thing that Neville Chamberlain did was to meet Hitler and let Hitler see him."[1] As with so many offhand statements about Chamberlain, it has enough truth to obscure its basic fallacy. Chamberlain has suffered much from the epigrammatist, and what seems to have emerged is a picture of the master appeaser gleefully selling out Europe until there was nothing left but war. His two biographers, while sympathetic, have not been able to dispel this picture.[2] It could be said, with some degree of accuracy, that Chamberlain has been so long under the cloud of adverse public opinion as to raise serious doubts that he and his policies will ever get a fair hearing.

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[1] Quoted in Frank Owen, Tempestuous Journey (London: Hutchinson, 1954), p. 744.

[2] The two official biographers, having access to his private papers, have been Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain and Iain Macleod, Neville Chamberlain.

An American biographer has recently sought to provide a useful summary of Chamberlain's life, and in doing so saw fit to divide his book into two sections, one dealing with the pre-Prime Ministerial years and the other with the controversial few years that followed his May, 1937 assumption of power.[3] In doing so he has provided an unwitting guide to the contemporary historians' opinion of Chamberlain --all that went before 1937, 68 years of his life, counts for less than half in any analysis. Munich and appeasement have come to so overshadow the solid domestic achievements of his life as to obscure them almost completely.

But if this chapter proposes to examine Neville Chamberlain as a diplomat, of what importance, it might be asked, are his domestic achievements? Simply this: that in his life before 1937, Neville Chamberlain developed certain psychological belief patterns that carried over to his tenure as Prime Minister. It is proposed that these psychological belief patterns, a composite of early failures and successes, formed his outlook and his patterns of negotiation in his dealings with Hitler. That indeed he should have expected success seems clear. That he did not gain success seems clear, too, from a twenty-five year vantage point. That he did not realize his failures is not so clear, a still lively debating point. Was he stupid, naive, willful or some combination of the three?

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[3]Rock, Neville Chamberlain.

This chapter will attempt to show that he was, in reality, none of the above, but rather a prisoner of a psychological belief system so carefully constructed as to allow no room to explore alternatives. Once locked-in on appeasement, a logical product of his belief system, he seemed unable to realize the deviousness of the dictators he faced. He assumed their goals to be not unlike his own until it was too late to change reality. It was not done from stupidity any more than much present day disarmament negotiation, which has assumed that the Soviets desire nothing more than peace and capital expansion.[4] In the field of history, one writer may view the past determined by cultural development while another may see it as economic change -- are they both right or both wrong? We are all to some degree or another prisoners within our psychological belief systems; the ability to objectively synthesize is seldom found until well after the fact. It is given to the few to grasp "this sorry scheme of things entire."

Thus, Neville Chamberlain as a diplomat was truly a product of his early years, in an age that, by own admission, he would have preferred to have seen remain Victorian. "The late Victorian age for me,"

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[4]Contemporary work on the question of psychological belief systems and "mirror-image" diplomacy has been done by Colin Gray who, in discussing SALT, has said: "In devising schema of deterrent relationships, in composing a deterrent calculus, in the area of bargaining-committment games, in speculating over viable rules and thresholds for war limitations, a good number of leading civilian strategists created a mirror-image opponent." ("What RAND Hath Wrought", Foreign Policy, vol. 4, Fall, 1971, p. 111.)

he once said, "was when new discoveries in science were thrilling the world, and the centre of Africa was still painted yellow on the map."[5]

In many ways he remained Victorian even when confronted with the brusque realities of the 20th Century. Here, he was not alone. Perhaps one of the principal failings of English foreign policy in the interwar years was its basis in 19th century ideas, ideals which had less and less value in the face of the dynamism of Nazism and Fascism.

Still, if he preferred the 19th century, Chamberlain was not unaware of the 20th century. His takeover of the Foreign Office in 1938 was as thorough and businesslike as that engineered in Germany by Adolf Hitler. On the credit side of the record, he combined the vast energy of the late Victorian age with the 20th century desire for social change and created, as Minister of Health, far-reaching programs. At Health, he was progressive and decisive, leaving behind an excellent record of legislative and administrative reforms.[6] Later at the Treasury, he was less radical, but no less successful than he had been as Minister of Health. In truth, his record as Prime Minister, with the obvious exception of Foreign policy, would put him among the better British Prime Ministers.

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[5]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 1.

[6]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 208.

What manner of man was this, then, who created so much only to see "...everything that I have worked for, everything that I have hoped for, everything that I have believed in during my public life, ...crashed into ruins."?[7]

For the influences that guided his early days we must, of necessity, rely on Feiling and MacLeod. In both biographies there appears little in Chamberlain's early life which would indicate a desire for the outgoing political life. Indeed the opposite picture seems to emerge.

> Neville matured in a circle of sisters and cousins which was inclusive and self-sufficient...outside the group, he was uncomfortable and unsociable, or as he himself later said, bedeviled [illegible] accursed shyness'--which in fact he never fully overcame.[8]

As a young man he claimed little interest in politics--"No, I don't take any interest in politics, and never shall."[9] --and found school, at least the upper grades, difficult and lonely.

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[7]Parl. Debates, vol. 351, col. 292, 3 September 1939.

[8]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 20-1. Macleod attributes this clannishness to the Chamberlain religious background of Unitarianism (Chamberlain, p. 20-1).

[9]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 10.

After school and a trip through the Mediterranean and Middle East countries, there came a six year adventure in the Bahamas in an attempt to grow sisal. The project began with high hopes, only to suffer misfortune until, in 1897, it was abandoned. One thing was clear: the failure of the enterprise was not due to a lack of energy on Chamberlain's part. He singlehandedly built up the operation, no small feat, and served as manager, overseer, amateur doctor, magistrate and social missionary to his mostly illiterate workers. Still it remained that the collapse of the Andros Fibre Company had meant a loss of £50,000 for Neville's father as well as the stigma of an unwise venture. But in sum, both biographers agree that the Andros adventure made Neville Chamberlain. MacLeod points out that the Andros Fibre Company may have failed, but Chamberlain did not. "Andros strengthened him, and he left a man instead of a youth, wiser, more self-reliant but also more tolerant."[10] The more moving statement comes, though, from Feiling:

> Initiative had become a habit, for with him alone it had rested, and confidence in his own judgement...Sensitive and self-dependent, self-respecting and sanguine, he had gone out to Andros, and the same, doubly, he returned.[11]

Yet, we are warned:

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[10] MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 36.

[11] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 30.

> Powerfully we must conclude, Andros over-sharpened some sides of his virtue, giving him a dislike of anything untidy, over-darkening for him the incompetence of humanity *en masse*, and imparting to his energy an unreflective turn, so that a day without incessant action seemed a day wasted.[12]

Confident, energetic, wise, duty-bound and filled with other sundry virtues, he returned to Birmingham. Chamberlain was twenty-eight and had yet to enter public life either as a businessman or a politician. For the next fourteen years, though, he would be caught up in the explosion that was the city of Birmingham. Behind lay adventures tried and failed and vast loneliness that engenders a sometimes singlemindedness which was to so mark Chamberlain's Foreign Policy. William Rock cannot pass by the temptation to compare the Andros Island adventure with Chamberlain's later adventures in British foreign policy.[13] Certainly the parallels are there: enthusiastic pursuit of a goal, courage and tenacity and a rare ability to administer. Too, the results bore much the same stamp: an ultimate failure that should have been admitted earlier, in both cases to cut his losses. Yet it is beyond this, in the loneliness of a childhood, that might be

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[12]*Ibid*. Perhaps the desire for incessant activity can explain in part his disdain for the Foreign Office and what remained of the "old Diplomacy". The tidiness, were it precision, might have been a help in personal diplomacy, but the lack of patience weighed heavily against him. (See Harold Nicolson, *Diplomacy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), ch. V, for a well presented description of the ideal diplomatist.)

[13]Rock, *Chamberlain*, p. 30.

found even more interesting parallels: his loneliness as a child causing him to seek answers within himself, a trait that, when Prime Minister, gave rise to talk of coldness and aloofness. On the other hand, his pleasure of being within the family circle later is reflected in the warmth he would show to his closest associates. And, above all, there was the deeply imbued belief in duty, duty to family and duty to "the people." From here, we must trace two men, with the more stern visage always dominant.

With family connections, initial business opportunities came easily. First director of a copper works, Chamberlain soon became the owner of Hoskins and Son, a firm whose line of business was the construction of metal cabin berths for ships. It was a small company, employing at its peak 200, though usually about half that. But it was a steady, if not spectacular, financial success. Chamberlain was successful and enjoyed "...the average life of a young public-spirited businessman."[14] He became increasingly interested in social reform and introduced a variety of measures to alleviate the problems of his workers --a compensation scheme for injured workers, pension plan and even went so far as to recognize the trade union movement amongst his workers.[15]

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[14] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 32.

[15] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 33.

With this interest and his business success, Chamberlain found himself drawn into what we today would call civic work. By 1904, he was active on fourteen committees, two of which portended the future: dealings with hospitals and membership in the debating society. Yet, in the main, even his biographers have had a hard time with the years to 1914, for Chamberlain "...would not commit introspection to paper; and when he once did so, during an unhappy time, later cut out the page."[16]

Still the bare bones of his life can be reconstructed: several overseas trips including India, Burma, and Dalmatia, a marriage in 1911 at the age of 42, and flirtation on the outskirts of politics. Finally, in the summer of 1911, he was elected to the 120-man City Council of Birmingham. Within three years he became an alderman, and within four, Lord Mayor --a rapid progress in any event, especially so for his professed disinterest in politics.

The coming of the World War suspended normal life for Birmingham and its Lord Mayor. Having put Birmingham on a war-footing, he found himself tapped by Lloyd George in 1916 to serve as Director of National Service. The jump from first citizen of Birmingham to national politics was a long one, into the unknown and fraught with difficulties. His biographers credit Chamberlain with the desire to serve, especially in war, but in the longer view, his acceptance almost has the appear-

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[16]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 43.

ance of a whim. Yet, given Chamberlain's earlier life, action based on a whim would seem most unlikely. MacLeod reminds us that, "Administration always interested him far more than the mere game of politics."[17] And it was in administration that his abilities were most concentrated. On paper --what there was of it-- the post of Director of National Service was an administrative job. Perhaps this more than anything led Chamberlain to accept.

For whatever reason, accept he did and fail he did. There were errors on both sides. The Department had no charter and it seemed that a definition of its duties would emerge, if at all, only as it pursued its work.[18] What functions the Department would have, it became quickly evident, would cut a swath through the responsibilities of other Ministries. Thus, the fledgling Department with its neophyte leader was almost guaranteed a cool welcome from the Whitehall family circle.

On Chamberlain's part, he failed to press Lloyd George for a concise charter in the first weeks. When he later did broach the question, it was too late and too weak. Too, he surrounded himself with a staff nucleus drawn from Birmingham acquaintances, most of whom had little experience in national politics.

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[17]MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 131.

[18]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 46.

Chamberlain groped through the first months of his appointment, but by midsummer he began to think in terms of possible defeat. In July, 1917, he wrote:

> Now I am in a position that reminds of the Bahamas when the plants didn't grow. With all the Departments against me and a chief who won't help, I see no chance of success.[19]

By August, he was determined to resign and did so on the eighth. It had been a costly tenure, both in personal and political terms. Politically, it marked the beginnings of a deep and sometimes acrimonious rift with Lloyd George. Personally, it was a failure not unlike the Bahamas: total, without compensation.

He returned to Birmingham and almost immediately decided --at nearly 50-- to stand for Parliament. As might be expected, he won handily and entered Parliament in 1919, at a later age in life than any man who ever became Prime Minister.[20] Once in Parliament, his name aided in his not being relegated the very backmost of the back-benches. For the next few years, he followed a path often before trod, slowly upward through committee work, rumors of an under-secretaryship and finally in 1922, the Cabinet-rank post of Post-master-General.[21] He also became a Privy-Councillor.

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[19]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 71.

[20]Rock, Chamberlain, p. 51.

[21]Though this was a Cabinet-level office, it was normally not in Cabinet.

Success began to come in other ways, too. Except for the London Times and the local Birmingham papers, Chamberlain was unknown to the general public. His tenure as Director of National Services had been too short to establish a public image-- to his ultimate good. But now he began to receive notice in popular magazines. As Minister of Health, and, shortly later, Chancellor of the Exchequer in the first Baldwin Government (1923), he moved with confidence and ability. In the second Baldwin government (1924-29), he resumed his duties as Minister of Health. His picture appeared in The American Review of Reviews in December, 1924 and in 1925 he wrote an article for the American City magazine.[22]

More important, Chamberlain gained valuable insight into the party politics that he had for so long avoided. Still, he remained to some an enigma. Even his best biographer, Feiling, feels constrained to devote a chapter at this point in an attempt "...to paint him as he was."[23] Feiling is not decidedly successful and perhaps the most illuminating portion of the chapter is a portrait photograph of Mrs. Chamberlain, a woman of aristocratic beauty that is only occasionally found. We are told that Chamberlain became "...the

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[22]"Greatest Need of Local Government", American City, Vol. 33, August, 1925, pp. 125-7.

[23]Feiling, Chamberlain, ch. X, pp. 118-25.

most self-contained and self-reliant of men."[24] Indeed, perhaps as an autocrat, dogged, but a first-class loser, "...a leader who fought better, and only, for causes, not for himself."[25]

During a remarkably successful tenure as Minister of Health, he had had ample opportunity to show his administrative talents. Too, he had overcome his distaste for politics to the point where he began to emerge as an important influence in the Conservative Party. Yet there was no Chamberlain "clique," no band of devoted followers; he remained lone and alone.

In opposition after the Conservative defeat in 1929, Chamberlain became active in party reorganization and reconstruction. He served first as chairman of the Conservative Party Research Department and then as party chairman. What emerged in the period between 1929 and 1931 was a party organization that became increasingly sensitive to Chamberlain's touch. The payoff of this was to come in 1935, when elections brought forth a Parliament wh[illegible]vative membership owed much to Chamberlain. But in 1931, this election was four years away, and now the real and critical problem of the Depression had to be faced.

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[24] Ibid., p. 120.

[25] Ibid., p. 124.

Chamberlain participated in the talks that led to the formation of the National Government in August, 1931. He took the portfolio of Minister of Health in a Government whose one purpose was to meet the national emergency.

The Government moved with surprising alacrity, but events overtook measures and it became quickly apparent that it could only work with public approval.[26] After long, heated debate within the party--especially on the tariff issue-- a National Election was held in October, 1931. The results, in view of the emergency, provided a mandate for the National Government and its policies.

Chamberlain went to the Treasury in a Government whose whole history had been called, "...one long diminuendo."[27] Yet the same author admits that the best personality in the government was Neville Chamberlain.

> It was he who largely directed its domestic policies and more and more dominated the Cabinet. In the day of the lesser men he was outstanding, with his clear, civil-service mind, high principles, narrow but progressive views, great energy and self-confidence.[28]

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[26] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 84.

[27] C. L. Mowat, Britain Between the Wars. 1918-1940 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1955), p. 414.

[28] Ibid.

Chamberlain began to emerge as a strong man. Behind him was his thorough organization of the Conservative Party machinery, ahead lay a paralysis of foreign policy whose solution was to increasingly tempt the growing power of Chamberlain. Clearly the mood of the twenties was gone. The National Government was a retreat from internationalism to concern with internal problems and domestic solutions. At first, the government was in harmony with the national mood, but by 1935 the mood had changed, although the government had not. Throughout, Chamberlain gained in power. "No aspect of politics could lie quite outside the purview of a man who controlled both the nation's purse strings and the Party's thinking machine."[29]

By 1935, he could say, "As you will see I have become a sort of Acting Prime Minister --only without the actual power of the Prime Minister."[30] If he hadn't the power of a Prime Minister, he was nonetheless formidable, so much so that in 1934 he began to deal in that long-stagnant bog of foreign policy. His plan for "limited liability" was defeated by what MacLeod calls, "...the stonewalling of the Chiefs of Staff and a formidable memorandum from Hankey, the Secretary

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[29] MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 163. "The Party thinking machine" referred to the C. C. C. (Cabinet Conservative Committee), a high level group that met more or less regularly to discuss Government matters from a Party viewpoint.

[30] Ibid., p. 165.

of the Cabinet."[31]

What Chamberlain had proposed was, in essence, an international police force. The plan,

> ...in the barest outline...consists of a mutual guarantee by, say, Germany, France, Italy, UK, Poland, and Czecho-Slovakia, under which, on breach of the convention, each of the other signatories undertakes to put a limited specified force at the disposal of the joint body.[32]

Thus, in 1934, Chamberlain was anything but hostile to the idea of collective security. Yet one must pause and wonder, how had Chamberlain suddenly become an expert on foreign policy? What conversion had occurred, what expertise gained, to bring the Lord Mayor turned politician into the labyrinth of foreign policy? The answer seems to be not in his experience, of which there was little, but in the failings of Baldwin and, in particula[illegible] John Simon. The ineffectiveness of Simon opened the way for Chamberlain who "...could not contemplate a problem without trying to solve it."[33]

Chamberlain came to power through the abdication of misuse of it by others in the Cabinet. Not that he was without talent: we have seen the contrary. The hesitating and irresolute attitudes of a Simon could only prove a goal for the action-oriented Chamberlain. At the

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[31] Ibid., p. 166.

[32] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 251.

[33] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 93.

same time, such wavering probably increased his distrust of his colleagues and cannot but have helped influence his later tendency toward personal diplomacy.

Ironically, in 1934, Chamberlain was perhaps in the forefront of those warning of the German potential and advocating British rearmament.[34] Increasingly he was called to comment upon foreign policy and, as Simon's inadequacies became all too apparent, Chamberlain came under consideration for the Foreign Office. Apparently, at one point the choice seemed so logical that even Winston Churchill supported it.[35]

In late 1934, the offer of the Foreign Ministry was discreetly made to him. He turned it down for a variety of reasons, the most important being the amount of unfinished work at the Exchequer and Chamberlain's desire to finish the job himself. For the next years he would remain Chancellor, gradually expanding his power base and slipping into the role of heir apparent.

While he watched and waited, two major issues occupied British foreign policy: German rearmament and Abyssinia. The British reaction to both actions was curious. On the one hand, she continued

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[34] Ibid.

[35] MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 179.

to rearm, at least on paper;[36] on the other, Britain sought to make a deal with Hitler. The Anglo-German naval agreement of June, 1935 was the deal. What role Chamberlain had in formulation of the agreement is not stated, but his role as chief architect of the Defense White Papers of 1936 and 1937 seems to show that he was heavily involved in Defense as well as Foreign Affairs matters.[37]

As it became more apparent that he would in all probability succeed Baldwin as Prime Minister, foreign policy began to attract more and more of his attention. In 1936, he began writing of the failures of collective security. By June 10, when he spoke of the 1900 Club, he was calling the extension of sanctions in Abyssinia, "...the very midsummer of madness."[38]

It was during this time that the administrator in Chamberlain came clearly to the fore. The direct method won out over consultation. On a few days before the June speech referred to above, Anthony Eden had assured Commons that no change was forthcoming in the government policies. At the very least, Chamberlain had embarrassed Eden. More importantly, he had signaled what was to become a hallmark of the Chamberlain method, what might be called today the

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[36] Military estimates were projected at £ 50 million spread over five years, with an increasing emphasis on the RAF. (Rock, Chamberlain, p. 94.)

[37] MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 191.

[38] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 102.

"bombshell" method. There was the upshot lonely schoolboy, the years on Andros, the days spent learning administrative skills all coming together. At best his methods would be, from now on, irregular; at worst, they would be behind the back. But, his reasoning seemed clear to him.

> I did it deliberately because I felt that the party and the country needed a lead, and an indication that the government was not wavering and drifting without a policy.[39]

The drift of policy was, in part, now corrected. At the outset of the decade Britain faced three alternatives in international affairs: collective security, alliance, and isolation. Chamberlain had eliminated the first and would waver between the last two until the middle of 1939.

As the months spun themselves out to 1937, Britain found her insularity more and more challenged by the deterioration of relations between the continental powers, by the continuation of the Abyssinian crisis and by the outbreak of the Spanish civil war. In May, 1937, Chamberlain came to power. It was a "bureaucratic formality", as William Rock puts it.[40]

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[39] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 296.

[40] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 111.

The organizer, the man with the administrative touch, was now at the helm. He had gained the Prime Ministry through quiet, steady determination. Clearly, his utilitarian approach to problem solving would serve well the domestic needs of the country, but its efficiency in international relations was certainly open to question.

To this point the attempt has been to single out several traits that, in the era of personal diplomacy that follows, are of critical importance in assessing Chamberlain's actions as Europe slipped to war. The childhood influence of "doing it alone" received consistent reinforcement in Chamberlain's business and public life. His failures at Andros and the National Service would only have intensified his desires to succeed. His distrust of others was only heightened by the seeming mediocrity of his fellow cabinet members and government colleagues. Finally, his desire for incessant action could only portend changes in foreign policy.

Yet it is fair to ask, how much leeway [illegible] left by 1937? On the British side, Chamberlain had all but formally abandoned the League of Nations while espousing a policy of rearmament and reconciliation that were in many ways incompatible. He was constricted by the actions of the other Powers. Unwilling to accept alliances, yet reluctant to retreat into isolationism, Chamberlain trod a narrow path, literally seeking to:

> Walk between dark and dark --a shining space
> with the grave's narrowness, though not its

peace.[41]

Thus he was constricted on the one hand by his beliefs and on the other by the international situation, over which Britain had less control than she believed. The 19th century in Chamberlain lived on beyond its usefulness. Set against the 20th century dictators, his ideals and methods seemed even more out of date than they were.

It is easy to forget today, though, that his ideals were in the main those of England at large. Peace was uppermost in English minds, perhaps to the extent that peace at almost any price was not an unfair comment on the state of British thought.

Chamberlain did not, like a 1930's Ralph Nader, crusade alone for his causes. What came to be called appeasement was widely approved. Margaret George devotes chapters to both institutions and organizations that supported appeasement.[42] Public opinion was in agreement. Chamberlain felt he had a wide base of support and, with complete control of Parliament and the Cabinet, must also have felt that he could easily handle any opposition. Until 1939, he was more correct than even he might have anticipated.

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[41]Robert Graves, Collected Poems (London: Cassell, 1965), p. 63.

[42]George, The Warped Vision, p. 126-62.

This in mind, it becomes easier to see how the businessman turned Cabinet Minister turned Prime Minister undertook to become the Government's chief diplomat. The mechanics, in retrospect, seem simple enough. Chamberlain had been in foreign policy long enough to recognize where the centers of opposition were. One of these, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was in the Foreign Office. The taking of the Foreign Office occupied the first six months of his Premiership. Believing that his double policy of rearmament and better relations with Germany and Italy would work, "...if only the Foreign Office will play up,"[43] he systematically eliminated the anti-German element there. Vansittant went to a honorific (and little else) post, Phipps was replaced in Berlin by the more malleable Henderson, and Eden was cornered by 1938.

When Eden left, he was replaced by Halifax and the National Zeitung proclaimed that the fortress of the Foreign Office had fallen to the appeasers.[44] There was more truth than lie in this and it became evident in the handling of the Czech crisis. The policy line to be taken was formulated by Chamberlain, dictated by him and, finally, personally, administered by him at Munich.

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[43]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 319.

[44]John Connell (pseud.), The Office (London: Wingate, 1952), p. 274.

Conveniently Halifax was a Peer; thus it fell upon Chamberlain to defend Foreign Policy in the House of Commons. Man and Policy became one in the eyes of the members of Commons. Ever so gradually, yet firmly, Foreign Policy came to rest at 10 Downing Street.

From formulating and defending Foreign Policy at home to negotiating abroad was not so long a step as might be imagined. Party politics securely under control, the Foreign Office subdued and the major organs of opinion such as The Times openly advocating appeasement, it seemed only logical that its leading practitioner should become its leading negotiator.[45]

As Czechoslovakia's last summer wore on, the crisis tangled and retangled. Britain and France sought refuge in words and the Runciman mission. When all else failed, The Times solved the problem on September 7th by a leader that advocated the cession of the Sudeten area. There was a prompt denial from the Foreign Office that the article had official support, which was probably true, in so far as the Foreign Office went.[46]

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[45]The role of The Times is thoroughly and candidly discussed in The History of The Times, Vol IV, part 2 (London: Printing House Square, 1952). See also George, The Warped Vision, ch. X.

[46]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 524.

But now the word --supported or not-- was out and the price would be paid. It was Chamberlain who would pay and pay in person at that. That the idea of personal negotiations was in his head before The Times article of September 7th is clear. A family letter dated September 3rd says, in part:

> I keep racking my brain to try and devise some means of averting a catastrophe ...I thought of one so unconventional and daring that it rather took Halifax's breath away.[47]

Chamberlain was poised for the ultimate action of his career. But, at age 69, having been in political life 20 years, how well equipped was he to face a man who Feiling describes as: "Born and bred in resentment against squalid circumstance."[48]

To those characteristics we have met so far --the ambition acquired of family and the loneliness bred there, as well as the zeal for efficiency and tidiness and the consummate skill as politician and administrator-- must of necessity be added the ease with which he handled power. The months in office, the victories won, especially that over the Foreign Office, had increased his self-confidence; the personal pronoun crept more and more into his letters and diary entries. He was confident that public opinion supported him and sure that his course was correct. The thread of reconciliation was the

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[47]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 357.

[48]Ibid., p. 358.

stronger in his thinking now, rearmament slipping further and further into the background.

He was surrounded by like-minded men of his own choosing (reminding one of the days at National Service) and was content to hear his views echoed. This inner group, Chamberlainites, were unabashedly men of peace --no Churchill, Cooper or Avery wanted-- and they had little use for confronting force, guile or wickedness. Of them -- Simon, Hoare, Wilson and Halifax-- A. L. Rowse has said:

> That they did not know what they were dealing with is the most charitable explanation of their failure; but they might...have taken the trouble to inform themselves...they all shared a non-conformist origin, and its characteristic self-righteousness --all the more intolerable in the palpably wrong.[49]

Hugh Dalton is less kind with Chamberlain, accusing him of being, at all times, stubborn and self-sufficient. "In regard to Foreign Affairs, he was, in addition, inexperienced, gullible and ill-informed."[50] Yet it is within this matrix that the decision for personal diplomacy was made. A less self-sufficient man might have not tried at all, one more so might have entered war at a time even less advantageous for Britain than 1939.

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[49]A. L. Rowse, Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline (New York: Norton, 1963), p. 19.

[50]Dalton, The Fateful Years, pp. 175-6.

When Chamberlain went to Berchtesgaden he was prepared to make extensive concessions to the Sudeten-German minority, even to the point of accepting, in principle, the full implications of self-determination. At the same time he had no objections to seeing the Czechs deprived of their special treaty relationships with France and Russia in exchange for neutralization and some kind of international guarantee.[51] He saw no impropriety in dealing away a third country, arguments about sovereignty notwithstanding.

Here then was a man who knew little history, who was ignorant of Europe, and who, if we are to believe Rowse, had the approach of, ". . a rather simple-minded businessman,"[52] and who earlier in life had professed no interest in politics, suddenly determined that he could solve the unsolvable and bring peace to Europe. Why? What engendered this belief? The answer can be found in the image of the self-made man, unsure in the higher world, but finding strength in his ability to stand alone. Chamberlain [illegible] the Victorian world, in reality carrying part of it with him always. He was a prisoner of his class and eminent sensibility. In truth he was:

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[51] Donald M. Lammers, Explaining Munich: The Search for Motive in British Policy (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford Univ. Press, 1966), p. 40.

[52] Rowse, Appeasement, p. 63.

> Between two worlds, one dead
> The other powerless to be born.[53]

He had many good qualities and certainly rated a kinder epitaph than that put upon him by Lloyd George, "A good Lord Mayor of Birmingham in a lean year."[54] Yet he lacked imagination which could have fitted the gaps of inexperience. Duff Cooper sought to explain Chamberlain's failures by suggesting that the former Lord Mayor of Birmingham viewed the dictators of Germany and Italy, "...like the Mayor of Liverpool and Manchester, who might belong to different political parties and have different interests, but who must desire the welfare of humanity, and be fundamentally reasonable decent men like himself."[55] It was hard to find error in this thinking, especially if one were English in 1938 and 1939. Chamberlain was the essence of Wilsonian diplomacy, open convenants openly reached in its most literal sense. His Victorian belief system, reinforced by his individualistic approach to life and scarcely modified by the technology that had brought Hitler nearly astride Europe, provided him with honorable tools when, as Duff Cooper would say, what was needed was the mailed fist.

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[53]Denys Thompson, ed. Matthew Arnold: Selected Poems and Prose (New York: Barnes, Noble, 1971), p. 86.

[54]As quoted in Rowse, Appeasement, p. 103.

[55]Duff Cooper, Old Men Forget (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1953), p. 200.

This belief system was confirmed for Chamberlain by those around him, his inner circle, "The Big Four" and echoed by Geoffrey Dawson and The Times. As was shown in Chapter 1, the opposition was divided and lacked organization. There were strident voices, but they were in the wilderness or made up of characters in some ways not unlike Chamberlain's, that is to say so individualistic as to be unable to form a united front against appeasement.

Too, Chamberlain felt he reflected public opinion. In this, he was probably correct --to a point. Certainly no one wanted war. The question became how far one would go to avoid war. Even now, 30 plus years after the end of appeasement, a clear definition has not been found.[56] This, perhaps simplistically, might be because of just what was meant by appeasement. Perhaps there were too many definitions. It would be fair to say that many sectors of British public opinion, Chamberlain included, expected more from appeasement than it was capable of providing.

Clearly, appeasement was idealistic. It thus fitted well into the British approach to international problems, which has been characterized by Harold Nicolson as moving always from the idealistic to the realistic.[57] Chamberlain brought to appeasement personality

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[56]See Ch. One, p.

[57]Nicolson, Diplomacy, p. 75.

traits, again citing Nicolson, common to British statesmen: They included (1) considerable ignorance of foreign psychology, (2) a dislike of facing unpleasant possibilities in advance, and (3) a tendency to welcome transactions and agreements which, while they have no real validity, are calculated to appeal to the sentiment of the British public and their love of comforting phrases.[58]

A seemingly logical policy became allied with men who possessed those traits. It is all well and good to exclaim as A. L. Rowse does, "the inexhaustible vanity of the disastrous old man,"[59] but there is more than that meager truth in saying that man and policy fitted the tenor of Britain. The flaw in Chamberlain was not in what he offered, but his reluctance to seek alternatives when his offerings proved unsuccessful. That he could not offer alternatives could have been predicted from his psychological belief system, just as could have his predilection for face-to-face negotiations.

Since those face-to-face negotiations did not avoid war, Chamberlain, prima facie, failed as a diplomatist. Yet given the elements that composed British Foreign Policy, his chances to succeed were slim.

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[58] Ibid., p. 76.

[59] Rowse, Appeasement, p. 87.

Those elements can be briefly summarized as (1) a basic conservatism in regard to the prevailing international order appropriate to a wealthy, contented power, (2) a tacit assumption that economic issues were paramount and political issues merely distractions from the essential workings of a demand market, and (3) the domestic scene; more specifically, the social grievances, as symbolized by the rise of the Labour Party, that came to dominate British politics in the interwar period. These factors, two old and one new, put a continuous strain on British resources.[60] As has been suggested, 19th century ideals came to grief on 20th century realities. Britain no longer had the power to attend to the first two elements and satisfy domestic clamoring, and awoke too late to alleviate the fact that her resources, in particular naval and economic strength, were inadequate to provide a counterbalance to German expansion. Chamberlain thus had the admittedly limited alternative of seeking accommodation with Germany. This reality conflicted with the historical logic of British Foreign Policy, the maintenance of the Balance of Power. By accepting, in a businesslike sense, the limitation of his options, Chamberlain reflected a 20th century attitude. His failure to negotiate his options in a sufficiently hardheaded manner can be laid to a combination of the weakness of those options and his 19th century outlook.

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[60] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 620 and following for a detailed discussion.

If appeasement was to fly in the face of the historical logic of British Foreign Policy, it follows that it would throw Chamberlain into conflict with the Foreign Office (see Chapter 2). Given Chamberlain's limited circle of friends and his difficulty in making new ones, and opposing this with that conflict, it becomes easier to explain his reluctance to have Foreign Office officials accompany him on his trips or to accept their advice.[61]

His diplomacy, then, was to be played out on a bare stage without supporting actors, a device theatrically impressive, but dependent solely upon the skill of the actor and the receptiveness of the audience. The actor's skill was no more nor less great than that of his colleagues. Others might have sought to decorate the stage, but in truth Britain had little with which to challenge Hitler.

Chamberlain played to an audience of one: Adolf Hitler. It is perhaps slighting to dismiss the Becks and the Bonnets' the Daladiers and the Dalherus', but the truth of the matter is that from Chamberlain's decision to seek a solution in personal diplomacy, the struggle focused on the dictator and the democrat. Perhaps only Napoleon and Christ have been described in more detail than Hitler, but one of Halifax's observations made on his famous 1937 trip shows graphically the problems Chamberlain would face in 1939:

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[61]But no less excusable! By avoiding criticism, he only reinforced the belief in his own system. Gradually, he became "hooked" on his own beliefs, resisting changes in a reflex manner.

> One had a feeling all the time that we had a totally different sense of values and were speaking in a different language. It was not only the difference between a totalitarian and democratic state, he gave the impression of feeling that whilst he had attained to power only after a hard struggle with present day realities, the British Government was still living comfortably in a world of its own making, a fairyland of strange, if respectable, illusions.[62]

We know that, by Chamberlain's own admissions, he sought in the face-to-face meetings with Hitler a "coup".[63] He was "bent on finding decency in even dictators".[64] Yet was it vanity --Rowse calls him a "vain old fool"[65]-- that sent him to Berchtesgaden or was it merely the sense of duty that had so long been a hallmark of the Chamberlains? It seems the latter, a sense of duty so strong as to eli[illegible] to the realities of the situation. Chamberlain was no less well-equipped than his friends --or opponents-- to deal with Hitler. For all their fiery retrospects, what might have A. L. Rowse, Leo Amery or even Churchill done to deter Hitler? But that is beyond this paper; rather we must continue by examining what Chamberlain was able to do.

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[62] Halifax, Fulness of Days, p. 192.

[63] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 364.

[64] Ibid., p. 365.

[65] Rowse, Appeasement, p. 83.

The immediate advantages lay with Hitler. By going to him, Chamberlain would later raise the question of Britain as a suppliant. It was demeaning for Chamberlain to fly backwards and forwards between allies and friends and a dictator twenty years his junior. Still, "Chamberlain insisted that prestige should not stand in the way of any expedient to ward off the unbearable catastrophe of war".[66] Chamberlain and Hitler spoke, literally, no common language. The translator was Hitler's own, as Chamberlain negotiated alone. Moreover, and more important, there was questionable validity in the process of two soverign nations dealing away a third. Increasingly it would be made to appear, despite the degree of truth, that Chamberlain had personally "sold" Czechoslovakia to the Nazis.

Chamberlain's diplomacy had yet another result, in the long run one that perhaps overshadowed even the whole Czech question. That was the engagement of Britain directly in the crisis and the focusing upon her of the question as to whether it was to be settled by force or negotiation. And in that question the whole issue of appeasement became entangled and eventually went to ground.

When Chamberlain went to Berchtesgaden, he clearly thought in terms of settling the crisis by personal diplomacy. His belief system would have engendered such an approach even if he had possessed

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[66] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 528.

the military strength to back up a stronger approach. He was clearly less interested in the Sudeten problem --"My personal opinion was that on principle, I didn't care two hoots whether the Sudetens were in the Riech or out of it",[67]-- than in the improvement of Anglo-German relations.[68]

His approach was businesslike and in keeping with his background. And yet if we are to believe Sir Harold Nicolson, a stern critic of Chamberlain, this was the approach that any good British diplomatist might take:

> ...the foundation of good diplomacy is the same as the foundation of good business-- namely credit, confidence, consideration, and compromise.[69]

So Chamberlain was on seemingly safe ground here. He sought his solutions in compromise, within what might be called the "dialog" of the marketplace where the relation is between buyer and seller. Yet, what was the object of negotiation? Clearly not the Sudeten Germans, or even the wider question of Czechoslovakia and Central Europe? And more important, who was the buyer and who the seller? If one answers this in terms of Chamberlain's beliefs, the object of negotiation would be British security within the framework of improved Anglo-

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[67]Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 367.

[68]D.B.F.P., vol 2, nos. 895 and 896, both dated 15 September, 1973.

[69]Nicolson, Diplomacy, p. 77.

German relations --a logical and indeed laudable goal. How then could anything so eminently correct end up so badly? The answer perhaps lies in the perception of the negotiating roles. If one assumes the ethos of the market place, as suggested above, a buyer-seller relation develops. It is proposed that Chamberlain sought to negotiate with Hitler within such a framework, but that Hitler's refusal to enter the marketplace of negotiation rendered Chamberlain's diplomacy ineffectual. Chamberlain, for his part, was so constrained by his belief system as to be blind to alternatives when it was obvious his approach was failing. His continued adherence to belief in an essentially moral program of appeasement when it had become wrecked upon the reality of Hitler's expansionist desires caused the Prime Minister himself to lose touch with reality. The upshot was that he discovered too late that policy must depend on power.

Much has been made of Chamberlain's individualism, or his vanity, as his detractors would suggest. It is evident in his negotiations with Hitler. Moreover, given the same characteristic, only better developed, in Hitler, Chamberlain came off a poor second. And, it would seem evident that Hitler did play upon Chamberlain's vanity; witness the Prime Minister's pleasure upon hearing from Henderson that Hitler had commented that at Berchtesgaden, he felt like he was

speaking to a man.[70] Yet for all that, Chamberlain at first kept sight of the fact that he must consult with the Cabinet before making a decision. His individualism was thus tempered by the British system of government.

Chamberlain approached the first meetings with Hitler seeking to improve British security while Hitler sought the more immediate. Hitler dismissed the idealistic approach of Chamberlain: "But all this seems academic, I want to get down to realities".[71] Recalling Nicolson's comment about the typical British approach to any international problem as one from the idealistic to the realistic, it becomes evident that the negotiation began from opposite poles. A strong case can be made for idealism going to grief when faced by reality and Berchtesgaden was no exception. Chamberlain expected Hitler to have goals not unlike his own. He was willing to make immediate concessions to get through to what he perceived as "a man who could be relied upon when he had given his word."[72] Hitler,

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[70] D.B.F.P., vol 2, no. 897, 16 September 1938. Though Hitler is supposed to have later said, when speaking of the declaration he and the Prime Minister had signed at Munich, "Mr. Chamberlain is such a nice old man, and I have signed so many photographs and books, that I thought I would give him my signature as a pleasant souvenir." (Conversation between Mr. Aston-Gwatkin and Dr. Schacht reported in F.O. C15642/62/18, 15 December 1938).

[71] Ibid., no. 895.

[72] MacLeod, Chamberlain, p. 239.

unconstrained by the British form of civility, gave his word freely and would later disregard it just as freely. But comforting phrases were welcome in Britain, and for a while could obscure harsh realities.

In all Chamberlain's negotiations with Hitler he was unsupported by criticism. The expertise of the Foreign Office might have helped in balancing out Chamberlain's views had he been willing to listen. His desire to be constantly busy caused him to seek rapid decisions to what he thought were critical problems. By seeking *ad hoc* answers to seemingly unrelated problems, he missed the chance to do what he truly desired: secure Britain and, incidentally, [illegible] Europe from war.

Subsequent to Berchtesgaden, Chamberlain saw Hitler twice again: once, in a series of meetings at Godesberg and finally on September 29 at Munich. Interspersed were several Cabinet meetings at home and a series of talks with the French as well as Sir Horace Wilson's approaches to Hitler on September 26th and 27th. Thus numerous opportunities were available for Chamberlain to formulate alternatives to Hitler.

That he did not seek alternatives suggested that either there were none or that he still felt appeasement and negotiation would succeed. While his personality would suggest the latter, it must be stated that Chamberlain's alternatives were, in truth, few.

German policy was essentially "Machpolitik" or a "Power policy." The implementation of this was in the idea that force or the threat of force are the main instruments of negotiation.[73] In the immediate past, Britain's insularity had allowed her to develop her foreign policy with little regard to that of other countries. Her intervention on the Continent was --even in World War One-- in response to specific cases. She usually maintained no residual presence on the Continent after the purpose of intervention had been met. Yet in the interwar years, Britain, for all practical purposes and perhaps without realizing it, became a part of the Continent, within the conceptualization of a technological Europe. Now the policy of Germany and Britain could not coexist. One had, of necessity, to yield to the other. British policy being the more ideal (yet not devoid of logic), yielded before the state who put its own needs above that of individuals. This does not argue the correctness of one or the other, rather it suggests that the response to "power policies," especially when those policies are in the hands of people such as Hitler, must of necessity be couched in the same terms. This Britain could not do, even had Chamberlain been so disposed, by 1937.

Thus, Chamberlain inherited a bit of a mess. But he made no attempt to correct this himself, so he must take part of the blame for Britain's continued weakness. In the final analysis, appeasement

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[73]Nicolson, Diplomacy, p. 79.

was worth a try. That it was worth more than that seems questionable. It is here that Chamberlain's personality overshadows the evident. He held to appeasement after Munich, when its bankruptcy was clear to a wide cross section of people. In this, if we are to believe Rock, he did "a great disservice to the English people in deluding about the real nature of the Nazi menace."[74]

It would be debatable as to whether his continued adherence to appeasement hindered rearmament, but the very debatability suggests the possibility. Certainly if Chamberlain believed in his policies, others also wanted to and thus they put a[illegible]tioning when a vigorous debate might have injected a sense of reality to British policy or at least underscored the necessity of meeting the threat of force with the threat of retaliation.

If Britain was not going to change her policy, then Chamberlain had nothing to counter Hitler with except moral arguments. But a large amount of morality and the smallest possible amount of force had for so long been a part of British policy that Chamberlain alone can hardly be blamed for not realizing its bankruptcy. Even his domestic opponents sought in collective security a minimal British military role.

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[74] Rock, Appeasement, p. 212

Thus Chamberlain retreated before force by adhering to a policy after Berchtesgaden that could only lead to war. His instincts had taught him --and traditional British diplomacy agreed-- that somewhere the ethos of the marketplace would prevail. A compromise between buyer and seller might be possible, except that Chamberlain was selling what was not his and Hitler, in no mood to buy, took, knowing that Chamberlain could do little else save express moral indignation. As on Andros Island many years before, the reprehensible thing was to hang on so long after failure was so clear. But the loss this time was not merely money.

Chamberlain made one more excursion into personal diplomacy before the outbreak of war. In early January, he and Halifax journeyed to Rome in a visit to Mussolini, the object of which was "[illegible] conclude specific agreements, but rather to produce, through personal contacts, closer understanding between the two countries of their respective points of view."[75]

The talks ran from the 11th to the 13th of January, covering the entire range of Anglo-Italian relations. There was apparently no agenda and the conversations wandered from topic to topic.[76]

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[75] D.B.F.P., vol 3, no. 502, encl. 5, 19 January 1939.

[76] Details of the visit and discussions are covered in [illegible].P., vol 3. nos. 495, 499, 500 and 502.

There were general allusions to peace on both sides, though in his opening declaration Mussolini stated that he found general disarmament not to be practical politics. Chamberlain spoke next, querying Mussolini about the Jewish refugee problem and commenting on the Duce's opening statement. As if to verify statements later made as to his vanity, Chamberlain spoke of his disappointment of seeing the results of <u>his</u> (italics mine) careful finance over many years dissipated in rearmament.[77] In fact throughout the conversation, there is a strong sense of the "I", reinforcing a feeling that Chamberlain was beginning to act more and more on his own without reference to his Cabinet or Commons.[78] This was a decided change from Berchtesgaden, when Cabinet was consulted as a matter of course. On the other hand, [illegible] Rome talks sought no specific agreements and Mussolini was clearly not the dictator that Hitler was.

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[77] *Ibid.*, no. 500, part 1, 11-14 January 1939.

[78] In the case of Commons, Rock (in *Chamberlain*) cites the Prime Minister's statement of December 19th, 1938 (*Parl. Debates*, vol. 342, col. 2517-8) as proof that he placed his own view of British opinion above anything said in Commons. For example, "I have been getting a great number of letters which convince me that the country does not want the policy (appeasement) to fail, and whatever views may be expressed in this House, I am satisfied that the general public desire is to continue the efforts we have made."

The talks went on, interspersed with the mandatory wreath-layings, luncheons and opera galas. In the public side of the visits, the enthusiasm of the Italian people made a noticeable impression on Chamberlain.[79] Crowds thronged to see him and in general he gained a warm, open reception from the Italian people. The British Ambassador, summing up the visit, reported that "members of the Embassy have seen many demonstrations in honour of visiting statesmen, but they have never witnessed an occasion when the people welcomed the visitors so spontaneously and in such a happy mood."[80] Chamberlain could not have helped equating the Italian cheers with his own belief that, at home, "public desire" was with his efforts to gain peace through appeasement.

Yet when the shouting subsided, the truth of the matter was that, without substance, the talks were shadows. Again the British found the words they wanted to hear and little else. Again a dictator made a few gestures, forgotten almost at the moment. In the afternoon, Chamberlain left Rome by train, in his own words, "more than ever convinced of the good faith and good-will of the Italian Government."[81]

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[79] And Count Ciano as well, who wrote: "The welcome of the crowd was good, particularly in the middle-class section of the city, where the old man with the umbrella is quite popular." (Macolm Muggeridge, ed., Ciano's Diary (London: Heineman, 1947), p. 8.)

[80] D.B.F.P., vol 3, no. 502, 19 January 1939.

[81] Ibid.

Rome was his last contact with the Axis dictators and his last attempt at personal diplomacy. In both cases, with Hitler and Mussolini, he seemed satisfied with the results. Yet with Hitler he had bargained away Czechoslovakia and with Mussolini done little more than exchange generalities. In both cases, though, he felt that the dictators were men who could keep their word. He assumed this because he would most naturally keep his word to them. That Chamberlain thought they might have blatantly lied to him surfaces no where in either Feiling or MacLeod.

In conclusion, one might ask two questions about Chamberlain's attempts at personal diplomacy: Why, and What were the results? The answer as to "why" must remain conjecture to some degree, but material available suggests that Chamberlain acted in accordance with a belief system that was rooted in the business ethos. These face-to-face negotiations promised immediate solutions, took the measure of the man and suggested sincerity that might not be present in the exchange of notes. Chamberlain failed to cast his opponents as other than mirror-images of himself. He assumed their goals, in the long run, to be the same as his, placing with them the same value of personal diplomacy as he held. Some of the "why" lies in Chamberlain's individualistic approach to life, an approach that did in fact border on vanity. Being self-reliant, he seldom sought the advice of others and when he did it was usually from a circle of like-minded friends. There existed no counterpoise to his ambition, especially in foreign

policy; he was an efficient man, highly systematic and used to coming to decisions quickly and with a minimum of discussion. This aspect of his personality could only have been reinforced by his contacts with the Axis dictators. Indeed, one looks in vain, especially in the Anglo-Italian discussions, for suggestions that Chamberlain was negotiating in the name of His Majesty's Government.

As to the result of Chamberlain's personal diplomacy, the answer on first glance seems to be that since it failed, its results were non-existent or negative. If Chamberlain impressed the dictators with his sincerity, the weight of his arguments certainly moved them little. Hitler's sole admitted concession to Chamberlain was to modify the timetable of the Munich agreemtns. If we are to believe A. L. Rowse, Hitler thought of Chamberlain as "der Arschl[illegible]"[82] and Count Ciano reports Mussolini as having said of Chamberlain: "These men are not made of the same stuff as the Francis Drakes...these... are the tired sons of a long line of rich men and they will lose their empire."[83] So it seems evident that Chamberlain had little effect upon either dictator except to reinforce the idea that Britain did not wish to fight.

Aside from the Munich Agreement and an equally worthless Anglo-German declaration on consultation, Chamberlain's personal diplomacy

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[82]Rowse, Appeasement, p. 83

[83]Muggeridge, Ciano's Diary, pp. 9-10. Ciano did admit though that, "Old Chamberlain is a pleasant fellow..." (p. 11).

produced no alliance agreement nor other visible sign that aided in the preservation of peace. Negatively, it reassured Chamberlain at a time when it might have been wise to heighten his scepticism.

Perhaps the greatest value in Chamberlain's personal diplomacy lay in the contrast it would offer to the dictators' later actions. Here would be hypocrisy at its height: [illegible] solemn, assurances ignored or cast aside. Chamberlain's personal diplomacy set these actions into true perspective and, ironically, exposed the bankruptcy of appeasement. Whatever the implications of Chamberlain's personal diplomacy, its value, never high, evapo[illegible]just as quickly as the shouts which greeted him in Rome.

For better or worse, no further overtures to the dictators were made by Chamberlain after the Rome trip. Thus, personal diplomacy would have no immediate role in the drift to war that followed Prague. Perhaps it had played the only role it could by March 1939, that of providing a stark contrast to th[illegible] of the dictators and exposing more clearly the magnitude of the threat to European life Hitler posed.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INTERACTION OF DEFENSE AND FOREIGN POLICY

> "Germany prepared for this war; France prepared for the last war; Great Britain prepared for no war at all."
>
> --Hanson Baldwin

By late 1934, the impending failure of the Disarmament Conference coupled with Germany's openly avowed intentions to rearm brought a new urgency to the question of what was to be Britain's defense policy. Tightly linked, if not inseparable, was the problem of settling on a foreign policy that could effectively blunt Nazi dynamism. The key to the search for a defense policy seemed to lie in rearmament, yet rearmament meant expenditures the Government (and Britons generally) were unwilling to make.

But whether Britain was to maintain her tranditional foreign policy of a minimum of interference on the Continent in maintenance of a balance of power or to choose collective security, she would be required to rearm her depleted military arsenal to provide a credible deterrent. Thus, pacifists and some Laborites aside, the question became not one of whether or not, but how much. In the answer ultimately would rest Britain's security and, more immediately, the directions open to foreign policy. It seems apparent that after the failure of the Disarmament Conference, and, given the situation in

Germany, the inability of Britain to quickly come to a consensus on defense policy insured that foreign policy in the Chamberlain government would be, at best, indecisive and, as a rule, ineffective.

The failure to develop an adequate defense policy can be traced to the question of rearmament. Rearmament, in turn, was linked to finance and, in particular, to the Treasury. Whatever the military proposals and plans of the interwar years, it was the Exchequer and the single-minded concern for economy that were the greatest forces shaping British defense policy.

In 1936, past defense policy could be summed up as being motivated by the assumption that no major war was expected. This feeling had carried over from the twenties when the peace had seemed more enduring. One major result was a military establishment that was materially and philosophically unprepared for war.[1]

In 1936, Britain had just come face-to-face with reality in the Rhineland. Yet foreign policy is harder to change than a suit of clothes and military policy takes longer still to implement. The not-too-distant memories of the "ten-year assumption" weigned heavily in

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[1] That it was unprepared was not the fault of at least one group within Britain. See Robert Higham, The Military Intellectuals in Britain: 1919-1939 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1966). Cadogan put the Foreign Office view well in 1938 when he said, "Our unilateral disarmament in the period of security immediately after the war was followed by failure to secure international agreement for disarmament and this in turn by failure to rearm in good time." (F.O. C14471/42/18, 9 November 1938).

the British decision-making process.[2]

The "ten-year assumption" had proposed, in 1919, no major war for ten years. Each year after 1919 it had been extended until, in 1932, it was scrapped, having done irreparable damage to Britain's military infrastructure. At first, its demise changed little, least of all the thought processes of the policy framers. It was the 1935 and 1936 Defense White Papers that finally broke the log jam.[3]

The 1936 Defense White Paper was a bold statement of rearmament aims. Britain had made the beginnings of substantive military expansion as early as 1934.[4] But these were tentative initiatives. Now a more comprehensive program was offered, which included the first real plan for rearmament in the air, Scheme F.[5] Defense expenditures, some 136 million pounds sterling in 1935, would rise to 185 million in 1936 (and were projected to 626 million in 1938).[6]

The paper also attempted to balance out service spending, which had been long dominated by expenditures on the Navy. Yet, as Table One shows, it was not until 1938 that money expended for the R.A.F.

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[2]M. M. Postan, British War Production (London: HMSO, 1952), p. 1.

[3]"Statement Relating to Defense", Cmd 5107 (1936).

[4]Postan, War Production, p. 9.

[5]Ibid., p. 11.

[6]Robert Higham, Armed Forces in Peacetime (London: Foulis, 1962), p. 326-7.

TABLE ONE

ESTIMATED ANNUAL EXPENDITURES ON REARMAMENT
(in millions of pounds sterling)

Year Ending March-	Navy	R.A.F.	Army
1935	24.2	9.9	8.5
1937	42.0	39.3	21.4
1939	82.9	109.9	67.6

Source: Postan, British War Production, p. 12.

exceeded that spent for the Navy. Impressive as the program was, it came late in the day when the threat from Germany could no longer be easily contained. Why had England waited so long to recognize the threat?

A principal reason can be found in the British preoccupation with disarmament after Versailles. Even after Germany publicly announced its intentions to rearm, the British man-in-the-street was "loath to infer that the dream of disarmament was over."[7] There was a refusal, perhaps subconscious, to admit that the days of ingenuity in the search for a modus vivendi were over for Britain. After 1934, she would have to weigh her effectiveness as a power in conjunction

[7] Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 384.

with allies --or in opposition to enemies. But opposition meant increased defenses.

Reluctantly, the Government recognized the need to rebuild its deterrent. If 1936 gave new direction to defense policy, it was in the jumble of 1935 that the need for change first showed through. The 1935 Defense White Paper[8] was the first attempt to set forth the reasons which made rearmament necessary. Its thrust was more educative than substantive.[9] Regrettably, the paper, coupled with a French decision to increase the length of conscription service, offered Hitler the opportunity to announce the reinstitution of conscription in Germany in an atmosphere guaranteed to provoke only minimal recrimination by democracies.

Success breeds success, and the moral lecturing by Britain and France only served to irritate Germany. Hitler's prestige was enhanced by the decision to reintroduce conscription --the first formal renunciation of a clause of the Versailles Treaty-- and the impotence of the other Powers and the League were made all too apparent.

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[8] "Statement Relating to Defense", Cmd 4827 (1935).

[9] Northedge, Troubled Giant. The author points out that the proposed increase in defense expenditure was only £ 4 million, though the final figure was closer to £ 23. (Higham, Armed Forces, p. 327).

Against the wider questions of Italian involvement in Abyssinia and the general deterioration of the balance of power on the continent, the Baldwin government sought to reconcile rearmament and pacifism. Abyssinia faded before the lost opportunity of the Rhineland. The Rhineland, in turn, gave way to the prelude to greater war in Spain. Throughout, Britain talked much, did little, hoping to ride out what was thought to be a temporary storm.

The 1936 Defense Estimates clearly reflect this thought. As has been suggested, the estimates were, in truth, a bold departure from past policies, a recognition that defen[illegible]ssential to a viable foreign policy. Yet there were several di[illegible]ing aspects to the paper. For example, there were no firm dates for program completions and a statement that rearmament must not interfere with the course of normal trade. Thus, rearmament was to be carried out in a normal, peacetime manner while the hurried pace of Hitler's [illegible]nsion daily increased the threat of war.

The drift and vagueness were to continue almost to the doorstep of war. As Postan points out, "Until well into 1938 the objects of rearmament were too uncertain, and on the wh[illegible]e too political, to make it possible for the Services to embark on direct preparations for war."[10]

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[10]Postan, War Production, p. 34.

On the whole too political! What Margaret George calls "the narrow concerns of a Chamberlain fused with the apathy and dis-interests of a Baldwin"[11] led to a disastrous foreign policy. The League was invoked in public and decried in private, as the Conservatives espoused a policy of deceit. To rearm would expose the deceit; thus it was at first not done and, later, only half-heartedly in such a manner as to assure its inadequacy.

But it was 1936 that was the beginning of change. The trend of what has been called the "reckless economizing upon defense in the names of disarmament by example and of orthodox finance"[12] was at last reversed, and the British government gradually shifted from a postwar mentality to a prewar one. It was now up to the government to instill in the population a sense of urgency that would allow rearmament to proceeed on a scale large enough to give Britain a credible deterrent. Further, the government would have to get into the matter itself, specifically by taking an active role in the economic life of the country.

The government did neither well and thus deprived foreign policy of the leverage that would have been inherent in a strong defense policy based on deterrence. In the first case, they were reluctant to alienate the electorate. Baldwin had a real fear of the masses.

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[11] George, Warped Vision, p. 54.

[12] Higham, Armed Forces, p. 285.

If we are to believe Margaret George, the Fulham by-election of 1933, in which a Conservative majority of 14,500 was turned into a Labour gain of 4,800, haunted Baldwin.[13] Thereafter, Baldwin avoided public opinion by avoiding the inherent risks in standing for any positive policy.

As to the need for the government to abandon its traditional role of bystander in economic matters and take up an active role in executing the rearmament plans, it was ignored. The government thought in terms of rearming without unsettling the normal relations between Whitehall on the one hand and the taxpayer and private industry on the other hand.[14] It thus provided no impetus or guidance to industries to encourage them ever to plan for expanded production in case of war.

These factors combined with a technological revolution, which called for at least five years in which to make a belated transition from 1914-1918 style war to 1939-1945 patterns, as well as a lack of strong leadership (such as might have been under Churchill) to critically affect Britain's return to military power. Simply stated, to the brink of war, Britain had inadequate forces with insufficient equipment, poor leadership and minimal political guidance in a world

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[13]George, Warped Vision, p. 43. Echoed in Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 386.

[14]Northedge, Troubled Giant, p. 394.

that based deterrence upon power; real power, not that projected years ahead. Germany was confident that there was little willpower behind Britain's words, and what there was of willpower was not adequately supported by the material of war to give it effect.

There were some in Britain who decried this. The critics of appeasement have been mentioned before---Churchill, Eden, Amery, Dalton, and others. Too, there were military critics, men who consistenly called attention to the poor state of Britain's military force, innovators in tactics and strategy, who sought to utilize the vast changes wrought by the 20th Century technology.[15] On the whole these men were ignored or neglected, although there were notable exceptions. Such men as Vice-Admiral Sir Herbert Richmond, General J.F.C. Fuller, Captain B. H. Liddell-Hart, Major-General Sir Fredrick Sykes and Marshal of the R.A.F. Viscount Trenchard sought not to encourage war, but rather, as Liddell-Hart put it, to seek the "technical security rather than the quantity of force"[16] which would provide the best guarantee of security. They strove severely and at personal cost to alert the country to the danger as they saw it.[17] From time to

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[15] See Higham, Military Intellectuals and Johnson, Defense by Committee (London: Oxford University Press, 1960).

[16] B. H. Liddell-Hart, The Defense of Britain. (New York: Random House, 1935), p. 2.

[17] Higham, Military Intellecturals p. 5.

time, they had their moments of influence: Liddell-Hart as advisor of the Secretary of State for War, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Richmond as a nominee for First Sea-Lord, and most successfully, Trenchard, who for fifteen years held high command positions such as Chief of the Air Staff. Yet as with the political opposition to appeasement, these men offered varied solutions to defense problems. The variety of their approaches weakened the strength of their arguments. There was something for everybody and, in the end, nothing for anybody.

Higham, in asking why the armed services were neglected, arrives at six possibilities: (1) a failure of leadership caused by the neglect of defense and lack of interest in [illegible]) a great insistence upon orthodox finance and upon disarmament, (3) the lack of interest by the leadership in things foreign or intellectual, (4) the traditional English distaste for unpleasant facts and basic theories, (5) a growing belief in unpremeditated *ad hoc* government and (6) the nature of English public school education, which placed emphasis on the classics and "gentlemanly pursuits" to the neglect of applied science and government.[18] He admits that these possibilities are "subtle and undefinable", but what they and any other reasons that can be added meant was an "unwillingness to discuss that most unpleasant of all subjects, the possibility of another major European

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[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 20-1.

war."[19]

Where there existed any willingness to discuss war, it would in turn come to grief on what I feel to be the underlying factor in failure to maintain an adequate deterrent force, the factor of finance.

There is no arbitrary monetary figure that can ensure a nation's security; this we know today. Yet in the interwar years in Britain, this was attempted with the all too obvious results of a general rundown of the military establishment. Higham accurately points out that, "No one can study the British armed forces without becoming aware of the all-pervading influence of the Treasury."[20] For example, not only was the Treasury the instrument through which the Chancellor exercised control over spending, but it was also the Head Office of the Civil Service. Thus every Ministry felt Treasury influence in two ways: fiscal control and the realization that the most powerful man in a ministry was not its head, but rather the financial officer.[21]

The Chancellors of the Exchequer, for their part, argued against service demands from two aspects, the economic and the financial. The economic argument, framed in the government's desire for non-interference in the private business sector, took for granted that the

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[19] Ibid.

[20] Higham, Armed Forces, p. 278.

[21] Ibid.

economy of the country could not and must not be stimulated and re-shaped to suit the needs of rearmament.[22] The Government felt that as the country was still convalescing from the Depression, economic recovery and in particular the revival of export trade might suffer if too large a proportion of economic resources were diverted to production for the Services. In the economic area, the government was reluctant to take action until after the war began.

The financial argument was not new; simply stated it resisted additions to expenditures in light of the prevailing argument that government extravagance had been responsible for the Depression. The upshot was that, even after 1935, the supplies that the service allocations could purchase were not large enough either to provide deterrence or prepare for war. The battle over finance continued until almost the eve of war. As Postan points out:

> As late as 1938, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir John Simon, in resisting further claims of the Services, found it necessary to stress that expenditure could reach a limit beyond which it might defeat the very purpose of rearmament. Finance, he argued, was one of Britain's military resources: something in the nature of a fourth arm. Britain could not hope to match an aggressor in a lightning war, and her chances of victory rested on her ability to withstand the financial stresses of a long war. To overtax her financial resources and to undermine her financial stability for the sake of military preparedness might

[22] Postan, War Production, p. 11.

jeopardise her very ability to wage war.[23]

A magnificent statement of 19th century strategy, but hardly appropriate in the face of Hitler! Simon, as Neville Chamberlain before him, paid lip service to national security, but little more. Both men fought continous rearguard actions against the demands of the services. Within limits they gave way, but they always maintained the most stringent limits possible, limits that circumscribed for at least three years after the acceptance of rearmement proposals both supply and the preparation of industry for wartime munitions production.[24]

Thus, we have seen some of the factors that hindered rearmament, upon which depended defense policy and ultimately foreign policy. To these --the slowness of rearmement, the braking actions of the Tresury, the weaknesses in the Defense White Papers, politics-- must be added two others: people and personalities.

It was suggested earlier that public opinion favored disarmament. Baldwin, as we have seen, was troubled over by-election results at Fulham.[25] He could not have helped being even more influenced by the

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[23]Ibid., p. 13. There is another facet to the economic question. British planners thought of the economy as a fourth "arm" of deterrence. As late as March 1939, documents spoke of the use of economic weapons against Hitler, feeling that Hitler's Germany was about to collapse economically and that Britain could then put the brakes on him. (F.O. C3938/8/18, 5 March 1939).

[24]Ibid.

[25]Parl. Debates, Vol. 317, col 1144, 11 November 1936.

Peace Ballot. While it emphasized the obvious, namely that all Britons sought peace, it revealed the depth of British feeling on the question of disarmament. The question --"Are you in favor of the all-around reduction of armaments by international agreement"-- was answered in the affirmative by over 90% of more than eleven and a half million Britons who voted.[26]

Yet within a year, the signing in 1935 of an Anglo-German Naval Agreement --an idea which had seemed eminently sensible in 1934 -- brought about worried letters to the editors of The Times. The magnitude of the threat from Nazi Germany was becoming obvious to all but the most averted eyes. Gradually, public opinion moved towards acceptance of rearmament and a stronger defense posture.

Personalities were slower to change, perhaps because the policies of appeasement, limited liability, a small army and stringent economy were of their making. Mention has been made of Baldwin and the small group of military intellectuals. Most other civilian personalities that helped shape British defense policy in the late 1930's were those also active in foreign policy. Neville Chamberlain as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister is well-known. His successor at the Treasury, Sir John Simon, continued Chamberlain's policy of a

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[26]Viscount Cecil (Lord Robert Cecil), A Great Experiment (New York: Oxford University Press, 1941), pp. 255-60.

tight control of defense spending, at least until rearmament gained a life of its own in 1939. Simon also became a member of Chamberlain's "inner" Cabinet which from 1938 onward decided the bulk of British policy, defense and foreign. Beyond this, Sir John was a close personal friend of Chamberlain, possibly with the exception of Sir Horace Wilson, his closest in the government.

The other members of the "inner" Cabinet --Sir Samuel Hoare and Lord Halifax-- were equally influential in policy-making. Hoare was a strong supporter of appeasement as was Halifax, though the latter moved away from outright support after Munich and Prague. Still, it was these voices --the "inner" Cabinet and Wilson -- that Chamberlain first heard when questions of foreign and defense policy were debated.

Beyond the "inner" Cabinet there were few other civilians in government who played major roles in defense policy-making. They can be mentioned in a paragraph: Duff Cooper at The Admiralty until Munich, Leslie Hore-Belisha at the War Office and Viscount and Kingsley Wood at the Air Ministry. To these men must be added Sir Thomas Inskip, who first headed the Ministry for Co-ordination of Defense until replaced in early 1939 by Lord Chatfield.

Outside of government one name stands out: Winston Churchill. But though his role in the Opposition is clear, it is harder to assess his impact upon defense policy formulation while out of office.

With the exception of Churchill, Hore-Belisha and, possibly, Cooper, the persons closest to policy formulation lacked the dynamism to encourage change and instill a sense of direction in defense policy. As Chancellor of the Exchequer, Chamberlain worked first to trim defense and then for rearmament.[27] But he never abandoned his frugal businessman's approach, and one cannot help wondering if as Chancellor he grasped the enormity of the problem of rearmament.

Inskip, the Minister for the Coordination of Defense, a ministry created in 1936 to stave off a Ministry of Defense and one of Supply, was at best a cipher. In a job that should have served as a marshalling point for the integration of military policy into foreign policy, Inskip was content to attempt merely to get the Services to work together; a laudable goal, but far short of the mark.

The Services themselves had, for the most part, a leadership vigorously engaged in turning the clock as far back as possible. Even with the limited funds available, some qualitative progress could have been made, but generally was not. By the early thirties, most usable war stocks had been consumed.[28] When rearmament began it was hampered by the fact that the deficiencies of those forces were so great that the bulk of early production had to go simply to bring the forces up to a safe level.

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[27] Higham, _Armed Forces_, p. 249.

[28] _Ibid._, p. 211.

The crisis that followed in rapid succession [illegible] the deficiencies of British defense policy. As the domestic debate that surrounded the abdication of Edward [illegible] the country, the government was at last free of the preoccupation with internal matters that had so long obscured the threat from abroad. If 1935 was a transitional year for defense policy and 1936 was the time when the first real moves to rearm were taken, it can be said that in 1937 the true enormity of the threat and the problems that the country faced in meeting that threat became obvious. Still, until 1938, the object of rearmament programmes was the reinforcement of peace.[29] The intention was to back up diplomatic efforts with a show of force and thereby to impress would-be aggressors while at the same time reassuring domestic public opinion. The immediate object of the rearmament programmes was what Postan calls a "deterrent display,"[30] a first-line strength impressive on paper, but not necessarily backed by sufficient industrial capacity or reserves. Only in the latter part of 1936 did the R.A.F. adopt Scheme F with a view towards a possible conflict. Indeed it was not until 1938 that rearmament, urged on by imminent fear of conflict, took on special urgency. And it was not until spring of 1939 that the plans of the Government began to be shaped

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[29] Postan, <u>War Production</u>, p. 10.

[30] <u>Ibid.</u>

for a land war in Europe.[31]

We have seen that Chamberlain, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, took an interest in rearmament. Indeed, if we are to believe Rock, his interest did not diminish when he became Prime Minister.[32] The historians' view can show that he did too little, but it must be admitted that much of what was done was to his credit. Having said this, I cannot agree with Rock when he goes on to say that "it was not so much the Prime Minister's grasp of the problem which was deficient...it was his (and the nation's) inability to make speedier progress..."[33] It was the duty of the Government to inform the people of the true nature of the threat, that would have speeded things up. But clearly the Chamberlain government did not do this. [illegible] they did not can only suggest they did not grasp the enormity of the problem or that they engaged in a deliberate deceit of the British people. As there is no evidence to indicate deceit, Rock's statement seems open to question.

The making of defense policy is, at bottom, a two-way arrangement. Chamberlain, as the head of the political leadership, was obliged to lay down objectives. The military should have then laid

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[31] Ibid.

[32] Rock, Chamberlain, p. 114.

[33] Ibid.

down plans and proposals, figured costs and passed this along to the Cabinet. The Cabinet was the body responsible for a decision as to what was politically, diplomatically and financially affordable, with an eye towards greatest value for the least expenditure. The Services then could plan and purchase.

This process, no less today than in 1938, was complicated by constantly changing international and internal situations. The error in British planning was not in attempting to avoid a proper planning cycle, but rather in attempting to plan for long stretches of time without building in an "expansion" clause. Blind adherence to a plan such as the Ten Year plan, which assumed unlimited international tranquility, caused defense policy to mirror national [illegible] properly, thus ensuring a non-credible deterrent. Long range, [illegible] planning, as Higham points out, "...jeopardized the country through a failure to allow six years, at least, for the re-creation of formidable force in time to meet any challenge."[34]

Higham further states, and the statistics in Postan verify, that "for the first two-thirds of the interwar years there was a distinct failure to understand the increasing time lag between desire for and delivering onto the battlefield of modern weapons."[35] Finally,

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[34] Higham, Armed Forces, p. 263.

[35] Ibid.

Britain, rearming slowly, had the intention to match Germany when it should have been researching for weapons that might have closed the gap a few years further down the road. She had to run to keep in place and that place was inferior to Germany.[36]

Chamberlain was well aware that he had come to ultimate power "late in this dangerous day."[37] Yet the truth of the matter is that the dangerousness of the day had been engendered by Chamberlain himself at the Treasury. Well he could admit in a January 1938 letter that "in the absence of any powerful ally and until our armaments are completed, we must adjust our foreign policy to our circumstances."[38] But what was unsaid was that the lack of a powerful ally was in part due to his avoidance of alliances.

The passage is valuable too for it shows that foreign policy had indeed, by early 1938, become a function of the very inadequate state of defense. From now on, Chamberlain admitted, Britain would have to "bear with patience and good humor actions which we should like to treat in very different fashion."[39]

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[36] Higham develops this idea further (Armed Forces, Chapter VII) and goes into details as to Service deficiencies and the lack of measures undertaken to remedy them.

[37] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 324.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

On March 7th, 1938, less than a week before the German invasion and annexation of Austria, Chamberlain introduced the 1938 Defense White Paper to Commons. Again he spoke of his concern with finance, referring to his own tenure as Chancellor of the Exchequer and calling economic stability "a powerful deterrent against attack."[40] He hedged on details of the paper, in particular on a question as to whether Scheme F would provide parity in first line strength with any European air force within striking distance of England.[41] Later he spoke of the policy for which the programmes had been designed. Of first importance was national security, followed by preservation of trade routes. Third came defense of the Empire, and [illegible] co-operation in the defense of potential British allies. Taken in order of priority, the defense of allies' territory was least important and, in fact, by 1938 was probably impossible. The defense of Empire and trade routes depended heavily on the Navy, a Navy smaller than that just before World War One, but at least not so rundown as the R.A.F. or Army.[42] If protection of the country was the primary goal of Chamberlain's policy, his means were no more adequate. The R.A.F., by 1938, had reached financial parity with the Navy. Scheme F was

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[40] Parl. Debates, Vol 332, Col. 1558, 7 March 1938.

[41] Ibid, Col. 1559-61.

[42] Postan, War Production, p. 2.

well underway and at least prevented Britain from falling further behind the Germans. It was not until April, 1938 and Scheme L that the financial checks to air expansion were removed and the R.A.F. moved into a concept of wartime conditions of supply.[43] But the aircraft would be slow in coming, leaving Britain without an adequate air umbrella.

Worst of all was the Army. Incapable of filling its roles in the second, third or fourth objective of Chamberlain's policy, it looked doubtful whether it could even fulfill its role in national defense: anti-aircraft defense at home. The deficiency program expenditures for Air Defense of Britain in 1938 nearly equalled that spent on the rest of the Army together.[44] Yet equipment was outdated and inadequate to defend against the Luftwaffe that was being created in Germany.

Thus from the beginning, Chamberlain's policy, created too late in the game, could not be adequately supported by his military forces. The Czech crisis served to make this all too evident. But with the

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[43] Postan, War Production, p. 18. That is to say R.A.F. expansion was now limited only by industry available. As it happened, the industrial potential available was limited and the pinch was almost immediately felt.

[44] At about this same time, the Foreign Secretary was urging the Minister for Co-ordination of Defense to adopt Germany arms production methods to British industry (F.O. C/3911/65/[illegible], [illegible] March 1938). Ibid., p. 31. £98 million for Air Defense, £22 million for the Territorial Army and £80 million for the Regular Field Force.

Czechoslovak crisis the uncertainties of the previous four years began to dissolve. The reality of Germany's three-year lead was still there, but at least now it was faced. The war scare over Czechoslovakia revealed to the public some of the deficiencies in the British defense system. Most serious were anti-aircraft defenses of the large cities, London in particular.[45] But as Postan points out, even at the moment the crisis became all too real, there was yet another hesitation, fortunately only momentary. Munich and Berchtesgaden had stimulated the hope of peace and "in the light of this hope the ghosts of disarmament again made their appearance in high quarters."[46] But now even Chamberlain realized all too well the gap between policy and reality. When he had gone to Munich, we are told, he was uncomfortably aware that the Governments of which he had been a member for most of the interwar years and over which since he ascended to the post of Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1931 he had exercised a large influence in defense affairs, had dangerously jeopardized peace in his time by their failure to provide a proper air umbrella."[47] When he returned to Munich his worst fears were realized, and a subsequent survey of deficiencies showed them to be even greater than the public realized.[48]

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[45] Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, p. 629.

[46] Postan, War Production, p. 55.

[47] Higham, Armed Forces, p. 184.

[48] Postan, War Production, p. 55.

Rearmament gained a momentum of its own, and after Munich was to a great extent unaffected by events, that is to say, no sharp departures from plans occurred over Prague or, surprisingly, even at the outbreak of war.[49] The change of spirit was clear: rearmament was now in preparation for war and no longer considered merely a safeguard to an assumed peace.

The debate over the value of the year given Britain by the Munich agreements is still active. Mowat suggests that the gains were primarily in air capability. This would seem logical given Chamberlain's earlier priorities.[50] Between September, 1938 and September, 1939, the R.A.F. expanded its Spitfire and Hurricane squadrons [illegible] to [illegible]. But the official historian of war production, although admitting the most important achievement in rearmament in the last year of peace was the closing of the gap in tactical air strength, states "...the actual equivalent of the leeway made up cannot be estimated with any accuracy..."[51] The Army benefitted from three additional divisions being rated as fully-equipped, thus bringing to five the divisions ready for combat.

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[49] Ibid., p. 54.

[50] Mowat, Britain Between the Wars, p. 6[illegible]0.

[51] Postan, War Production, p. 108 and footnote 1.

TABLE TWO

BRITISH AND GERMAN AIR STRENGTH, 1938-39

	1938		1939	
	Germany	Britain	Germany	Britain
First Line Aircraft	2847	[illegible]	[illegible]	[illegible]
Totals of new Aircraft production in year	5235	2827	8295	7940

Source: Postan, War Production, pp. 107-8.

What was lost in the year after Munich was impressive too. Thirty-six Czech divisions were dealt away as was the Czech Air Force. Additionally, Germany continued Army expansion so that by mid-1939 she claimed 106 divisions, over double that of 1939. But for Britain the search for national security seemed still to rest in air power. Whether the gains of the Munich year are held to outweigh the losses depends on a judgment as to the value of a year in increasing Britain's air power and industrial potential for war; an increase which came "not so much from what was done in the year, as from the greater length of time in which programmes of production already begun could gain momentum."[52]

Now defense policy was truly the master of foreign policy. Foreign policy without power had proved futile; it must now await the regeneration of Britain's military establishment. Time, perhaps

[52] Mowat, Britain between the Wars, p. 631.

mercifully, eliminated that possibility.

Why, in the years when Hitler's aims began to become all too clear, did the British not attempt to develop a defense policy that could adequately serve its traditional foreign policy of maintenance of a just equilibrium on the continent? Several suggestions have been made: lack of will to rearm, fear of unorthodox financing, government reluctance to intervene in the industrial sector, the role of public opinion, the personalities of the leaders themselves, blatant underestimation of Hitler, failure to realize that technology takes some years to implement --the list can continue, perhaps exceeding Luther's theses. One point, though, that is seldom considered and is, perhaps, the underlying cause for the failure of an adequate defense policy that would have underpinned a viable foreign policy lies in the area of strategy.

Ideally, defense and foreign policy should have met on the level of strategy. It is for policy to lay down the aims to be achieved by strategy: thus strategy fuses the elements of defense and foreign policy into an integrated one. The Twentieth Century has been called the Century of Total War. that is, where war is carried out in all fields--political, military, diplomatic and economic. By the same token, the policies that seek peace must have the same broad approach, making an interaction between defense and foreign policy not only logical, but necessary. linked as are mountain climbers, he who leads being no more important than he who anchors.

In the rush to put aside the horrors of war in 1919, Britain conveniently forgot that her traditional policy demanded constant vigilance, vigilance being the price of power. By eschewing vigilance she abdicated her power status, at least in the eyes of Hitler. He correctly reckoned that Britain would not (and, after 1935, could not) offer a counterpoise to his military power. Thus, he had a relatively free hand until the last possible moment, unconstrained by Britain's foreign policy of unsupported words.

What sort of strategy might have altered the picture is hard to say, perhaps as hard as it was easy to criticize. Grand strategy came to England only with the decision to contain Hitler. Before that, there had been none, no clear objective which recognized that war was only one means, the last at that, of attaining it.

"The English have no system," Fredrick the Great is reputed to have said.[53] Perhaps it was in the interwar years they should have settled on one, as technology voided forever the empirical approach to foreign policy. That they did not cannot be held solely to the blame of Chamberlain, or even Baldwin before him. Here the English nation must take some of the blame.

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[53] Nicolson, Congress of Vienna, p. 53.

Certainly most of the cause will of necessity rest with the leaders. As Kennedy once noted:

> The great advantage a democracy is presumed to have over a dictatorship is that ability and not brute force is the qualification for leadership. Therefore, if a democracy cannot produce able leaders, its chance for survival is slight.[54]

But the English people took refuge in insularity when it was evident that isolation was a will of the wisp. They failed to see, or be shown, a world view in an age that demanded it. They had been let down by their political leadership, but all too few questioned until it was too late.

If a nation is to be considered a Power, it must manifest what the word implies. To do that requires a thorough integration of all policies, particularly defense and foreign, and the formulation of a strategical framework within which the policies can operate. Britain, by failure to decide upon a strategy early in the interwar years, condemned her military establishment to a slow death through neglect. This in turn undermined foreign policy, creating a situation where _ad hoc_ policies were created in crisis situations. Even a potentially viable policy, appeasement, was undermined by the inability to temper justice with force. When it was at last decided to add the factor of force to the foreign policy equation, it was

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[54] John F. Kennedy, _Why England Slept_ (New York: W. Funk, 1961), p. 225.

discovered that technology would not [illegible] the [illegible]; rather the problems of development, testing and production had to be faced and a time lag between inception and delivery had to be reckoned with, a period perhaps as long as five years.

British foreign policy was unable to blunt Nazi dynamism because it lacked a credible deterrent. Britain lacked a credible deterrent because it failed to realize, in the mutual exhaustion that followed World War One, that peace has a price, too, if it is to be lasting. Defense cannot be neglected until a threat develops, for response is then doomed to being little else than a catch-up to aggression. The lesson seems to be that defense is a matter of continual planning, execution, practice, criticism, modification and development. If, in the long run, the political leadership is vital and aware of its goals as outlined in its strategy, a steady, small expenditure is likely to incur less ultimate expense than a war every generation or so. The price of Power status was, and is, a visible deterrent. Without it, Britain's foreign policy might be aesthetically attractive, but it was functionally useless. As Samuel Hoare observed, "To a much greater extent that in any other great country we had reduced our military strength to so low a point that there was no effective support for our foreign policy. No British Foreign Secretary could hope to succeed when other governments had begun to question our

influence in the world."[55] But the observation was made in 1954, not 1934. It was, as usual, too late.

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[55]Samuel Hoare (Viscount Templewood), _Nine Troubled Years_ (London: Collins, 1954), p. 110.

CHAPTER FIVE

FROM PRAGUE TO WAR

"Of course the difficulty is with Hitler himself"

--Neville Chamberlain

The historian hoping to find a radical revelation in the story of British diplomacy in the last years of peace before World War Two is unlikely to succeed. With the exception of some private papers and a few Foreign Office documents, the bulk of information is now available and tends to confirm, in general, the now [illegible] scholarship surrounding events in the late 1930's.

But historians continue to be fascinated by the period, which suggests there are still a variety of lessons to be learned. As for the story, even the most modest student of the period is aware of the main course of events. Recurring images of umbrellas, "peace in our time" and the Führer haranguing seemingly mass-produced audiences are by now familiar. While widespread knowledge has tended to diminish the effectiveness of these narrative embellishments, it has also allowed for the exorcism of many of the demons of the period. Hitler was still bad, but on some days appeared all too human. Appeasement was still wrong, but the alternatives seem to have left no choice. In short, blame must be spread around.

In this distribution, the foreign policy of Great Britain must stand indicted. As was suggested in the opening chapter, foreign policy was not a unilateral exercise. It had to be weighed against the aspirations of the other powers, Britain's strength and her commitment to her traditional policy of the Balance of Power. Too, foreign policy did not exist in a vacuum. It had to face some real internal problems, mostly the rigid economic restraints on rearmament and the general desire of the people to avoid war at almost any cost.

The three aspects of British foreign policy discussed in the central chapters of this essay were by no means the most important. Rather, like a collage, they were part of a larger picture drawn from many sources. Certainly, it is impossible to analyze British foreign policy in the late thirties without discussing Neville Chamberlain. It is Chamberlain who seems to unify any aspects under discussion: his personal diplomacy and failure to correctly assess Hitler's true ambitions, his desire to take control of foreign policy, at least in the vital area of Anglo-German relations, and his commitment to appeasement that seemingly hindered British rearmament.

Yet each aspect transcends Chamberlain. Was his faith in his belief system so strong that no one dared oppose his concept of personal diplomacy? Was he so adept at taking control of foreign policy that no one could stand against him? Was appeasement such a [illegible] policy that alternatives were unthinkable? In each case the answer must be no. Rather, Britain--in the largest sense, the

British people-- sought the path of least resistance. A sense of isolation from the events on the Continent seemed to override the realities of Nazi dynamism. Ironically, in the long run, Britain's isolation was to save her, but just barely and at great sacrifice.

Would there have been less sacrifice had Britain opposed Germany's re-occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, thereby challenging Hitler at the outset? It is a very valid question that will perhaps never have a valid answer. In terms of the three aspects of British foreign pol[illegible]per has examined, it would seem that Britain's mood, as reflected by her inadequate military establishment, her disinterest in foreign affairs and the suspicion in which the Foreign Office was held, would not have allowed a strong enough respon[illegible]ler. One might even conjecture that a weak, ill-timed response per[illegible] would have been worse than no response at all. In 1936, Germany seemed to still have respect for Britain as a military force; it might pay to guard the illusion.

Would there have been less sacrifice if Britain had more actively supported the League and collective security?[1] Again, the answer is elusive, but it seems that Britain would no more have found real

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[1]Of which Arthur Cadogan minuted in 1939: "This flogged horse must soon die of flagellation", a comment that probably accurately reflected Foreign Office opinion after Eden's departure. (F.O., C1447[illegible]/42/18, 9 November 1938).

refuge in collective security than she did in isolation. Her contribution would have been too small and her dedication too shallow.

And, concerning the aspects of policy examined in this essay, would there have been less sacrifice had Neville Chamberlain not sought to implement his policies through personal diplomacy? Probably not.

The options open to British policy were limited and the chances of deterring Hitler either by face-to-face conversation or by conference seem, in retrospect, slim indeed. Perhaps the biggest disappointment in Chamberlain's foreign policy is that it seems to have not opened his eyes to the magnitude of the threat posed by Hitler. That he remained with his policy of appeasement so long after it had been discredited seems due in great measure to his miscalculation of Hitler's intentions.

The removal of the conduct of Anglo-German relations from the Foreign Office to 10 Downing St. had myriad implications. In particular it served to remove internal criticism of appeasement from view and to neutralize the anti-appeasers. Still, even at 10 Downing St., the ultimate futility of a foreign policy without basis in power seemed to be vaguely apprehended, though the most viable alternative meant a return to alliances, an idea distasteful to the inner circle.[2]

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[2] Feiling, *Chamberlain*, pp. 341-2.

If foreign policy had to be based on power, that power would, of necessity, have to be military. It was all well and good to speak of Britain's economic power as a "fourth service", but the truth of the matter was that Hitler was not cowed by British threats against his trade or by the machinations of international banking. As Arthur Cadogan so aptly put it, "Brave words butter no parsnips".[3] And so it was when it came to economic threats against the Nazis. Power meant, plainly, military strength and Britain, as we have seen, had little strength until very late in the day. This was not obvious at first to Hitler or his generals and they held Britain in higher regard than she deserved until the truth became all too clear.

At about the same time the Germans began to fathom British weaknesses, the British themselves awakened to the sorry state [illegible] military establishment. From the Rhineland crisis onward, it became a race between the expansionist dynamic of Nazism and the rebuilding of British military strength to a degree first adequately to support France and, later, to carry the burden of containing Hitler alone.

Thus of the three aspects of British foreign policy this thesis has examined --Chamberlain as a diplomat, the conflict between the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office and the interdependence of foreign and defense policy-- it is the last that is center stage

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[3] Dilks, Cadogan Diaries, p. 53.

during the slide toward war after Prague.

Chamberlain did not indulge in personal diplomacy after his trip to Rome in January of 1939. There was certainly one occasion --the Anglo-Franco-Russian discussion-- when he might have. But his failure of 1938 was too close and his dislike of Communists perhaps too great to allow him still another try at face-to-face diplomacy.[4] In the last month or so of peace, he drew away from personal contact, and nowhere in the Foreign Office documents can be found a suggestion that a bold personal initiative might snatch peace from the fires of war in August of 1939.

As for the conflict between Chamberlain and the Foreign Office, it could be said not to have existed by Prague. Not existent in the sense, as has been noted, that the critical question of the conduct of Anglo-German affairs had already removed to No. 10 Downing St. Throughout the spring and summer of 1939, the opposition in the Foreign Office minuted madly, but they were isolated most effectively from the mainstream of policy-making.

From the Foreign Office came the interesting theory that Germany was on the verge of economic collapse. This muted some of the more outspoken critics and silenced those who were on the border

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[4] F.O. C5028/54/18, 5 April 1939 "The Prime Minister said that he had a very considerable distrust of Russia, and had no confidence that we should obtain active and constant support from that country."

time. Perhaps if appeasement could buy a bit more time, the Nazi economy would collapse. Britain could then step in and assist Germany, the price being Hitler's agreement to participate in the European state system.[5]

What seems to emerge from the Foreign Office is a sense of confusion. So much so that one observer could write that, "there is, at present, much perplexity in Germany from the apparent lack of logic in the [illegible] of British statesmen toward the principles which they advocate". He might well have added that the same perplexity was not unknown in Britain.

As the web of Nazi intrigue widened, the Foreign Office seemed to be overwhelmed by events. One report, covering [illegible] pages, merely recounts rumors about the fate of Danzig, [illegible] covering only two weeks, and comments, rather fatalistically, "...there is little hope of Hitler agreeing to a joint Anglo-German Declaration on Danzig".[7]

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[5]F.O. C2612/15/8, 3 March 1939. At about the same time, Vansittart was predicting war as the way out of economic difficulties and, barring that, a complete nationalization of economic life (F.O. C3235/15/18, 7 March 1935).

[6]F.O. C2612/15/18, 3 March 1939.

[7]F.O. C4622/54/18, 31 March 1939. See also F.O. C4578/54/18, 30 March 1939.

The frustration of being unable to influence events is clearly reflected in an April, 1939, minute of Cadogan's which, in relation to the Polish question, he stated that, "this is one aspect of the old dilemma --should we stand up to Hitler and infuriate him or shall we stand aside and confirm him in power"?[8]

Cadogan's comment was an exercise in futility as it was evident at Prague --indeed well before-- that Britain could not stand up to Hitler beyond words, and since they could not, they along with the other powers had long ago confirmed him in power. Still, it is valid as a reflection of Foreign Office thinking after Prague.

Meanwhile Britain's moves to rebuild its defense establishment gained momentum. The "European Appreciation for 1939-1940" rightly recognized that "it would be unwise to place any substantial reliance on assistance, active or passive, from Poland", while feeling "by April 1940, it will be seen that our defensive position, generally, on land and in the air will have been improved, notably in Air Defense."[9]

The campaign to buy time was felt to have validity in that any gains would enhance Britain's ability to go over to the offense that much sooner. War seemed an almost foregone conclusion in the view

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[8] F.O. C4822/54/18, 7 April 1939.

[9] F.O. C5178/54/18, 20 February 1939, also issued as C.I.D. D.P. (p) 44.

of the "Appreciation" drafters.

If this was so and if the defense posture was steadily improving, it might help to explain the sudden infusion of backbone into British policy after Prague. Perhaps, after all, the guarantees were not just flung around with abandon. Yet the difficulty is to equate this sudden galvanizing of direction with the general air of confusion that is obvious to the reader of Foreign Office documents.[10]

One thing seems clear: Prague cleared the air. Only the utmost of naiveté could ascribe any residual decency to Hitler's aims. The guarantees gave form to the policy. There could be no going back on these, as was done in the case of Czechoslovakia. Hence in the last days of peace, British policy was much firmer and more [illegible] than in 1938. As Woodward puts it:

> ...there was...no question of conscience and, in fact, no question of choice. The choice lay with Germany. For all its reckless execution of prepared military plans, German policy was --as one might have expected-- less clearly thought out.[11]

To this might be added a renewal in confidence as regards Britain's military strength. The rearmament programs, especially the R.A.F., were beginning to hit full stride in some areas and the power

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[10] A confusion due in part perhaps to the fact that the control of the conduct of Anglo-German affairs was out of the Foreign Office.

[11] Woodward, "Some Reflections on British Policy, 1939-45" in International Affairs, July 1955, p. 276.

so long [illegible] was gradually being infused into British policy. Britain was clearly still not strong enough to challenge Hitler but she was now no longer so weak as to stand aside. Perhaps practically speaking, the guarantee to Poland had little value but in a larger sense it reflected both a moral position and a feeling that at last Britain, as her military strength grew, could begin to pressure Hitler.

Yet appeasement did not yield at once. It has been earlier suggested that it disappeared by degrees. Like the Chesire cat, it never went completely away and in June of 1939, Halifax spoke of the "twin foundations" on which British policy now rested. The first was a determination to resist force, and the second, [illegible] older policy, was Britain's "...recognition of the world's desire to get on with the constructive work of building peace."[12]

Clearly, there were contradictions in this double policy line, but the fact that Britain could enunciate a policy of resistance to force indicated a renewed confidence in her military power. Yet it was all too clear that more time was needed to create a truly viable deterrent. In the interim, an appeal to the peaceful nature of states would continue to be made. Whatever the ratio of peace to resistance

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[12]Arnold Toynbee and Veronica Toynbee, eds. Survey of International Affairs, 1939-46. Vol. 10: The Eve of War, 1939 (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 20[illegible]. The pages following offer a detailed chronology of the double line of British policy towards Germany.

of force was; it was clearly a compound of the residual effects of appeasement and the degree of completion of the rearmament program.

But the crisis surrounding the end of Czechoslovakia was better handled than had been its beginnings in 1938. Woodward points out that "in spite of the immense importance of every step in policy taken by the British Government during the weeks preceding the German invasion of Poland, the actual weight and strain of responsibility was less difficult to bear than in the crisis of 1938".[13]

Why was this so? Certainly a key reason was Chamberlain's own conversion from appeasement to the double policy line. Even if, as Medlicott suggests, that much of the force of a policy of determination to counter aggression was undermined by Chamberlain's [illegible]ng belief that "...the problem was primarily one of controlling Hitler's moods",[14] the fact remains that the change in thinking of the Prime Minister was crucial to a change in policy.

Chamberlain, for his part, had more than Hitler's insincerity to prompt his change. He could not have helped but been influenced by the fact that rearmament, slow as it was, had passed the point of greatest danger. Perhaps he felt he could now speak from a position

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[13] Woodward "Some Reflections... 1939-45", p. 276.

[14] W. N. Medlicott, Contemporary England, (New York: McKay, 1970), p. 395.

of some strength. Too, the shift in public opinion since Munich had not gone unnoticed by the Government. If at Munich Chamberlain had doubted whether the British public were ready for war, such doubts were dispelled by spring. There was a rising insistence from critics on both the right and left that every Nazi triumph was "a direct defeat and humiliation for Chamberlain and England."[15]

Thus after Prague, British policy could be described as moving from appeasement to deterrence. Until Britain could confront Germany, her policy would reflect a mixture of the two policies, the double line of which Halifax spoke. At the time of the German invasion of Poland, British policy was clearly weighted towards confronting Hitler, though the hesitation in declaring war suggests that appeasement, in some ghostly form, might have again entered Chamberlain's mind.

The shift in policy, as has been suggested, was in direct relation to the progress of rearmament. The reintroduction of conscription was not a political gesture, but rather appears to have been somewhat timed to a point when the military establishment could, in fact, handle a large influx of recruits. It would be naive to say that political factors did not have a large role, but it would be equally naive to suggest that politics were the only factor in the decision.

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[15] Ibid., p. 39[illegible]. There is apparently no study that deals with the role of public opinion in the period just prior to the war. The role of public opinion, or at least its weight in government decision-making, still seems unclear.

In spite of all the [illegible] accounts of last minute interventions by British and Swedish businessmen and all the notes that flew between capitals, there seem to be but two events of vital importance in British policy after Prague. The first of these, discussed above at some length, was the beginning of the abandonment of appeasement and the stated determination to, at some point, challenge Hitler. In this volte-face can be included conscription, the guarantees to Poland, Rumania and Greece and the general worsening of Anglo-German relations.

The other event --or perhaps, in current language, non-event -- was the attempt to reach an Anglo-French-Soviet agreement. It was a curious negotiation whose failure seemed, in retrospect, assured no matter what interpretation is taken.

Briefly to set the scene, one need only trace the Prime Minister's actions in the few days after the occupation of Prague. At first, Chamberlain hesitated in his denunciation of Hitler. But at Birmingham on the 17th, two days after Germany began her occupation of "Czechia", his tone hardened. Apologizing for creating the belief that he did not "feel strongly on the subject",[16] he went on to ask if the occupa-

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[16] Neville Chamberlain, "In Search of Peace" (New York: Putnam, 1939), p. 269.

tion was the end of an old adventure or the beginning of a new. If it was the latter, then Germany could make no greater mistake than to suppose that, because [Britain] believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power to resist such a challenge if it were ever made."[17]

This said, he began to think out a plan that he would present to the Cabinet on the 20th of March, feeling "as always, I want to gain time, for I never accept the view that war is inevitable."[18] Now, the plan would have to fit into Chamberlain's [illegible] scheme; that is to say, it would have to be a mode of warning sufficient to deter Hitler but not to madden him. As always, Chamberlain's goal was [illegible].

The plan presented to the Cabinet called essentially for a formal declaration to be made by the British, French, Soviet and Polish governments. The declaration would call for consultation between the [illegible] the event of "action being taken which appeared to constitute a threat to the security or independence"[19] of any European state. The idea of a strong statement by the four major anti-Axis powers in Europe was a good one in theory, but in practice it failed to take

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[17] Ibid., p. 275

[18] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 401

[19] Medlicott, Contemporary, p. 400. See also Toynbee, The Eve of War, 1939, pp. 70-[illegible].

into consideration the distrust between Poland and Russia on the one hand and Russia and Britain and France on the other. Polish desire to remain on the fence between her Nazi and Soviet neighbors and the British decision not to pressure Poland to sign (thus giving a *de facto* precedence to Poland over Russia) caused the project to go aground.

Similarly, a Soviet proposal for a six power conference met with a cool reception in the West. Thus Britain's first attempt to coalesce a peace front through multi-lateral consultation failed.

Viewed in this light, the next step--the extension of a guarantee to Poland--seemed if not practical at least arguable. Perhaps a series of bilaterals could succeed where multi-lateral attempts had failed. It was of little consequence that, say, it might have been better to guarantee Czechoslovakia in 1938 than Poland in [illegible].[20] The fact of the matter was that it was now 1939 and a guarantee was at once a moral statement and a warning to Hitler that Britain at last felt she was able to stand and fight. The guarantee to Poland and those to Rumania and Greece that followed became fixed points around which British policy formed. It was clearly out of the usual British style, but the threat was hardly ordinary. It seems that the

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[20]This is a point easy to make and hard to quantify. The experts felt in 1938 the military situation made exposure to German attack tantamount to suicide. See Ironside, *Ironside Diaries*, pg. [illegible]. On the other hand, a guarantee to Poland, as with Czechoslovakia, clearly would never become operative on Polish territory.

guarantees, whatever their value to the [illegible], were of great value to Britain in deciding her attitude and plan of action vis-a-vis the Germans.

With the guarantees, the stage was set for war. The remaining five months present interesting studies in national psychology and diplomatic tactics, especially those of Poland, but the only remaining major development was Russia's decision to stand aside.

A great amount of ink has been spilled over the Anglo-Franco-German talks.[21] Aside from commenting that it presented Chamberlain with a chance for personal diplomacy, a chance he wisely did not take, it is certainly debatable whether either side sincerely wanted agreement. Perhaps, as Lord Strang, the chief British negotiator [illegible] put it, "The Germans had more to offer".[22]

Whatever the reasons, the talks broke down and in the last weeks before the invasion of Poland, an eerie silence settled over Europe, broken only by the news of the Nazi-Soviet treaty. The future contacts between Germany and Britain through Dahlerus continued, indeed beyond

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[21] B.D.F.P. Series III, Vol. VII, pp. [illegible] contains the full documents. See also Strang, Home and Abroad, Toynbee, The Eve of War, 1939, and many others.

[22] Strang, Home and Abroad, p. 198. Given the immediate situation, his statement seems remarkably sound. Neutral Russia could cash in on the partition of Poland and the absorption of the Baltic States. If war between Germany and the Western Powers came, Russia would perhaps expand in the mutual exhaustion that followed. Only the schemes of Hitler ruined this, schemes apparently unsuspected by the Russians.

the eve of war itself. What remains of the genesis is more symbol than story, a relentless history by time and gesture. There was a last minute Nazi attempt to gain Poland by negotiation, half-hearted, [illegible] noisy and confused, then a 4:40 a.m. Sept. 1st invasion, followed by Britain's declaration of war —after Chamberlain's second thoughts on appeasement— on September 3rd at 11.15 in the morning. British policy had failed, appeasement and, at the last, the double line, had not deterred Hitler.

In the opening chapter of this essay British foreign policy in the inter-war years was described as among the most unsatisfactory in the long record of the British government. Yet, in the months after Prague, what had been heretofore the very failings of [illegible] policy now began to work in her favor. If war became inevitable [illegible] Prague, it would at least be clear who was the aggressor. As Toynbee puts it: "...if Hitler hoisted the black flag to Germany's masthead, Chamberlain nailed it there."[23]

But it was at a high price, perhaps too high, and in any event, did not free Britain from responsibility. Ultimately, in assessing the failure of a policy, the question must arise as to how might it have succeeded. In terms of the three aspects examined in this paper the answers have varying degrees of clarity. Certainly the easiest to

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[23] Toynbee, The Eve of War, 1939, p. [illegible].

answer concerns Chamberlain's relations with the Foreign Office. Much of his distrust seems well-placed. The Foreign Office was hide-bound, it was elitist and it was tiresomely slow. But in severing the political head from the official body, Chamberlain lost more than he gained. True, he had control over Anglo-German relations, but he lost a valuable counterpoise to his thinking and that of his "Big Four". The lesson he learned as Director of National Service in 1917 when he surrounded himself with Birmingham men was too easily forgotten. The advice of Vansittart or Eden in itself might not have prevented war, but it might have moved Britain more quickly towards rearmament.

How might Chamberlain have succeeded as a diplomat? This point defies an answer, unless it be a simplistic one [illegible] Hitler to take an orderly, proper place in the European status system. On the whole Chamberlain seems no better nor worse than the majority of high political figures that even today undertake to build their ideas to [illegible] here. The major difference between today and the thirties is one man: Hitler. Rowse called Chamberlain "inexperienced, gullible and ill-informed" as regarded foreign affairs.[24] This is overstatement of a dangerous kind, a polemic that obscures rather than clarifies, but it was an opinion held by many of the anti-appeasers. He went on to complain that Chamberlain preferred men with the same

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[24] Rowse, Appeasement, pp. 175-6.

qualities to one's with experience, shrewdness and knowledge.[24] While continuing to disagree, one can also ask of what real value the latter attributes might have been in facing Hitler, given the facts of British power.

Even Chamberlain seemed to think not so much of solving the problems in Anglo-German relations but rather of getting around them, writing that "I keep racking my brains to try and devise some means of averting a catastrophe".[25] In the final analysis, Chamberlain's personal diplomacy contributed more to the public fancy than to private reality. As has been suggested, it perhaps served its greatest purpose by setting into stark contrast the differences between Britain and Germany, differences that at the outbreak of war at least unified the former on one key point: war was due to German aggression. Still in all, it was a vague success.

The chances for any large success of British policy in Europe after the 1933 Nazi revolution rested in one word: power. Specifically, a creditable military deterrent to convince Hitler to play a more moderate role in the European state system. Clearly, as seen in Chapter 4, Britain had little military power beyond her navy in 1933. On the other hand, assuming she had the power, how might she have

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Feiling, Chamberlain, p. 357.

applied it? Not in the Rhineland, for even had the mood been right and the response adequate, British troops would have arrived after the fact. Rather than challenging the Germans the British would have been forced to dislodge them. Apparently, no such plans even existed. A recent study indicates that, contrary to the generally accepted belief that German troops were under orders to withdraw if they met French troops, the Germans had in fact been ordered by Hitler to fight if attacked.[27] In any event, neither France nor Britain reacted, as Hitler had predicted, and the Rhineland again became German. Austria and Czechoslovakia are, as military problems for Britain, extensions of the Rhineland. Support of these countries was impossible given the size of the British army and the lack of air transport and logistics, even if the Government had by some wild chance wanted to intervene. Clearly, naval power could not be projected [illegible] far inland.

Thus there is the inherent dilemma of power, namely its application. And in any view, British power whatever its potential could not have been applied in central Europe. Why then the guarantees? As stated, they were both warning and a moral response. Not a warning that Britain would defend Poland, but rather a warning that Britain would defend her traditional policy, in particular the invasion of the

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[27]D. C. Watt, "German Plans in the Reoccupation of the Rhineland: A Note", Journal of Contemporary History Vol 1, no. 4, 1966 p. 193.

Low Countries. As to morality, lest too much be given away here, it was perhaps a morality buttressed by public opinion and certainly by a renewed confidence in British rearmament.

In his use of what power he had Chamberlain seems to emerge as a more politic individual. He never overplayed his hand, finally abandoning appeasement by degrees as rearmament became credible. This does not excuse his miscalculations of Hitler, but does bring his policy of appeasement more clearly into focus. There were no better alternatives until power was obtained through rearmament and, more important, until a situation occurred where that power could in fact have a creditability.

Perhaps the two most persistent themes in this study have been Chamberlain and power. It is impossible to discuss British foreign policy in the late Thirties without mention of them. It seems that both have been misunderstood. Chamberlain was both architect and victim. Architect in that he played a key role in outlining British defense and foreign policy, victim in that he alone faced Hitler and Mussolini while others and anti-appeasers alike limited themselves to criticism. History has blamed Chamberlain, the tip of the iceberg, for accurately reflecting the desires of his own nation and probably the majority of mankind: avoidance of war at almost any price. The critics offer no alternatives because there were none other.

As to power, it has been argued that British force would have deterred Hitler. Yet where could Britain apply force? Not in the Rhineland or Austria. Czechoslovakia would have still been defeated had Britain intervened and the loss would have perhaps had serious effects on British morale had her armed forces been involved. Power is a tool whose effectiveness depends upon its proper application. It would have been more than a waste to have attempted to defend the successor states of central Europe; it would have been folly. Chamberlain can be faulted for not speeding rearmament, but not for conserving what power he had.

This examination of three aspects of British foreign policy has been essentially a negative one: conflict of personalities, failure of personal diplomacy, and the seeming inadequacy of rearmament. Perhaps this is so because it is difficult to escape a sense of the negative in British policy in the late Thirties. A well-intended morality confronted the dynamics of expansion in Germany and retreated into defeatism until almost the last moment. Who was to blame or is it, in fact, possible or necessary to cast blame? Certainly as long as there is Hitler there will be Chamberlain. Neither will ever be declared guiltless because, in greatly different ways, neither was. Yet in the case of Chamberlain the question still seems unresolved. He was in conflict with his Foreign Office, so much so as to remove from them control of Anglo-German affairs, his personal diplomacy did fail, as might have anyone's faced with Hitler, but on the question

of his use of power, his application of what influence he had to the control of Hitler, the verdict is far from clear. Future studies will perhaps be able to prove that he used what power was his to a far better degree than has been realized. To do this will require an escape from negativism that it seems too soon to expect. That same negativism colours the wider view of British policy in the last years of peace, to the detriment of much that was, if not wise, at least logical.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

Documents

Thanks to a change to a thirty-year rule in Great Britain, almost every document covering Anglo-German relations in 1938 and 1939 is now available. The series edited by E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, *Documents on British Policy, 1919-39*, Third Series, especially volumes IV through VIII, (London: HMSO, 1949-55) extract the most important documents. The remainder, with their illuminating minutes, can be found in the Public Record Office, London, England by using the *Index to the Correspondence of the Foreign Office for the Year 193[illegible]* (and 193[illegible] [illegible] is published in Germany by agreement with HMSO. Some few documents are still being witheld, but it would seem unlikely that their release will bring major revelations. To provide the German side of the story, see *Documents on German Foreign Policy from the Archives of the German Foreign Ministry*, Series D, volumes Four through Six (Washington: GPO, 1951-56). Of course, essential to any study of this nature are the *Parliamentary Debates* (House of Commons), 5th series, volumes 3[illegible] through 35[illegible], which cover the 1938 and 1939 Sessions. Other documents are listed in the Supplementary Bibliography.

<u>Memoirs and Diaries</u>

Neville Chamberlain's death in 1940 precluded any memoirs from the key British figure in the period. Two books—more properly biographies—were written by authors having access to Chamberlain's private papers and are included here. The most recent is Iain Macleod's <u>Neville Chamberlain</u>, (New York: Atheneum, 1962) which is good on the early Chamberlain, but seems to drop off after Munich. Keith Feiling's earlier <u>The Life of Neville Chamberlain</u> (London: Macmillan, 1947) is, on balance, the better book, but it too suffers from a difficult style. Both authors quote extensively from the former Prime Minister's private papers. Until Chamberlain attracts a new biographer, Feiling remains the "standard".

Among those who did manage to write their own memoirs, the following were of value in this essay. Tom Jones' <u>A Diary with Letters, 1931-40</u> (London: Oxford University Press, 1954) which gives especially interesting insight into the roots of appeasement from one who should know; the Earl of Avon, <u>The Memoirs of Anthony Eden: Facing the Dictators</u> (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962) who gives a full account (having had access to the then unpublished Foreign Office documents) of the Foreign Office in a critical period; Alfred Duff Cooper's <u>Old Men Forget: The Autobiography of Duff Cooper</u> (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1[illegible]) with its graphic descriptions of the cabinet during the Munich crisis, given in a strong anti-appeasers' language; and, A. L. Rowse's <u>Appeasement: A Study in Political Decline</u> (New York: Norton, 1961) which sometimes borders

Memoirs and Diaries (cont.)

on [illegible], but is an interesting commentary on [illegible] and appease-ment as well as a burning indictment of [illegible] in [illegible] the "Big Four" save Halifax, who is treated with some kindness.

Other memoir [illegible] include [illegible] with [illegible], (London: Hutchinson, 1953), three volumes from [illegible] who long supported Chamberlain, but broke over appeasement. From Chamberlain's inner cabinet--the "big four"--have come three memoirs. Lord Halifax in Ful-ness of Days (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1957) recounts the Foreign Secre-tary's estrangement with appeasement and offers an interesting chapter on Chamberlain. Viscount Templewood (Sir Samuel Hoare) describes how the inner cabinet worked (and, in fact, gives it the name "[illegible] four") while revealing the thinking of the principal appeasers in [illegible] Troubled Years (London: Collins, 1954). Sir John Simon's [illegible] is [illegible] little [illegible] controversial and is of little note. Sir Horace Wilson wrote [illegible]; nor has he had a biographer.

No bibliography would be complete without mention of that constant, if isolated, critic of appeasement, Winston Churchill. In particular, Step By Step (New York: Putnams, 1939) and The Gathering Storm (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1948) serve to present the feelings of a man who, though once Chamberlain's colleague, was most steadfast in his opposition to appeasement.

A variety of other memoirs of lesser interest in this essay are included in the Supplementary Bibliography.

Memoirs and Diaries (cont.)

Perhaps the most useful diary was David Dilks' The Diaries of Alexander Cadogan (New York: Putnams, 1972). This is a rare book with an excellent commentary by the editor. Cadogan emerges as a stronger figure than previous writers have believed. His role on the border line between the political and official realms of the Foreign Office proves to have been more critical that previously thought. In the long run, Cadogan seems to have been a worthy successor to Vansittart.

Ciano's Diary, 1939-43, edited by Hugh Gibson (London: Heinemann, 1947) contains slanted, but interesting views on English politicians as does Malcolm Muggeridge's edition of Ciano's Diplomatic Papers (London: Odhams, 1948).

Newspapers

By virtue of availability, only The Times of London and The New York Times were consulted. (The role of The Times of London is discussed under secondary sources). William Rock in Appeasement on Trial ([Hamden, Conn.]: Archon Books, 1966) makes good use of regional press comment in his discussion of appeasement. But no overall study of press opinion in the period seems to have been done.

Secondary Sources

The course of British policy in the interwar years has been traced by many of the most eminent contemporary historians. Among those that I found most valuable were: F. S. Northedge's The Troubled Giant: Britain Among the Great Powers, 1916-1939 (New York: Praeger, 1966) and W. N. Medlicott's British Foreign Policy Since Versailles, 1919-1963 (London: Methuen, 1968), both comprehensive accounts that take a moderate view of Chamberlain. A valuable guide to the last two years before the war is Christopher Thorne's The Approach of War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1968), a tightly written book with a wealth of detail. Other surveys include P. A. Reynolds, British Foreign Policy in the Inter-War Years (London: Longmans, 1954) and J. W. Gathorne-Hardy's A Short History of International Affairs, 1920-39 (London: Oxford University Press, 1942). Sir Lewis Namier's two books, initially published shortly after the fact and using only the various "coloured" books as sources, have aged remarkably well; they are Diplomatic Prelude 1938-1939 (London: Macmillan, 1948) and Europe in Decay (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1963). For a historian who marches to a slightly different drummer, but does so extremely well, see A. J. P. Taylor, especially The Origins of World War Two (New York: Atheneum, 1962) and English History, 1914-1945 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965).

In specific areas, a good beginning point would be Chamberlain. The two official biographies have been already mentioned. Surprisingly, there is little recent work on the "man with the Umbrella" save

Secondary Sources (cont.)

for William [illegible]'s Neville Chamberlain (New York: [illegible], 196[illegible]), a concise volume in keeping with most of the books in this series. It is particularly valuable for the author's straightforward style and chronological handling of Chamberlain's life. A variety of articles and sketches written at the time are of limited value today, but one recent article of note is an excellent study of Chamberlain's relations with Parliament. It is Marion Kenney's "The Role of the House of Commons in British Foreign Policy during the 1937-1938 Session" which may be found in Norton Downs ed., Essays in Honor of Conyers Read (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). The author takes the line that Chamberlain sought to exclude the Commons from any role in foreign policy formulation.

If Chamberlain is a bit neglected, appeasement certainly is not. In recent years, a small body of literature has grown up around the topic, with nearly as many opinions as monographs. The works are all anti-appeasement with William Rock's Appeasement on Trial making the widest, if sometimes uneven, survey. Neville Thompson studies the Conservative opposition in The Anti-Appeasers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971) and Donald Lammers takes apart the view that anti-Soviet bias was a significant factor in appeasement in Explaining Munich: The Search for a Motive in British Foreign Policy (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1966). Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott in The Appeasers

Secondary Sources (cont.)

(Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1966) and Margaret George in *The Warped Vision: British Foreign Policy 1933-1939* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1965) both concentrate on personalities although George has interesting chapters on the role of institutions and the Bank of England in appeasement.

The Foreign Office also awaits a thorough study covering this period. The memoirs of Eden are valuable and, to a lesser degree, those of Halifax. The Cadogan diaries will be of great help; but for work dedicated solely to the Office, one can only turn to John Connell (pseud.) *The Office* (London: Allan Wingate, 1958) which [illegible] on the late Thirties as is Franz Ashton-Gwatkin's *The British Foreign Service* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1950).

A valuable source on the inter-war years and on the diplomacy of Sir Nevil Henderson is Gordon Craig and Felix Gilbert, *The Diplomats, 1919-1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953). Also Ian Colvin's *Vansittart in Office* (London: Gollancz, 1965) should be noted.

In the area of defense, Robert Higham has produced two fine works, *The Military Intellectuals in Britain, 1918-1939* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1966) and *Armed Forces in Peacetime* (London: Foulis, 1962). These, together with the official history, M. M. Postan's *British War Production* (London: HMSO, 1952), provide a complete overview of the inadequacies of the British military establishment in

Secondary Sources (cont.)

the inter-war years.

A variety of miscellaneous sources would seem to round out this essay. Of the most important, and by no means miscellaneous in its own right, is Hajo Holborn's The Political Collapse of Europe (New York: Knopf, 1951). Here is a successful attempt at historical interpretation which traces the balance of power and the search for equilibrium in Europe from the Congress of Vienna to the aftermath of World War Two. In its lucidity, Holborn's book serves as historiographer and guide to the student of European diplomatic history.

Other sources include Harold Nicolson's The Congress of Vienna (New York: Harcourt, Brace, [illegible]) which serves as [illegible] of where it all began and Malcolm Muggeridge's The Sun Never Sets (New York: Random House, 1940) for one man's view of how it all ended in England. For another, see the excellent work by Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, The Long Weekend (London: Faber, 1940

An excellent book which devotes a chapter to cliques within the Foreign Office is D. C. Watt's Personalities and Policies (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, [illegible]). The [illegible] of the book is amply summed up by its sub-title: "Studies in the Formulation of British Foreign Policy in the 20th Century".

Finally, The History of the Times, Vol. IV, Part [illegible] [illegible] a unique insight into the relations between Geoffrey Dawson, [illegible] powerful editor of The Times, and Neville Chamberlain and how [illegible]

Secondary Sources (cont.)

relations affected the course of appeasement.

Brief mention should be made of some articles that were of assistance. Besides the work of Namier (previously discussed), Sir E. L. Woodward's "The Origins of the Second World War" (The [illegible], Vol. LXXII, 196[illegible]) and, by the same author, "Some Reflections on British Policy" in International Affairs, (July, 1.[illegible]). Some interesting background was found in Harold Nicolson's "British Public Opinion and Foreign Policy" in Public Opinion Quarterly (Vol. [illegible], January, 193[illegible]).

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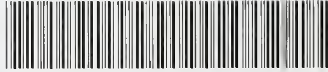
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