

Materials on **Sir Neville Chamberlain in Munich** (September 1938)

The Treaty of Versailles made Germany a land of financial ruin after the end of World War I. The huge financial strain of war reparations imposed on Germany by the Treaty set the stage for the political instability that eventually brought Adolf Hitler to power in 1933. What Germany saw in Hitler was a leader who could restore the country's stature; his brazen actions and aggressive pursuit of territory were viewed through a haze of German nationalism.

At the same time, the rest of Europe had to heal, too. With the fear of an even more horrible war in the future, many countries allied with their neighbors in the years that followed World War I, hoping that these alliances would deter any attacks on them. These alliances nearly brought about war in March, 1936, when Hitler sent German troops into the Rhineland, in clear violation of the Versailles and Locarno treaties, and with little regard to the consequences for other countries. Only because of the skepticism of Belgium, Italy, and Britain were hostilities avoided. Hitler promised, "All Germany's territorial ambitions have now been satisfied."

And yet, in 1938, Hitler intimidated, threatened, and then invaded Austria, ultimately replacing Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg with a Nazi cabinet minister, who invited additional Nazi troops into Austria. Unlike 1936, however, Hitler made no statement of satisfaction this time, and secretly began to draw up plans for the invasion of the Sudeten (German) areas of Czechoslovakia. The European community grew more anxious every day, both because of Hitler's actions and because of the increasingly hostile language the Nazi regime used. Faced with the possibility of war, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain made three separate trips to Germany, to discuss the "Sudeten problem" with Hitler. What is your assessment of Chamberlain's goals, strategy, and results, and why? What different approach, if any, might you have advised and why?

CAST OF CHARACTERS
Sir Neville Chamberlain in Munich

Edouard Benes, President of Czechoslovakia

Georges Bonnet, French Foreign Minister

Sir Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain

Edouard Daladier, French prime minister

Lord Duff Cooper, British 1st Lord of the Admiralty -- resigned after Chamberlain's final visit to Germany

Edward Fredrick Lindley Wood [1st Earl of Halifax], British Foreign Secretary

Konrad Heinlein, Leader of Sudeten-German party

Sir Neville Henderson, British Ambassador

Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of Germany and leader of the Nazi party

Sir Samuel Hoare, British Home Secretary

Milan Hodza, Czechoslovakian prime minister

Cordell Hull, Secretary of State of the United States

Joseph Kennedy, United States Ambassador to England

Benito Mussolini, Chancellor of Italy

Sir Eric Phipps, British Ambassador to France

Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States

Walter Runciman [1st Viscount Runciman of Doxford], British parliamentarian and unofficial mediator

Joachim Von Ribbentrop, German Foreign Minister

CHRONOLOGY

Sir Neville Chamberlain in Munich

1919

June 28

The Treaty of Versailles is signed, ending World War I. The terms of the Treaty:

1. Provided for a League of Nations Covenant;
2. Demilitarized all German territory into 30 miles east of the Rhine;
3. Deprived Germany of overseas rights and interests;
4. Limited the manpower and equipment in the German Army and Navy; prohibited conscription; dissolved the General staff; forbade a German Air Force;
5. Brought many German officers and enlisted men accused of crimes to trial;
6. Gave Germany 30 years to pay compensation for loss and damages due to "the war imposed upon them by the aggression of Germany and her allies," authorized confiscation of German private property abroad for the reparation account; and
7. Guaranteed the Allied forces could occupy the demilitarized German Rhineland for 15 years in order to execute the Treaty. If Germany upheld the Treaty, the forces would leave; otherwise, the forces could reoccupy the territory even after 15 years.

November 19

The United States Senate rejects the treaty of Versailles, objecting specifically to the provision for a League of Nations.

1919

Disarming after the war, Britain decides on a ten-year moratorium before considering possible rearmament.

1920

February

A corporal in the German Army, Adolf Hitler, dominates the first mass meeting of the German Workers' Party in Munich.

February 19

The Treaty of Paris is signed, binding France and Poland to concert their defensive measures if either or both are attacked.

1921

May 5

The Allies issue an ultimatum to Germany: Accept liability of 132 billion gold marks and fulfill treaty stipulations regarding disarmament and war criminals, or else the Allies would reoccupy the Ruhr Valley. Germany agrees, and begins payments. However, soon faced with appalling inflation, Germany asks for a moratorium on payments until 1924. Although Britain agrees,

France and Belgium send troops into the Ruhr Valley. Germany responds by suspending all reparation payments.

1921-1922

Winter

At the Washington Conference, the U.S., Britain, Japan, France, and Italy sign a five power treaty regulating comparative strengths in battleships and aircraft carriers to a ratio of 10 : 10 : 6 : 3.3 : 3.3.

1924

January 25

France and Czechoslovakia sign a treaty to (1) concert action when their external security is threatened, and (2) consult one another if attempts were made to unite Germany and Austria.

April

Now called "the Fuhrer," Hitler is sentenced to four years in prison for attempting to seize power in Bavaria. His term is reduced to thirteen months. In prison, Hitler writes Mein Kampf in which he admits his hatred of Jews, his belief in a master race, and his vision of German "Febensraum" (living space). Hitler also predicts "a final, active reckoning with France."

April 20-
June 7

Czechoslovakia initiates "the little Entente" among itself, Yugoslavia, and Romania for defense against Bulgarian and Hungarian nationalism.

August 16

France accepts the Dawes Plan after Radical-Liberal statesman Edouard Herriot comes to power. It stipulates that, while no specific amount of reparations is due, Germany must resume payments. Germany would also receive a loan of 800 million marks, and a new currency would be instituted. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of Belgian and French troops from the Ruhr Valley begins.

November

French and Belgian troops completely withdraw from the Ruhr Valley.

1925

October 16

The Locarno pact is initialed in Switzerland. It holds that: (1) the German-Belgian border and the German-Franco border as fixed by the Versailles Treaty were inviolable, and (2) the Rhineland should remain demilitarized -- if violated, all parties would aid the aggrieved party. This pact was received enthusiastically in Britain, cautiously in France, and triumphantly in Germany since the prospect was open to revise by arbitration its eastern and southern borders.

1926

- January Allies leave the Cologne zone of the Rhineland.
- April 24 Germany and the U.S.S.R. sign a treaty pledging to remain neutral if attacked by a third party.
- June 30 The Koblenz and Mainz zones of the Rhineland are evacuated, four and one-half years ahead of schedule.
- September 8 Germany is admitted to the League of Nations.

1928

- August The U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Japan subscribe to the Kellogg-Briand Pact which renounces war as an instrument of national policy.

1925-1933

Various efforts by the League of Nations to achieve meaningful disarmament are frustrated, especially by Germany, which claims it needs "equality of status."

1929

- October 24 Prices fall sharply on the New York Stock Exchange, heralding the onset of the Great Depression. International finance, trade, industrial production, and unemployment are all adversely affected. American banks are forced to curtail their loans to countries attempting to repay war debts. Consequently, most countries default on their debts. This in turn fuels isolationism in the United States. In Germany, unemployment rises to 3,000,000. By 1932, it rises to 5,600,000. Poverty spreading throughout the world makes fascism an increasingly attractive alternative.

1932

- June 8 At the Lausanne Conference, Germany's creditors abolish Germany's liabilities.
- December 11 France, Britain, the U.S., and Italy issue a Five Power Declaration allowing Germany to enjoy "an equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations."

1933

- January 30 Hitler is appointed Chancellor of Germany after his Nazi Party gains the largest percentage in the Parliamentary elections.
- February France rebuffs a secret Polish suggestion of a joint military action

against Hitler.

- March 18 Italian dictator Mussolini, seeking to direct Germany's interest away from Italy's northern frontier with its German population, proposes a Four Power Pact whereby Italy, Germany, France, and Britain would acknowledge "the principle of revision of treaties," which tacitly licenses Germany to agitate about possible border changes in Eastern Europe. France and Britain agree in principle, although they seek new language to assure Poland and the "little Entente." In Germany, Hitler rejoices as Germany is given security during the early stages of rearmament.
- October 3 Nazi assassins in Austria unsuccessfully attempt to murder the Christian Social government leader, Engelbert Dollfuss.
- October 10 The U.S.S.R. opens discussions with the U.S. for diplomatic relations.
- October 14 Germany leaves the League of Nations over the question of equality of arms.
- 1934**
- January 26 Poland and Germany sign a ten year nonaggression pact intended to allay Polish fears.
- February 12 A four day civil war breaks out in Austria after Dollfuss dissolves the Austrian Social Democratic Party.
- February 17 Italy, France, and Britain announce their "common view of the necessity of maintaining Austria's independence."
- March 17 Mussolini, Dollfuss, and Hungarian Premier Gyula Gombos sign protocols prescribing "effective collaboration" among European states to save Austria from having to depend on Germany.
- April French Foreign Minister Jean-Louis Barthou travels to Poland seeking creation of a defense system with Poland and the "little Entente" and guaranteed by the U.S.S.R. to protect Eastern Europe. Poland balks at the Soviet guarantee while Roumania and Yugoslavia reject the idea outright.
- June 14-15 Hitler and Mussolini meet in Venice. Hitler offers an alliance for division of eastern and southeastern Europe into German and Italian spheres of influence. Mussolini rebuffs Hitler and

demands that Germany leave Austria alone.

- June 25 Austrian leader Dollfuss is murdered by Nazis.
- June 30 Hitler initiates a bloody purge of Nazi Party generals and politicians whom he suspects are plotting a military coup.
- June Barthou travels to London still seeking to create a defense system. He finds the British unwilling to involve themselves and preferring that Germany, instead of France, be the western guarantor of the main pact.
- 1935**
- January 13 A plebiscite is held in Saarland, as specified under the Versailles Treaty; 90% of the votes cast favor reunion with Germany.
- March 10 Hitler officially informs France, Britain, and Italy that Germany already possesses an Air Force.
- March 16 Hitler announces the introduction of conscription and the peacetime establishment of a German army consisting of 36 divisions.
- April 11-14 Statesmen from Britain, France, and Italy meet to create the "Stresa Front" pledging their countries to collaboration "by all practicable means" against any repudiation of treaties which might imperil the peace of Europe.
- May 2 France and the U.S.S.R. sign a treaty of mutual assistance. The treaty is so cautiously phrased, however, as to be almost noncommittal. Meanwhile, Hitler orders plans drawn for the militarization of the Rhineland.
- May 16 The U.S.S.R. and Czechoslovakia sign a mutual assistance treaty which stipulates that the U.S.S.R. would come to Czechoslovakia's aid against aggression only after France did so.
- June 18 The Anglo-German Naval agreement is signed. Regardless of the naval clauses in the treaty of Versailles, Germany is now allowed to build a fleet equal to 35% of the British Navy, and a submarine fleet equal to 45%.
- October 3 Mussolini invades Ethiopia, revealing his motive in forming the "Stresa Front": he had sought to deter Germany from invading Austria when the large part of his forces would be conquering Ethiopia.

- October 5 The League of Nations responds by declaring Italy an aggressor.
- November 18 The League applies economic sanctions to Italy, but no embargo on the supply of oil. France and Britain would not commit their navies to enforce such an embargo. Meanwhile, Germany remains silent.
- December The Foreign Ministers of Britain and France propose a partition plan for Ethiopia that both Mussolini and Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie reject.

1936

- March 7 Hitler sends German troops into the Rhineland and simultaneously proposes negotiations to create a demilitarized zone on both sides of the Franco-German and Belgian-German frontiers and nonaggression pacts with Germany's neighbors. France considers going to war, and is privately assured of Poland's active support. However, Belgium and Italy are skeptical, and Britain did not see Hitler's actions as threatening. Hitler promises, "*All Germany's territorial ambitions have now been satisfied.*"
- March 11 The British Government issues a White Paper stressing the need for Britain to rearm. The result is half-hearted enthusiasm for rearmament.
- March 19 The League Council finds Germany guilty of breaking the Versailles and Locarno treaties.
- May 5 Mussolini announces that with the capture of Addis-Ababa, Italy's conquest of Ethiopia is complete.
- July 4 League sanctions against Italy are lifted.
- July 17-18 The Spanish Civil War begins. The Nationalists, led by General Franco, receive arms and volunteers from Germany and Italy.
- Sept. 8-14 The Nuremberg Party Congress proclaims the Nazi Four Year Plan and world crusade against Bolshevism.
- October 25 Germany and Italy form the Rome-Berlin Axis.
- November 25 Germany and Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact.

1937

May 28 Neville Chamberlain becomes Prime Minister in Britain replacing Earl Baldwin.

November 6 Italy joins the Anti-Comintern Pact.

1938

January President Roosevelt, distressed about the European situation, asks Chamberlain whether the U.S. should invite the antagonists to Washington to discuss the underlying causes of tension. Chamberlain thanks Roosevelt for his concern, but says that American intervention would only hinder his own efforts to reach peace.

February 12 In Berchtesgaden, Bavaria, Hitler insults, threatens, and issues an ultimatum to Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg: by 6 p.m. on February 15, he must agree to take Nazis into his government or else face German invasion. Without support from other European powers, Schuschnigg yields.

February 21 British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden resigns principal over a disagreement on negotiating with Italy. He believes that Britain should stand firm against Italian aggression in Ethiopia. Eden is replaced by Lord Halifax who is thought to be more pro-German.

March 9 At Innsbruck, Schuschnigg announces that a plebiscite will be held on March 13 to determine whether Austrians want "this free, German, independent, social, Christian, and united country." In response, Hitler demands that Austrian President Wilhelm Miklas replace Schuschnigg with Arthur Seyss-Inquart, a Nazi cabinet minister. Miklas refuses. However, Schuschnigg resigns, and self-appointed Chancellor Seyss-Inquart invites Nazi troops into Austria.

March 11 The German invasion of Austria begins; Mussolini acquiesces.

March 13 Hitler announces that Austria is "a province of the German Reich."

April 21 Hitler orders secret plans drawn for the invasion of Czechoslovakia. "It is not in my intention to smash Czechoslovakia in the immediate future without provocation, unless an unavoidable development...." Hitler also decides that any aggression must be preceded by heightened agitation within Czechoslovakia combined with diplomatic pressures from Germany.

- April 23 Czechoslovakian Nazi leader Henlein makes a speech demanding "full self-government for the German [Sudeten] areas of Czechoslovakia" and "liberty to profess German nationality and political outlook."
- April Chamberlain tells French statesmen that Czechoslovakia should be urged to surrender some territory to Germany.
- May French Foreign Minister Bonnett rebuffs a Polish suggestion that France, Poland, and Britain should discuss the Czech-German crisis.
- May 14 Rumors in Prague hold that Germany is massing its troops along the Czech border.
- May 20 Czechoslovakia mobilizes its reserves, kicking off howls of protest in the Nazi press about Czech "provocation."
- May 22 Hitler assures Prague that his intentions are peaceful.
- May 28 Hitler fixes the date to invade Czechoslovakia for October 2.
- May 30 Hitler alters his secret directive: "It is my unalterable decision to smash Czechoslovakia in the near future."
- May-August The Czech government negotiates with the Sudetan leaders.
- August 3 Lord Runciman, a British government emissary, arrives in Prague to mediate the conflict.
- September Runciman approves Czech President Benes's proposals as embodying (early) nearly everything that Henlein had sought in April. Now, however, Henlein rejects the offer.
- September 7 The *London Times*, which some feel is speaking for the government, suggests that the Sudetenland be allowed to secede and unite with Germany.
- September 9 France says it will support its ally Czechoslovakia, and will go to war if Germany attacks Czechoslovakia.
- September 10 German Field Marshall Goering calls the Czechs a "miserable race of pygmies, devoid of culture."
- September 11 Great Britain asserts it will stand by France if necessary.

- September 12 In Nuremberg, Hitler lashes out violently against Czechoslovakia. German infantry and armored units move to the Czech frontier.
- September 14 British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain offers to meet with Hitler -- a "mission of peace to Berchtesgaden."
- September 16 Chamberlain meets with Hitler and discusses plans which the German Chancellor has set forth in his Nuremberg speech 4 days earlier.
- September 17 English ministers meet to discuss Hitler's plan. Meanwhile, the Czech government in Prague declares a state of emergency.
- September 18 French Premier Daladier and French Foreign Minister Bonnet fly to London to meet with Chamberlain.
- September 23 Hitler adds additional terms for the Sudeten "problem" in Czechoslovakia, including a cession of all Czech territories with 50% or greater Sudeten population. Chamberlain again flies to meet with Hitler.
- September 25 Daladier and Bonnet again fly to London to confer with Chamberlain.
- September 28 Chamberlain, desperately trying to allay European fears of war, meets with Hitler a third time. They reach an agreement concerning the cession of Sudeten lands. Hitler again asserts that all of Germany's territorial ambitions have been met, while the rest of the world breathes a sigh of relief.
- Sept. 29-30 The Munich Conference approves German acquisition of the Sudetenland.

* * *

1939

- March 15 Hitler occupies the rest of Czechoslovakia.
- April 7 Mussolini invades Albania.
- August 23 Germany and the U.S.S.R. conclude a nonaggression pact.
- September 1 Hitler invades Poland. Britain and France declare war.
- September 17 Soviet forces invade Poland.

October 6 Last organized Polish resistance is broken at Kock.

November 30 Soviet forces invade Finland.

1940

April 9 Germany invades Norway and seizes Denmark.

April 14 Anglo-French forces reach Norway and by May 2 are driven out.

May 10 Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg.

June 14 German forces enter Paris.

July 10 Battle of Britain begins. British cities undergo massive bombing.

CITATIONS
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2. Excerpts from Memoirs of the Second World War by Winston Churchill, 1959 by Houghton Mifflin Company, Reprinted by Permission.
3. "The German Position" by Adolph Hitler, Speech from Vital Speeches of the Day, 2/20/1938
4. Foreign News Section, Time Magazine, 3/21/1938
5. Excerpts from The Chamberlain Cabinet, by Ian Colvin, 1971, Reprinted by permission of Victor Gollancz Ltd.
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7. "Germany's Defense" by Adolf Hitler, Speech from Vital Speeches of the Day, 10/1/38
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Sir Neville Chamberlain in Munich

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