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## Some Political Issues in the Background of World War II

By FRANCIS NEILSON

### Churchill and the League of Nations

IF THE STUDENT has spare time to indulge in a fascinating exercise concerning the intellectual shiftiness of the mind of a statesman, he cannot do better than compare what Churchill said to the House of Commons in the speeches printed in *While England Slept* with what he wrote to himself in *Step by Step*. It is in this comparison that we find the views he held about submitting the difficult problems of Central Europe to the League of Nations. Although he knew the League of Nations had failed for fifteen years to consider the petitions of minorities, he would have us believe that there was no other court of redress. But what was his real opinion of the League of Nations? Here it is: "The League at the present time is not strong enough to undergo a surgical operation. It would die under the knife. Even the chloroform might prove fatal."<sup>1</sup>

Such was his opinion of the League eight months before the Munich settlement. But Attlee's remarks about Churchill's notion of military preparedness to meet the great force that Hitler was spending so much money upon proves conclusively that the leader of the opposition did not know that what Churchill said in public was not what he thought when he wrote to himself. Surely, however, he must have heard the speech that Churchill delivered in the House on the Consolidated Fund Bill, March 24, 1938, in which he said:

. . . In the opinion of many good judges, Germany is not ready this year for such an ordeal as a major land war. . . . I cannot see that it would be to the interest of the rulers of Germany to provoke such a war.<sup>2</sup>

I wonder if, when Churchill wrote on October 15, 1937, "I declare my belief that a major war is not imminent, and I still believe there is a good chance of no major war taking place again in our time,"<sup>3</sup> he remembered what he had told the House on March 10, 1936 about Germany's expenditures "upon warlike preparations."<sup>4</sup>

Here was a case of Dr. Jekyll not knowing when he was Mr. Hyde. So with all the bluster about the terrible Hitler and the immense sums

<sup>1</sup> Written February 4, 1938; see Churchill, *Step by Step*, New York, Putnam's, 1939, p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> Churchill, *While England Slept*, New York, Putnam's, 1938, p. 398.

<sup>3</sup> *Step by Step*, p. 149.

<sup>4</sup> *While England Slept*, p. 241.

that he spent upon war preparations, Churchill convinced himself before the Munich settlement there would be no major war over the problem of the minorities in Czechoslovakia.

Who convinced him of this? When the war was over, we learned that there was only one man in the French Cabinet who was in favor of war, and he was Georges Mandel. In the spring of 1938, he had communicated to William Bullitt, the American Ambassador, that the French Government would do nothing to help Beneš.

Was Attlee sincere when he questioned the wisdom of the Prime Minister's visit to Munich? It is hard to believe that before the debate he had emptied his mind of all the amazing changes in Churchill's proposals (made in and out of the House) for dealing with the problems of Central Europe. At one time he was in favor of collective security. He had infinite faith in that, but he never told the House how it could be brought about. However, it made an excellent text for a speech.

Attlee, at the time of the Munich debate, must have forgotten all about it. Churchill, in November 1936, seemed to be deeply concerned over the peace of Europe, when he spoke to the House on Collective Security:

. . . Germany, we are assured, is a most peace-loving country. It is true they are scraping together a few weapons, but that, we are told, is only because of the terror in which they dwell of a Russian Bolshevik invasion. . . . Let them come into the system of collective security, and if Russia is the aggressor and the invader, then all Europe will give to Germany guarantees that they will not go down unaided. . . .<sup>5</sup>

The astonishing thing about it all was that there was no one on the Treasury Bench capable of replying to Attlee by quoting Churchill against himself. All this is bad enough, but there was worse to come. For the Munich debate revealed to Churchill that he could look for recruits in the Labor Party.

#### Disintegration of Czechoslovakia

CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE PATCHED-UP STATE put together at the instance of Masaryk and Beneš, fell to pieces. Its power as a military stronghold of the Little Entente disappeared in a night. Mr. Churchill had said in a letter to himself on the subject of the European crisis, only two weeks before Chamberlain went to Munich (September 15, 1938):

Inside the Czechoslovakian Republic there is an absolute determination to fight for life and freedom. All their frontiers, even that opposite Austria, are well fortified and guarded by a strong and devoted army. . . . The Czechoslovakian army is one of the best equipped in the world. It

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 313.

has admirable tanks, anti-tank guns and anti-aircraft artillery. This resolute people have long prepared themselves for the ordeal. Systems of concrete pill-boxes and solid entrenchments, if defended, cannot be taken at a run.<sup>6</sup>

The "fertile brain" accredited to him by Lloyd George played him false again. France did not move a soldier; Poland watched the debacle without alarm, so continental observers remarked in their press. Stalin sat at the Kremlin, his poker face set. No one was to know the cards he would play, although there were strenuous attempts on the part of the British Government to have a look at his hand.

The story circulated by Robert Coulondre, the French Ambassador, about the treatment of Dr. Hacha and his Foreign Secretary, when they reached Berlin made a deep impression upon the people who read it in the newspapers. But the French Government took no action. This was strange, because we read in the British documents the Communists invented a yarn about Hitler having planned to strike at the Low Countries and France in the spring of 1939. I think it was the British Ambassador in Paris who tracked this story to its source. Anyway, such an outrage never entered the mind of the Führer, even though he had occupied the Rhineland some time before.

Churchill saw the reason for a war coming to nothing, but Hitler's occupation of what was left of Czechoslovakia gave him the very best pretext for rousing public opinion, which had been firmly fixed on keeping the peace. The cry went out, "Hitler has broken his pledge given to Chamberlain." Without consulting the British Government, he had violated the Munich Agreement, in which he had promised to submit a new crisis to the consideration of both governments.

The weeks that passed between the time of the Munich settlement and when Dr. Hacha and his Foreign Secretary went to Berlin to see Hitler in March 1939 were the busiest the British War Party spent. It was no great effort to bring the sensational press into line with their purpose, but it was a stupendous job to change the mind of the people who had unmistakably shown a desire for peace.

The truth about what was taking place in Czechoslovakia during the winter never reached the British public. Indeed, most of the stories that appeared in the war press were not true. There has been so much confusion of thought about this period and what really took place that it is time now the crisis should be described in clear terms. The best single report of it is in Alan Bullock's *Hitler, A Study in Tyranny*, in the chap-

<sup>6</sup> *Step by Step*, p. 246.

ter entitled "From Vienna to Prague, 1938–1939," part XII. There the reader can satisfy himself about the events that took place in Prague and Berlin.

The report that Hitler had acted entirely on his own in this matter is quite untrue. The British documents show that Sir Neville Henderson was informed of everything that took place. His dispatch to Halifax in *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919–1939*, Third Series, Volume IV (1951), No. 256, is conclusive proof of the correct diplomatic procedure. There is, also, in the same volume the dispatch of Mr. Newton from Prague to the British Foreign Office (No. 262). We learn from them:

. . . The Czecho-Slovak President declared that in order to serve this purpose, and in order to secure final pacification, he placed the destiny of the Czech people and country with confidence in the hands of the Führer of the German Reich.

The Führer accepted this declaration and expressed his determination to take the Czech people under the protection of the German Reich and to guarantee to it an autonomous development of its national life in accordance with its particular characteristics.<sup>7</sup>

The rush of these events was too much for Neville Chamberlain. He seemed to be helpless before the torrent of abuse that was let loose when Hitler marched into Prague. The speech that he made at Birmingham on March 17, 1939 came from a man who had lost hope. He said:

. . . Nothing that we could have done, nothing that France could have done, or Russia could have done could possibly have saved Czechoslovakia from invasion and destruction. Even if we had subsequently gone to war to punish Germany for her actions, and if after the frightful losses which would have been inflicted upon all partakers in the war we had been victorious in the end, never could we have reconstructed Czechoslovakia as she was framed by the Treaty of Versailles. . . .<sup>8</sup>

When the British War Party wrung the pledge to support Poland, Churchill's purpose was achieved.

#### The Role of Sir Neville Henderson

THE STORY that is told by Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador to Berlin, in his book, *The Failure of a Mission*,<sup>9</sup> is not in accordance with the facts. Hitler had no plan in October 1938—neither before the

<sup>7</sup> Dated Berlin, March 15, 1939; *loc. cit.*, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup> *The British War Blue Book*, Miscellaneous No. 9 (1939), New York, Farrar & Rinehart, pp. 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1940.

Munich meeting or after it—of dealing with the Czech Government as Henderson would have us believe. Indeed, he could not foresee the utter disintegration of the State, after the minorities revolted and Germany, Hungary and Poland reclaimed the territory and people who had been wrested by the Treaty of St. Germain, under which treaty the State of Czechoslovakia had been established. There is no doubt that Hitler took every opportunity that came his way to accomplish his purpose, but there was no indication four months after Munich that Dr. Hacha and his Foreign Secretary would, on their own initiative, go to Berlin to see Hitler.

Beneš resigned as President of Czechoslovakia just after the Munich settlement, on October 5, 1938. The Czechoslovakian army had been mobilized on September 23rd, and Hitler demanded the evacuation of the Sudetenland by October 1st. Both Poland and Hungary were eagerly awaiting the chance to reclaim their people.

Poland presented an ultimatum to the Prague Government on September 30, 1938, and occupied Teschen on October 2nd. Hungary, likewise, demanded immediate negotiations for settling her territorial claims on Czechoslovakia (October 2nd). These are some of the facts that should have been known to the House of Commons, for I have taken them from Sir John Hammerton's review of the crisis, to be found in *Europe's Fight for Freedom*,<sup>10</sup> a work that went under the counter before Hitler struck at Poland.

How the British people were humbugged by the government and the servile press is no mystery to me, for I lived through the Second Boer War and remember what happened when news contrary to the government view was published in the *Daily News* and the *Manchester Guardian*. The abuse of "freedom of the press" in war time has been exposed over and over again during the past two generations by editors and journalists who were obliged to toe the line marked by the censor or get out.

Freedom to distort the news and paint the foe as gangsters and liars denotes a freedom that exceeds the bounds of patriotic license. But when the diplomatists delude themselves, it is not to be expected that those in Parliament who depend upon the Foreign Secretary for information will be enlightened. Edward Grey was dependent upon Sir Arthur Nicolson and Eyre Crowe for news of what was taking place on the Continent. Eden and Halifax were dependent upon Vansittart.

There should be no doubt in the mind of anyone who will take the trouble to do some reading about the sinister influences that were working

<sup>10</sup> Part 12, p. 500.

against the British public from the time that Churchill made up his mind to work for a war. The position of a diplomatist, in which Sir Nevile Henderson found himself at Berlin for the months before the attack on Poland, can only be appreciated by men who have known something of the work of legations. He rejected the stories in the German press about the sufferings of the minorities. What else could he do? He was the British Ambassador. He could not go to Karlsbad or Marienbad to see what the Narodne Jednota band had done in the Sudetenland.

Who was there in diplomatic circles in Berlin to tell him that there was at least some truth in the reports published in the press? It borders on the farcical for one to imagine that an ambassador in such a crisis can give information to his government that cuts athwart the policy it pursues.

When Hitler was appealed to by Dr. Hacha and Dr. Chvalkovsky, he had no other course of communicating with the British Government than through Sir Nevile Henderson. That conforms with the routine work of the embassy, and it should be patent to any reader who goes to the trouble of looking through a book of dispatches. But it takes time to transmit information from an embassy to the Foreign Office of another State.

According to the story in *The Failure of a Mission*, Hitler must have been taken by surprise when Hacha determined to go from Prague to Berlin. This is quite plain because Hitler had an engagement in Vienna, and Göring was going to San Remo for a rest. In the circumstances, there was no opportunity, according to the time sheet in several reports of what took place that week, for Henderson to communicate with London. Indeed, he himself admits that he went to bed and was surprised at the news when he read the papers the next morning.

But suppose that he had sent word to the Foreign Office at Downing Street. It would have been some time before the Prime Minister could be reached, and more time would have been wasted in waiting for the House to meet; time wasted in dispatching back to Berlin; and time wasted again in communicating the British reply to Ribbentrop.

Is it any wonder that, so far as these events were foreshadowed some years before the war, the keenest European observers came to the conclusion that consular agents should supplant diplomatists, cut the red tape, use the telephone direct, and economize time, just as keen manufacturers and merchants would do in their business?

It is just as well to review the events that arose quickly one after another, if we are to understand why there were protests against the action Hitler took in going to Prague. No one asked the question as to what

would have happened in that almost dismantled State if Chamberlain had said that the appeal of Dr. Hacha was to be rejected. Was chaos to be desired? The reader may comb the literature on this grave matter in vain for a suggestion as to what the British would have done if their government had been in the situation that Hitler was.

The review of this period is necessary, because it has been made the pretext of giving the pledge to Poland.

#### Czech and Polish Minority Problems

FOR SOME DAYS before it was announced in the House, the press let loose a torrent of denunciation and described the act of Hitler and his troops as a violation of the pledges he had given at Munich. Who was to stamp that charge as untrue? The document signed by Hitler and Chamberlain on September 30, 1938, at Munich is clear upon that point. The last paragraph—the important one, reads as follows:

*We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.*<sup>11</sup> (Italics mine)

The problems of the minorities in the State that was called Czechoslovakia were not terminated at Munich. There was no possible way then of hitting upon a solution, for while they were discussing these affairs in Bavaria, difficulties were increasing in the Czech State, and neither Hitler nor Chamberlain could tell what would have to be done to save Bohemia from chaos. They did not know that Beneš was then contemplating resignation. He gave up his job on October 5, 1938. The Poles, the Hungarians and the Slovaks were reincorporating the sequestered territory and their peoples. Therefore, the words "any other questions" could refer neither to Czechoslovakia nor Danzig and the Corridor. It might be said that "any other questions" referred to the Polish problem, but such a notion disregards the pledge that Hitler made over and over again to bring the sequestered people back into the Reich. He could not under any circumstances have promised Chamberlain to abandon his projects.

Notwithstanding, the pledge to Poland was given because Hitler was "an unreliable man." Presumably it was the best excuse that could be made at the time, and it was such a relief to the War Party that no one asked if it were possible for Great Britain to go to the aid of Poland, if she was attacked by Hitler.

<sup>11</sup> *Doc. on Brit. For. Pol. 1919-1939*, ed. by E. L. Woodward, London, H.M.S.O., 1949, Third Series, Vol. II, 1938, p. 640.



## Panic Caused by British Warmongers

WHETHER THE CAUSE of peace was lost or won in September 1938, there could be no doubt that the Prime Minister's efforts to come to an understanding with the Führer would have little or no influence upon Churchill and his friends. I do not know a work that has been published by an American or an English historian that tells the story of the five days in September, 1938 when the people were swept off their feet by the most senseless panic ever invented by warmongers. It is described in detail and with many illustrations in the first number of *Europe's Fight for Freedom*.

The detail of this orgy of military preparedness for a supposed attack upon Great Britain led to demonstrations that were unbelievably crazy. The reason for it was said to be the speech that Hitler made in Berlin, on September 26, 1938. In reading it once more, as given in *My New Order*,<sup>12</sup> it is hard to find a line in it that justified the panic created by the warmongers in England. The candor and brusqueness of the statement Hitler gave to his people, concerning his interchanges with the President of the Czech State, have many overtones. But the substance cannot be challenged.

The language is strong, emphatic. He did not mince matters by using the polite, meaningless phrases of diplomacy. No wonder it was resented in London and New York, where plainer declarations are customary to cover a multitude of sins.

Beneš had rejected the Godesberg Agreement, but neither the House of Commons nor the people seemed to have known that fact. Consequently Hitler put a time limit—October 1st—for Beneš to comply with the Chamberlain-Hitler solution, as it was considered at Godesberg.

What followed the sensational newspaper statements of what had taken place makes strange reading at this time. Trenches were dug in the parks, gas masks were distributed to the people; plans made for the evacuation of school children; coastal defences were strengthened, and iron railings were torn up to be melted down. For five days an orgy went wild, without the slightest provocation of injury to Great Britain. In all this, the territories of the minorities (despite the Godesberg Agreement) were included in Czechoslovakia, despite the fact that Hitler in his speech at Berlin laid it down clearly that he had not the slightest desire to menace Bohemia and its capital.

A British soldier of high rank told me that the government was amazed at what had taken place. Indeed, it is evident now from the literature

<sup>12</sup> Edited by Raoul de Roussy de Sales, New York, Reynal & Hitchcock, 1941, pp. 515-33.

upon this short period in September, after the Berlin speech, that the panic would never have arisen without the report that France and Russia would join Great Britain in a triple front against Germany.<sup>13</sup>

This preposterous idea was persistently circulated, and to a great extent, it was responsible for what happened while the British Prime Minister was still in communication with Hitler, for he had not given up hope of finding a solution of the problem.

And yet another visit by Chamberlain to Germany was to come, the most momentous one of all. The mobilization that Hitler had planned for the protection of the Sudetens was postponed for twenty-four hours on the intervention of Mussolini.

Hitler invited the Prime Minister to join Daladier and Mussolini in a conference at Munich. Looking over this extraordinary week, it seems incredible that the people who dug trenches, pulled up railings, wore gas masks, should have, within a few hours, welcomed Chamberlain at the airport as a savior of the peace. The relief seems to have been a logical one, but no one asked if there had been the slightest necessity for the panic. William Gallacher has said that he and Churchill were the only two members of the House of Commons who remained silent when the House gave the Prime Minister an ovation.<sup>14</sup> Sir John Hammerton tells us, in his review of the events, that "October 2, 1938, following the signing of the Munich Agreement, was set aside by all denominations as a day of thanksgiving for peace. All over the country, the Empire and the world, congregations gathered to praise God for the relief from disaster."<sup>15</sup>

#### Hitler's Monetary Policies

THE READER whose mind has been warped by the propaganda that has been circulated since 1933 may be disturbed at this review of events and think that it is undertaken in defense of what occurred in Germany. However, the questions of defense and charges do not arise in this survey as partisan affairs. It is only by thorough investigation of the literature which deals with the political, diplomatic, financial and commercial problems of the period that one can arrive at a judgment that is historically satisfactory.

The political and diplomatic literature of the portentous six years before Hitler attacked Poland gives us enough information to enable us to decide

<sup>13</sup> *New York Times* editorial, Sept. 27, 1938.

<sup>14</sup> *Sunday Express*, London, July 19, 1957.

<sup>15</sup> *Europe's Fight for Freedom*, No. 12, p. 492.

many of the vexed questions that arose during the war. Every well-equipped library in America and Great Britain should have works that will enable the student to see things as they were, not as they were pictured by the official broadcasters and writers.

It is, however, not so easy to find works that enlighten us about the changes that Hitler made in the financial arrangements of the State and commercial transactions. He had decided long before he became Der Führer that foreign loans were inimical to the interests of the workers who had to find the interest for payment. He also declared that the system of the exchange of goods should be the ancient one of barter. These two proposals deeply disturbed the financial world; and the worst of it was, as the months passed after he became Chancellor, he was putting his new systems into operation and they were working well in the most amazing manner.

The reader will find sections in *The Tragedy of Europe* and *The Makers of War*, where I explain in some detail the operations and newspaper reports upon them.

The effect seemed to be the grave one of dislocating not only the foreign banking system but also the disruption of the exchange system. All this was well known before Hitler went into the Rhineland (March 1936) and later into Austria (March 1938). One year after the war began, *The Times* (London) published articles upon the success of Hitler's system.<sup>16</sup> The most astonishing thing was that the new operations met with success from the first.

We may now ask what Mr. Churchill thought about it all. In November 1936, General Robert E. Wood had lunch with him in London, and before the Senate committee he testified that Churchill said: "Germany is getting too strong and we must smash her."<sup>17</sup> This was long before the festering sores in Czechoslovakia came to a head.

Now one of the strangest difficulties the reader must resolve for himself is how this statement came to be made by Churchill about the time that he was writing the most laudatory tributes to the achievements of Hitler. One was as follows:

Whatever else may be thought about these exploits, they are certainly among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world.<sup>18</sup>

And then in September 1937, in a letter to himself, Churchill wrote:

<sup>16</sup> See Neilson, *The Churchill Legend*, pp. 294-5.

<sup>17</sup> *New York Times*, Feb. 5, 1941.

<sup>18</sup> *Great Contemporaries*, p. 226.

. . . One may dislike Hitler's system and yet admire his patriotic achievement. If our country were defeated I hope we should find a champion as indomitable to restore our courage and lead us back to our place among the nations.<sup>19</sup>

These encomiums must have been written months before the books were published. Was Churchill defending Hitler, finding excuses for what he had done? It is just as well to put this question and think deeply about it, for it will help us to find some reason why Germany should be "smashed."

To what extent these books were read by the British taxpayers cannot be determined, but they must have had a considerable circulation in the United States. I cannot predict what the historian will say about this matter, but we may be sure he will wonder what the condition of Churchill's mind was when he determined to destroy the type of champion he hoped would arise in England if she were ever in the position Germany was when Hitler appeared upon the scene.

#### The Pledge to Poland, March 1939

THE SCENES in the House of Commons after Chamberlain's declaration of the pledge to Poland<sup>20</sup> have been described as a demonstration of sheer warmongering. If there was a member who imagined for a moment that it was a gesture in favor of a peaceful settlement of the outstanding problems, he did not make his presence felt. The belligerent party excelled themselves in revealing their desires to smash Hitler. The clamor for action rose to a high pitch. The members who were foremost in this triumph were: Churchill, Eden, Duff Cooper, Harold Nicolson, Cripps, Greenwood, and Morrison. Churchill had told the Prime Minister after the Munich settlement that he was going to say the most unpopular thing, and the War Party cheered his efforts. Now in March 1939, no one asked how Great Britain intended to aid Poland, if she was attacked by Germany.

The determined attitude of the War Party was summed up by Sir John Hammerton, just a year earlier, as follows:

Britain has nothing to lose by taking up a stern attitude. Hitler's threats are only a bluff; there would be a revolution in Germany if he engaged in a major war. France and Russia would stand by us [England] without any hesitation, and we should have the moral support of the

<sup>19</sup> *Step by Step*, pp. 143-4.

<sup>20</sup> See Peter H. Nicoll, *Britain's Blunder*, Torquay, Devon (England), The Devonshire Press, no date.

United States. Now is the time to submerge Fascism. If Britain is going to enter the arena at all, it should be with a sword in her hand.<sup>21</sup>

The wild statements and unsubstantial hopes of these gentlemen led to war. In the Munich debates (October 3 to 6, 1938), Mr. Eden stated:

. . . I would like to make special reference [to] the appearance in the press of this country on Tuesday last of this statement:

It was authoritatively stated in London last night that should Germany, in spite of all efforts made by the British Prime Minister, attack Czechoslovakia, France would be compelled immediately to go to the Czech's assistance and Britain and Russia would certainly stand by France.<sup>22</sup>

There were only two sources from which such a notion could emanate. They were in Paris. One was Georges Mandel, and the other American Ambassador, William Bullitt. However, the British War Party learned nothing from the defeat of their hopes during the Czechoslovakian crisis, when the French Government took no action whatever. After the promise of aid to Poland, they still believed that France and Russia would combine with Great Britain, if Hitler began war. Again, they were disappointed. And even in August 1939, they cherished the idea that Russia and France would be allies of Great Britain when the time came for action. Indeed, Mr. Greenwood was so sure of this that he stated: "Poland will not be allowed to follow to the grave those nations that were martyred by the aggressors."<sup>23</sup>

They seemed to pin their faith to their delusions. No matter how often they were mistaken, they cherished fervently the hope that some miracle would take place to confirm their desires. From the middle of March to the first of September 1939, when the first shot was fired, they imagined a cooperation of the powers that would call Hitler's "bluff," the words used by Duff Cooper, in his speech to the Commons after his resignation: "Do they mean that he [Hitler] believes that he will get away with this, as he has got away with everything else, without fighting, by well-timed bluff, bluster and blackmail?"<sup>24</sup>

The mobilization of the fleet made little or no impression upon Hitler, although it might have been an unmistakable indication that war was inevitable. The action was strongly reminiscent of the First World War, when Churchill gave orders for the fleet not to demobilize and then moved it on July 25th, in accordance with the Franco-Russian Treaty of 1892, which declared that mobilization was a declaration of war. Who would

<sup>21</sup> *Europe's Fight for Freedom*, No. 3, p. 110.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 11, p. 443.

<sup>23</sup> Speech reported in *The Times* (London), Aug. 30, 1939.

<sup>24</sup> See *The Tragedy of Europe*, Vol. I, p. 295.

have believed, then, that three British cruisers would be sunk by German submarines, and that later on the great battleship "Audacious" would be torpedoed off the coast of Ulster?

In 1939 it was Churchill who placed implicit faith in the prowess of the Little Entente, and who declared, "Thank God for the French Army." In the early months of the First World War nothing turned out as he had hoped. So it was after the Munich settlement and for seven or eight months before Poland was defeated, when no bullets were shot from British, French, or Russian guns. Poland was left alone to withstand Hitler's attack.

#### French Revelations

THE STORY told in *Europe's Fight for Freedom* is historically correct, so far as it goes. It must be remembered that the editor brings it to a conclusion shortly after the Munich settlement. Nevertheless, it is valuable for the student who will follow the progress of the British War Party from the time that Hitler became chancellor. Before the value of this work was appreciated by the British public, the thunders of the war storm came rolling over the British Isles, and the sensational newspapers vied with official broadcasters in an effort to convert the people who desired peace into a nation fearing another continental war.

In the melee of the summer of 1939, such works as Hammerton's were taken from the bookstalls and put under the counter. Probably the taxpayer was in no mood to read what had happened. It was quite in the order of things that his mind should be given to what was to come. Still, such a work as *Europe's Fight for Freedom* was not in the interests of Churchill and the British War Party. Indeed, it is a straightforward narrative of its formation and efforts to thwart the Prime Minister's work to keep the peace.

How resolute they were! What a demonstration of righteous political indignation! They would not see Poland "swallowed up" like Benes' State. They would prevent that "with others." The anti-German European States would never permit Hitler to dominate the Continent. Great Britain, France, Russia and perhaps the United States would combine against such an act. That phrase of Churchill, "with others," used in so many of his speeches and letters was a mere dream. Nothing was to be done by the United States, for Roosevelt was occupied day in and day out wondering how to solve the unemployment problem and to gain the nomination for a third term. Nor was there any hope coming from France, of a nature that would prove substantial. All that the British War Party had to base its hopes upon was the information they received from Georges

Mandel, the Minister of Interior, William Bullitt, the American Ambassador, Daladier, the pusillanimous Premier, and Lukasiewicz, the Polish Ambassador to France.

The revelations concerning the actions of these people, which were published at the time of the Vichy and Riom trails, are unbelievably monstrous. It is hard to imagine how such a conspiracy could have been hatched without the knowledge of the Chamber of Deputies. The dispatches on this matter that appeared in the New York papers give one the impression that Flandin was right when he accused them of being responsible for starting the war. *The New York Herald Tribune* of December 22, 1940 describes a scandalous state of affairs. It is headed: "Bullitt Accused of Helping Pull France into War," a dispatch from John Elliott at Vichy.

In *The New York Times* of December 15, 1940 there are two articles: one headed "Laval and Flandin Long Pro-Germans"; the other is headed "Flandin Expected to Aid Riom Trial." The information they contain will startle the reader who had been under the impression, since Hitler attacked Poland, that he was the deep-dyed villain of the piece.

The article from Paris (delayed) dated December 10th states that Flandin, in an interview in the *Matin*, said:

In contradiction to the declaration of (Sir Nevile) Henderson, the British Ambassador to Berlin, Flandin said that the British Ambassador had understood very well the German proposals referring to Poland. Flandin guaranteed further that the Polish Government never saw these proposals, since neither the French nor the British Governments had communicated these proposals to them.

Flandin stated that Germany awaited the Polish negotiators in vain. These negotiators could not come. The Polish Government did not know anything about Germany's proposals.

Flandin stressed that the then French Government had strong intentions not to tell the French people the real state of affairs. Daladier had sent a private message to Hitler to which the latter answered on the Twenty-seventh of August, 1939. They had agreed that these letters would not be published.

In spite of this, certain French papers published Daladier's letters but not the letters written by Hitler. The German Ambassador in Paris protested against this publication, and demanded that the replies of the Fuehrer should be published also, so that the French people would be informed, honestly and justly. . . .<sup>25</sup>

How much of this business was known to Churchill, Duff Cooper, Eden and Greenwood? It is quite likely they were informed by Georges Man-

<sup>25</sup> *New York Times*, Dec. 15, 1940.



del, for after the fall of France when Mandel went to North Africa, Duff Cooper and Eden took the plane to see him. For what purpose? Were they afraid that he might be taken back to France and tried with Daladier? Would he give evidence against them in that case? It was a risky journey to take, and we may be sure that the errand was a desperate one.

The Daladier-Bullitt combination in Paris will be regarded by the historians of another generation as one of criminal intent. The following is the accusation that was published in the French weekly paper, *Gringoire*:

. . . Bullitt was accused of being one of the persons who persuaded Daladier to declare war against Germany at 5 p. m. Sunday, Sept. 3, instead of giving Hitler until 5 a. m. Monday, as Bonnet desired.

"Bonnet was on the point of telephoning Coulondre [Robert Coulondre, French Ambassador to Germany]," said the *Gringoire* article, "when Daladier called him to say that he had changed his mind and fixed the expiration time at 5 o'clock the same day. Bullitt, Lukasiewicz and Mandel [Georges Mandel, Minister of Interior] had won him over."<sup>26</sup>

The men accused of assisting Churchill in his threat of smashing Germany are now exposed in many works, but little notice is taken by editors of great newspapers to make their readers acquainted with the revelations. We now have a fairly straightforward story of what took place in Paris and London. What really occurred in Washington will perhaps remain a dead secret because so many of the documents were destroyed. There was, however, one man who had been at work on war plans long before Hitler appeared upon the scene: Robert Vansittart, the Permanent Secretary of the British Foreign Office. Indeed, he is quite frank about it in his book, *Lessons of My Life*.<sup>27</sup> He has escaped the notice of historians, but there was no doubt in the minds of generals of the highest rank in August, 1939 of his responsibility for unleashing the dogs of war.

After a war council meeting, General Sir John Dill, commander-in-chief, and General Sir Bernard Paget, destined to become Commander of the Home Forces, turned down Whitehall, both gravely disturbed by the tone of the meeting they had attended. Dill said to Paget, "When I see Vansittart tomorrow morning, he will say, 'It's war. I told you so!' and my reply will be, 'You made it so.'"

Budding historians should set to work now upon the task of collecting the literature that contains the evidence. It is extant in many works. Some are missing, probably bought up and destroyed; even libraries complain of the loss of certain books.

<sup>26</sup> *New York Herald Tribune*, Dec. 22, 1940, p. 16.

<sup>27</sup> *New York*, Alfred A. Knopf, 1943.



There has also been a publishers' censorship upon works dealing with this all-important question to the taxpayers. We hear much talk of the influence of men behind the scenes, which is exerted upon publishers and authors. Nothing can be proved because the names of these mysterious people are suppressed. Nevertheless, there is sufficient material to be obtained now of the history of this dreadful calamity to insure a straightforward story of how it arose and the reason for it. This is the job that devolves upon young men who will write without fear or favor the volume that will lay bare the causes of the two wars.

*Port Washington,  
Long Island, N. Y.*

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