

ARTHUR NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN:

THE ROAD TO MUNICH

by

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This paper attempts an evaluation of the events which moved Neville Chamberlain to adopt and propagate a policy of appeasement of Fascism, and which motivated him to the conference at Munich where the culmination of this policy hastened the outbreak of the second world war of this century. While perhaps it is ambitious - or even audacious - to attempt a near-cogent overview of the events leading up to and following the capitulation in a paper of this size authored by an undergraduate, the effort has been nonetheless interesting.

The movement into necessary historical discussion forms the factual outline within which analyses are

rendered. Extensive and specific citation isn't used since, by definition, the paper is primarily concerned with personal analysis rather than pure research and integration of source materials. The approach, in which some elements of Morgenthau's views proved useful, emphasizes the sequence and character of events which either caused various other events to occur or made them, generally, inevitable.

Arthur Neville Chamberlain (1869-1940) was the second son of the British statesman Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914), who was a member of a faction of Gladstone's Liberal Party called the Radicals. Joseph Chamberlain led the Liberal-Unionists, who possessed enough power in Commons to keep the Conservatives on top for two decades. He later advocated the abandonment of the traditional British policy of free trade; his opinions later weakened the Liberal-Unionists. He had in his career favored "imperial expansionism" and internal reform.

Sir Joseph Austin Chamberlain (1863-1937), the half-brother of Neville, held various offices high in the British government, the latest of which was foreign

secretary in the second Baldwin cabinet of 1924-1929. With the American Charles Dawes, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925. During his lifetime, he published, among others, Peace In Our Time.

Neville Chamberlain was born in March of 1869, and was educated at Rugby and Mason College, Birmingham. He became Lord Mayor of that city in 1915, and entered Parliament in 1918. The offices he held are important indicators of his training in foreign affairs, or rather, his lack of it. He held, successively, the offices of Postmaster General, Paymaster General, Minister of Health, and Chancellor of the Exchequer. For his faithful service he was chosen in May of 1937 to succeed Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister. Soon after, he became the head of his party. He proved to be an efficient administrator and was possessed of great tenacity.

### I

Among his writings in 1939, Chamberlain published In Search of Peace. Of his efforts to secure peace, he remarked in the forward: "My efforts have been mocked by some and denounced by others, but I believe that by the majority they have been approved, and if peace has

not yet been securely established, we have at least so far escaped the calamity of war." He went on to discuss his philosophy of peace:

To me war is not only the cruelest but the most senseless method of settling international disputes. But man of peace that I am, there is one claim which, if it were made must, as it seems to me, be resisted even, if necessary, by force. That would be a claim by anyone state to dominate others by force, since if such a claim were admitted, I can see no possibility of peace of mind or body for anyone.

Therefore I shall not abandon my efforts for this much longed-for peace and I trust my readers, whoever and wherever they may be, if they share my ideal, will give me their good wishes and, so far as they can, their help in the cause to which I am devoting myself.<sup>1</sup>

His background, then, his half-brother's and his own philosophy of peace and pacific settlement of disputes, all influenced his outlook in foreign affairs, and helped lead him to react to the threat of Germany in the ways which will be described below. His philosophical propensities centered around the establishment of one primary international political and social aim:

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1. N. Chamberlain, In Search of Peace (New York: Van Rees Press, 1939).

the creation and propagation of universal peace.<sup>2</sup>

## II

Perhaps at this point it would be proper to discuss what lies behind the attempts to apply a policy of appeasement to a nation either potentially or actively imperialistic. At the base of such attempts is the feeling (or hope) that by satisfying the desires and fulfilling the objectives of such a nation, they will have thus achieved peacefully the policy ends of that nation. Complications often tend to tender such a process unlikely. There is the problem of detection not only of the goals of a policy, but of the nature of the means to achieve, under that policy, the goals which are so elusive. This sort of obstacle can usually best be met by the employment of a merit-selected professional diplomatic corps. Also, it is widely believed that success (and indeed failure) in the realization of goals of policies usually leads to the formation of new goals and new policies. In the case of the imperialistic

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2. K. G. Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London: MacMillan Co., 1946).

government especially, such changes rapidly occur. The lust for conquest is said to multiply with each in a sequence of successes; then too, weakness and defeat in battle may be stimulations in the formation of policies of imperialism. Munich is the classic example of the desire for conquest becoming amplified in the face of appeasement interpreted as weakness on the part of the opposition (i.e., the Allies).

Essentially, appeasement involves an error in policy detection; thus it has been described as "a mistaken policy of compromise." Professor Morgenthau defines appeasement as a foreign policy that attempts to deal with a policy of imperialism as if it were a policy of status quo.<sup>3</sup> It is, in this view, possible to see the attempts to appease Germany and Italy as an effort to aid a country on the surface merely trying to establish the proper status quo, while in reality the situation amounted to a futile gesture since every advance only made Hitler more convinced that his "grand design" was

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3. H. J. Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1960).

nearing actualization. Thus the efforts to appease these nations, the effort to eliminate the threat of war by erasing its possible cause, really made the coming upheaval occur more rapidly because they accelerated the decline of English strength.

Morgenthau feels, further, that the policies of a appeasement and imperialism "imply" one another since, if one exists in policy A, then the other exists in policy B. For our purposes, in the example of Munich, this is certainly a salient observation. That Chamberlain lacked knowledge or appreciation of this is only too evident.

Chamberlain felt that general principles do not, of themselves, "constitute a policy." "Surely if you are to have a policy you must take the particular situations and consider what action or inaction is suitable for those particular situations." He felt that, since these situations altered daily, policy could not "...be stated once and for all, if it is to be applicable to every situation that arises."<sup>4</sup> With these things in

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4. Speech in the House of Commons, October 21, 1937.

mind, it seems clear that Chamberlain thought his "psychology" would be effective at Munich; we have seen, though, how its basic assumptions contributed to relegate it to failure. Even if one were to deny the characterizations of appeasement given by most students of the subject, one would nevertheless be forced to conclude that its precepts involve a basic misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the actual policy of the particular nation at issue. The reasons behind, consequences of, this failure must subsequently be examined.

### III

The initial stages of the economic depression which began in the United States with the Wall Street stock market crash of 1929 had the effect of hindering international relations. Problems of currency stability, unemployment, trade stagnation, and commercial insufficiency combined to create a crisis situation in European affairs as national economies struggled to recover some semblance of order. Since economic conditions are often responsible for social change, it is hardly surprising that the voices of radical political leaders found fertile ground for their seeds of reform.

In the effort to analyze and discuss the various events which must be considered to understand the inter-war international climate, there follows treatment of the situations present in the nations which were the principal protagonists before and during the war. The position of England must be conceptually placed in the context of the international conditions present in the interwar world in order to establish some coherence in the picture of the various intranational and international events that led to the fateful conference at Munich.

The economic crisis had altered the nature of European society as inflation, capital concentration, etc made it difficult to conceive a swift return to order.<sup>5</sup> The crisis strata which became evident were definately material susceptible to totalitarianism. When, as early as 1931, the German schlotbarone began agitation against the Weimar Republic, the general public sentiment was one of social apathy. The rise of National Socialism, however tempting, cannot be patly blamed on Article 48

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5. C. W. Guillebaud, The Economic Recovery of Germany (New York: MacMillan Co. 1939).

of the Weimar Constitution, or proportional representation, or presidential usurpation, or the schlotbarone "sell-out," or the bureaucracy, or the labor infighting, or Versailles, or even national character (which has been described as the "last refuge of baffled historians"). Collectively, these factors spelled fundamental social crisis.

The rise of Hitler was seen by many as the dramatic ascent of a dynamic young leader whose success would eventually lead to a stronger, unified Germany. For the petty bourgeoisie (kleinburgher), National Socialism offered recognition which was felt to be long overdue. The common worker (orbeiter) was flattered by the attention he was accorded in Feder's 25 Points and, in short, wanted himself to feed at the public trough for a time. The middle bourgeoisie found a chance for prosperity and security, a feeling positively reinforced by the intense discipline which characterized the early years of the "Thousand Year Reich."

For these two groups, Hitler symbolized (among other things) the authority which Weimar had lacked - he became a focus for the general excitement. He became, in the

continuous agitations, a center of the excitement the Nazis themselves engendered. The tendency to make of Hitler a demi-god increased in direct proportion to the effectiveness of the propaganda campaigns of the government.

Doctors without patients, lawyers without clients, professors lacking students - these and others became "intellectual gangsters" as their particular talents were applied to the manipulation of state affairs. Again, it is notable that the "drifting" elements of German society, devoid of a sense of purpose, gravitated toward the Nazi vortex. Those whose lives were without direction and meaning suddenly found a movement with which to identify their frustrated feelings - this "lost generation", in short, could finally belong. The professional or avocational soldier was also likely to become a Nazi supporter; war was his life and this promised to be supplied in abundance. Many Communist soldiers even joined the SA, from which phenomenon comes the facetious comparison of them to a beefsteak (red on the inside). The schlotbarone may be epitomized by industrial tycoon Alfre Hugenberg who, with Hitler

and Franz von Papen, was one of the main conspirators in the 1933 coalition. For them, as we mentioned previously, National Socialism seemed to promise economic expansion, increased political influence and recognition, and new social status under the dynamic - or hypnotic - leadership of Hitler.

There were even attractions for the Junker society (von Papen was on the fringes of this society). It should be clear, then, that Hitler cut across class lines and focused the fears and ambitions of the various elements in German society inward upon the ultranationalistic Nazi cult, and outward upon the international scene which was to be the arena of future triumphs. The fanatic loyalty and blind obedience which he commanded is eloquent testimony to his singular success in cultivating and exploiting the frustrations of the masses and causing them to coalesce in ultranationalistic fervor.

With this base of popular support, the Nazis emerged with two enemies in the international context: the Treaty of Versailles and Bolshevism. In time, as we shall see, they precipitated far-reaching changes in both of these respects. The period from 1933 to 1936 saw Versailles

repudiated as the movement matured and began to assume the voracious and bellicose dimensions of the party and nation that initiated World War II. For various reasons, especially the critical lack of responsible leadership, elements providing resistance to the total state - the churches, the conservatives, labor and youth groups - failed to form a broad front of opposition to the Nazi mania, and the country was left in the control of the Hitler circles of elites.<sup>6</sup>

Italy, like most other European nations, also felt the influence of socialism in the early years of the present century. The teachings of Marx posed the deathless question of political change-whether it should be evolutionary or revolutionary.

In 1912, a young socialist named Benito Mussolini persuaded the party to expel reformist Leonida Bissolati. Mussolini soon assumed the editorship of Avanti! (onward or forward), the most prominent of the socialist newspapers. He continued to agitate and in 1914, with radical

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6. A. Lichtenberger, The Third Reich (New York: The Greystone Press, 1937); E. Lindley and F. Davis How War Came (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1942) Many others will suffice here.

syndicalist Filippo Corridoni, formed what became the Fascist Party.

After the war, popular disillusionment and economic problems joined to produce a desire for change. It required, in a few years, the efforts of the aged political figure Giolitti to end the problems thus caused when D'Annunzio and his footloose followers occupied the city of Fiume. The Fascists were "...a tool of reaction for the industrialists, the petty bourgeoisie, the big landowners, and then the government itself. From the Nationalists (and D'Annunzio) came the trappings of the movement: the Roman salute, the hysterical chorus of obedience to the leader, and the fatuous worship of the nation."<sup>7</sup>

The Bonomi and Facta governments proved successively weak, and Mussolini's organizational unity was employed to improve his relative position. In 1922, when Victor Emmanuel III refused to grant the request of Facta for a declaration of martial law, the Fascist march on Rome

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7. T. Cole (ed.), European Political Systems (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1961), p. 469.

was not halted. Soon after, Mussolini was asked to become prime minister. Once entrenched, Mussolini established a total state that bore testament to his ability in absolute rule: every aspect of life was subjected to intense regulation. Even the Church acquiesced, and ultranationalist foreign policies led inevitably to aggression in Ethiopia, and then to the orientation with German Fascism that eventually culminated in the downfall of the crafty Duce.

Having dealt with the two powers which formed the early opposition in Europe, it is incumbent upon us to examine the positions of the "other side," as it were, in the preliminary events leading to the 1938 conference.

The Marxist credo in Russia was based upon philosophical materialism. Hegel's "dialectical" process was modified into the Marxist "dialectical materialism," this concept (thesis, antithesis, synthesis, thesis) led to an economic "determinism" whereby the foundation of society was seen as the economy. The resulting identification of the insecure worker and the dissatisfied intellectual with this philosophy formed the outlines of the Russian distrust of capitalism.

The first years of the 20th century were dedicated to the creation of the ultimate weapon for social revolution: the party machine. The activities of the select core of believers set the stage for the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. From 1918 to 1921, the first efforts of the West to destroy this new development, and of Bolshevism to injure the West, ended in stalemate. By 1924 and 1925, diplomatic gestures had managed official recognition of Russia by most Western powers.

After Lenin left politics, Stalin assumed command and, by 1929, was regarded as a charismatic embodiment of wisdom in government leadership. The intellectual Trotsky was deported in the cleansings of 1929, and later met his fate in Mexico due to the purges of 1940. Russia began to industrialize with the first of the Five Year Plans in 1928; in 1935, Alexei Stakhanov demonstrated more efficient methods, and an incentive system was introduced to overtake the capitalist societies.

The Russian fear of finding themselves alone in a Europe and a world united in alliances not favorable to them caused the emphasis on security alliances. This consisted of championship of disarmament and non-aggression

policies, and of pledges of non-participation in hostilities instigated by others. These pacts obviously tended to negate the purpose of the League and its "collective security" policies. With the spectacular rise of Hitler, who proceeded to do in six months what Mussolini had taken three years to accomplish, and with the manifestations of the intended transfer of power in Tokyo, the world situation assumed a character which demanded decisive Soviet action to prevent danger to the very existence of the Russian nation. Such action was not forthcoming.

In 1935, the Seventh Congress initiated the "People's Front" against Fascism as the concept of world revolution was temporarily forgotten. But the doctrines of appeasement allowed Fascist extensions to continue; soon Hitler recognized Spain, and Italy joined with Germany to destroy Bolshevism. With Stalin's purges added to this brew, Russia in 1937 was, in the words of A. J. Toynbee, a gigantic madhouse.

Despite Comintern reorganization of policy, the large German Communist party was successively subordinated little by little. The entire European situation - in

which Central and Eastern Europe were surrendered to Fascism - was worsened by the isolationism of the United States, and the reluctance of England to join reciprocal agreements.<sup>8</sup> An eleventh hour non-aggression pact with Germany proved empty; the subsequent invasion brought four years of fantastic destruction without any substantial materialization of the promised U.S. aid. (The U.S. failure to provide aid has been seen as a basic element which contributed to the Cold War, the "iron curtain," the bipolar world, and other manifestations of East-West dichotomies.)

In America, the beginning of World War I triggered a reaction that endured for a quarter of a century. It has been described as a "flight from destiny" and was essentially an effort on the part of the United States to escape the international implications of being a primary world power. The election of "normalcy" in Harding in 1920 was seen by great numbers as a defeat of Wilsonianism; the rejection of the League was a clear

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8. See for fuller treatment: F.L. Schuman, Russia Since 1917 (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc. 1957); B.H. Sumner, A Short History of Russia (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1943) etc.

expression of the popular feeling.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the 1920's found it necessary to become involved in the movement for disarmament, the problem of reparations, two Pacific treaties to insure Far East stability, the Kellogg-Briand Treaty of 1928, and various problems in Latin America. Despite these, the defining characteristic of U.S. foreign policy was its isolationist temper.<sup>10</sup>

The economic depression of 1929 magnified American wishes for isolation, and as the League disintegrated and European free governments faltered, Fascism advanced in the wake of economic, social and political turmoil. The New Deal continued and expanded the trend to neutrality and isolationism as Europe seethed in the wake of Italy's invasion of Ethiopia and the entrance of the Axis powers into the civil war in Spain. However the reforms and progress of the New Deal contributed not a little to a degree of "hemispherical stability" and national unanimity

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9. C.O. Lerche, America In World Affairs (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1963), p. 43. The phrase, "flight from destiny", doesn't appear to originate with Professor Lerche.

10. Ibid.

which was to prove valuable during the trying years of the war.

It is interesting that it has been surmised that much of the acquiescence of the West to the Nazi movement was due to the American policies of that time. The truth of such a contention must here be left to the reader; the intricate causality, if it exists at all, cannot be examined here.

After World War I, France dedicated herself to two main principles. They consisted of the conviction that Germany should pay for the havoc of the war, and that Europe should be protected from future German aggression. While France was involved in the monumental task of reclamation of the areas devastated by the war, the reparations claims, originally set by Allied governments at \$56,000,000,000 (of which France was to receive 52%), were judged by Germany to be excessive and unfair. When this became evident to the French, the Ruhr Valley was seized. This presaged and partly caused the collapse of the German credit system. The Dawes Plan of 1924 accordingly allowed for different methods of reparations payment since the mark had to be stabilized before

payment could proceed at all. In 1929, the Young Plan fixed reparations at \$9,000,000,000. The Lausanne Settlement, because of the economic crisis of 1929, reduced the total to \$2,000,000,000.

The French position demanded some degree of security from Germany, a feeling which has influenced French diplomacy historically. Defense alliances with Belgium (1920) and Poland (1921) strengthened the French posture. Later France allied herself with the Little Entente powers (Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia) by treaties in 1924 and 1927. By encirclement of Austria, Germany, and Hungary, France hoped to preserve Europe and herself from the threat of aggression. The French spent liberally on defense in all fields of armament; the "Maginot Line" was lauded as impenetrable (a condition of which Germany was apparently unaware).

France was a devout proponent of the status quo as established by the peace treaties of World War I. In 1925, a meeting at Locarno (in Switzerland) concluded five treaties in which, among other things, the Versailles conditions were affirmed, pledges of pacific compromise and arbitration were announced, and, in general, "regional understandings" were promulgated. Briand's efforts

continued, and in 1928, the Kellogg-Briand Pact renouncing war (except in self-defense or censure of a state in violation of the League Covenant) was signed by fifteen countries, and eventually by fifty. But again, treaties are paper, and paper isn't practice; the escalation of national armament production stood in stark contrast to the public concern for peace.

France in 1933 was yet in the economic decline from which most other nations had arisen; her alliances had largely become merely nominal, and government fear and duplication combined to create a multifaceted crisis. In the years prior to 1938, France became increasingly dependent upon the foreign policy positions of England, while persisting in defense movements as if possessed of some prescient knowledge of the coming conflict.<sup>11</sup>

At first glance, it might seem obvious that England after World War I had profited to a greater extent than had any other European nation. However, industrial problems, manpower shortage, and international trade competition cast a shadow upon the extrinsically bright picture. The economic problems of 1929 led Britain to alter her long-

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11. W.K. Ferguson and G. Bruun, A Survey of European Civilization (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1962).

standing systems of free trade.

MacDonald became, in 1923, the first socialist prime minister England ever had. The following year saw the return to power of the Conservatives under Stanley Baldwin. Labor was again elected in 1929, once more with the aid of Liberal cooperation. A coalition government next controlled the nation with MacDonald from 1931 to 1935, and Baldwin until 1937 when Chamberlain, a Conservative, was chosen.

By 1936, foreign affairs assumed a role of dominant importance in the British government as the Nazis began to take their ultimate shape. A question, then, may be posed: Why was England napping until this time while Germany was girding, both physically and ideologically, for war and world conquest? The English position toward armament at this time can be considered in terms of the basic English beliefs regarding it, and of the effects of the financial crisis and the movement to disarm in the years of 1931-1933. The movement to rearm was begun in response to European events of 1936; its lethargic progress also hindered attempts to prevent war.<sup>12</sup>

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12. J.F. Kennedy, Why England Slept. (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1940).

It would be incorrect, therefore, to simply blame Stanley Baldwin or Neville Chamberlain, although they of course are responsible for their interpretation and reaction to events, for the mistakes of this era. At least, Roosevelt in this country was ahead of Baldwin in his concept of the deadly potential of the Fascist movements. The author cited above, J.F. Kennedy, traces an evolutionary pattern of psychological change as England groped (with much of the world) from various degrees of illusion and self-delusion for a more lucid understanding of the German position. He believed England paid the "penalty" exacted by history for her tragic tardiness of perception and her incapability of positive and decisive action.

#### IV

Germany before World War II was literally circled by arrangements which, had they been honored in time of need, would have prevented any German advances. The League of Nations, the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the Versailles Treaty, and the Locarno Pact were but the major diplomatic obstacles to German alteration of the status quo; many two-country pacts were also theoretically in opposition to

instances of German aggression. A realistic analysis would seem to indicate that nations honor such pacts only when they are compatible with their national interests.

In 1933, the course and character of German policy was internationally an unknown quantity. In 1935, Ethiopia was invaded; in 1936, the Rhineland was remilitarized; soon Hitler and Mussolini seized the opportunity to aid the rebel Franco government in the Spanish Civil War. All of these occurrences (and indeed many more) should have been red-letter clues to the nature of German Fascism; the story of the failure in this regard is a history of confusion, of concession, and of regret.

Soon after assuming leadership, the Chamberlain ministry faced problems caused by the Sino-Japanese disputes and the Spanish Civil War. On the provision that Italy would leave Spain, Chamberlain granted ratification of the recent conquest of Ethiopia. By September of 1938, Britain was an "intermediary" between the demands of Germany and those of the Czechs. Tension mounted as it became evident that the British and French meant to honor their treaty obligations, and that Hitler would not hesitate to amass the force of the Reich behind his

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conception of the rights of the Sudeten Germans. Lord Runciman felt at this time that the only amicable solution was cession of the controversial areas to Germany.

Chamberlain initially flew to see Hitler; soon they met again, and this time Hitler insisted upon the "immediate transfer" of the predominantly German areas of Czechoslovakia. It was the frantic efforts of Chamberlain in this period that prompted one observer to remark that his answer to every problem seemed to be to fly to Germany. Nevertheless, an ultimatum was sent to Czechoslovakia (a "model" democracy before the events which we are tracing). By September 28, the outbreak of war seemed but "hours away"; it was in this atmosphere that details for the conference at Munich were finally arranged. The agreement itself, consummated on September 30 of 1938, formed what might be termed a physical climax and a mental anticlimax to the appeasement movement. Those participating were Chamberlain for England, Hitler for Germany, Daladier for France, and Mussolini (who himself drew the Czech boundaries) for Italy. The agreement provided for the cession of the Sudetenland in four stages during which arbitration of issues would be handled by a

joint committee representing the powers involved. The same day the terms of the agreement were accepted by Czechoslovakia. All the while, Hitler had asserted that his intentions were pacific and that he was quite unwilling to make further claims.

In effect, the Allies had attempted to satisfy, at least temporarily and hopefully permanently, the ambitions of two dictators at the expense of a democratic nation. In this most vital of international power struggles, the inability of Chamberlain to cope effectively with political realities reached its awful peak. After he had thus ruined Czechoslovakia and endangered the entire continent, he delivered the statement, "I think it is peace for our time," upon returning to London - an opinion which formed the exact antithesis of historical fact.<sup>13</sup>

V

The success of its foreign policy placed Germany, after the Munich settlement, in a position of dominance

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13. The statement is a corruption in meaning and form of Thomas Paine in The American Crisis (Philadelphia, 1776). Here Paine deploras the shallow view, "Well! give me peace in my day," saying that a parent ought to take the position, "If there must be trouble, let it be in my day that my child may have peace."

in Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>14</sup> It also marked the simultaneous decline of the European hegemony which France had constructed by alliances following World War I.

In March 1939, the Nazis occupied the remainder of Czechoslovakia and installed a regime typical of their government system. Neither France nor England, though both had guaranteed the lines set at Munich, moved when this occurred. Hitler soon seized Memel from the small nation of Lithuania. In April 1939, Italy invaded and conquered Albania. Soon Chamberlain began to realize what was happening: the League had been destroyed, the Versailles Treaty had vanished, and Russia seemed the only hope. A treaty-making mission sent to Moscow failed due to policy alterations in that capital.

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14. W.S. Churchill, Step by Step (1936-1939) (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1939); A.L. Rowse, Appeasement (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1961). Rowse here desires the establishment of the "true" conditions prevailing at All-Souls College during the era of appeasement. He states that the majority opposed appeasement, while the Times and some of the Fellows advocated it. All, according to Rowse, were dedicated to the national interest, despite different convictions concerning the methods in which it could best be served.

Hitler and his generals realized that opening a war on two fronts could well prove disastrous. Accordingly, they opened negotiations with Russia to insure immunity from that side. Blindly, Stalin made a non-aggression pact with the Germans rather than the Allies. This allowed Hitler to attack immediately and begin the second world war. He did so on September 1 when German troops rolled into Poland.<sup>15</sup>

## VI

The Nazis possessed, in their first advances, a significant element of surprise. Poland, not even completely mobilized when attacked, was defeated in three weeks. The Allies demonstrated such inertia in the face of this aggression that Hitler asked in October for peace and the acceptance of the Polish conquest. Needless to say, it was refused. The Finnish conflicts ended in the inevitable Russian victory as the Allies remained outwardly complacent. Of the temporary lull, Chamberlain - clinging bravely to his convictions - remarked: "Hitler has missed the bus." Several days later, he apparently

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15. Innumerable references will supply information in this area.

caught it and seized Denmark and most of Norway. Chamberlain was deeply shocked, and felt at first that the reports must have been mistaken.

Soon debates were launched concerning the possibility of a Chamberlain exit. Numerous and explosive debates soon convinced him that he should resign; indeed, one of his own former followers intoned: "In the name of God, go." Winston Churchill took office in a coalition government of which Labor was a member, and was destined to become the instrument and symbol of British stamina and determination in the struggle to come.

The mobile German divisions swarmed into Belgium and Holland; shortly the invincible Maginot Line became strategically useless. Mussolini declared war on the failing Allies. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were annexed. After a pause, Britain itself was attacked. Mussolini, aided by Hitler, soon took Greece and surrounding areas. Germany, with incredible rapidity, attacked Yugoslavia.

Hitler, impatient with success, left half of his war incomplete and invaded Russia. Late in the same year, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the fray.

In succession, the Philippines, Malaya, and the "fortress" of Singapore fell. The Russian winter inhibited German advances (again we see the vaunted Russian "generals": January and February) while Burma was swiftly lost by the British. Japanese advances paralleled German successes in South Russia.

But in November of 1942, Rommel was attacked in Libya, and Russian armies counterattacked in South Russia. In 1943, Mussolini fell as the American forces moved from Africa to Italy. The Tehran Conference was held to promote unity among the Allies. The year 1944 saw the tide of war turn. Russia made gains in pushing back Germany, the battle in Italy changed, and Western troops landed in France and the Philippines. Daily, Patton swept German positions back into the Western camp; the Japanese fleet suffered crushing defeats in the battle of the Philippines. By January of 1945, Russia had recaptured much of her lost territory, and Patton and the British had cut the Reich in half. Hitler was a suicide in Berlin only two days after Mussolini had been shot in Italy, and the news ended most of the fighting in Europe.

Hints incomprehensible to the Japanese about successfully tested atomic devices preceded the slaughter of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The unconditional surrender of Japan ended the war, and the tremendous cost of all the miscalculations was left to be computed.<sup>16</sup>

## VII

We scarcely intended to engage upon a philosophical diatribe concerning the nature of the actions of the principal in a moral or ethical sense. It is not within our power to pass upon the rectitude of behavior in such a manner. However, it is surely proper to pose a very old question: Is it correct to make a facile and conclusive condemnation of a man who acted to the best of his knowledge and ability, but still failed in the exercise of his "public trust"? We might urge a more reasoned and fair appraisal; instead of branding Chamberlain a man who sacrificed a nation for his beliefs at Munich, it would be more accurate to envision him as a person whose convictions rendered him somewhat myopic

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16. J.L. Snell, Illusion and Necessity (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1963) provides a concise chronology of causes and (especially) events. Countless studies of every conceivable variety can be consulted on this subject.

to the cancerous multiplication of the totalitarian threat, and to its political significance in world affairs.

It is tempting, of course, to deposit all blame on the narrow shoulders of Neville Chamberlain. It is also impossible. We recognize that honorable intent does not by any means absolve officials (or anyone else) of responsibility for their actions. But we should make an effort to understand motivation in the structuralization of Chamberlain's position as a reflection of his environment and personal beliefs. In sum, the "atmosphere" in which decisions and policies are formulated and executed must be taken into consideration.

### VIII

The basic test of the efficacy of any policy is its operation in reality, when exposed to the actual political phenomena which it purports to deal with in a particular manner.<sup>17</sup> The policies propounded by Chamberlain in the areas discussed failed to correspond with political reality since they mistakenly felt that Hitler wasn't engaged in the execution of policies of imperialism,

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17. Morgenthau, op. cit.

and that, even if he was, they could be satisfied by concessions. Thus appeasement appears to us, in the cold light of historical perspective, manifestly impracticable and quite completely counterproductive. How and why appeasement seemed necessary to Chamberlain we have already seen: His steadfast adherence to an ideal precluded the objective visualization of material realities which might possibly have averted or prevented (or at least given the Allies time to prepare for) the outbreak of war.

If there is any merit analysis of the Munich capitulation, it is probably couched in the sentiments of those who have realized the basic futility of attempting to satiate that which only becomes more ravenous with each feeding. As Secretary of State Dean Rusk observed at The Johns Hopkins University in a recent speech: "...we have to have enough time for you to learn what many of us have forgotten: aggression cannot be fed because it has a political appetite that is never satisfied."<sup>18</sup>

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18. Delivered in October, 1965 and entitled "The Unseen Search For Peace."