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WINSTON CHURCHILL VERSUS GERMANY:  
A CHRONOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION, 1932--1940

by

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B. A. Montana State University, 1951

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
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## INTRODUCTION

It has been customary to assume that Winston Churchill had a certain definite attitude toward Germany, which never changed at all from the time the Nazis were gaining control. The primary consideration of this thesis is to show how this attitude was solidified as a result of certain events during the 1930's.

To a degree this thesis also represents a biography of Churchill, wartime British Prime Minister, a winner of a Nobel Prize for Literature, and a famous international figure. However, the primary intention will be a chronological comment and summary upon the speeches and writings of Churchill concerning Germany, for other authors have written complete biographies of Churchill. Other persons have also written articles about him with reference to some important subject.

Churchill's continual warnings in publications and Commons helped push forward the British rearmament which slowly expanded after 1934. Furthermore, the inspired leadership of Churchill contributed greatly to the fact that against heavy odds early in World War II the British stayed off the German military machine. During a period of total warfare Churchill

frequently sustained English morale in a number of ways not always understood by the common man.

In addition, it can be said that as early as 1932 Churchill had given definite warnings to the European communities and the world about the coming military adventures of Germany. During that year much of the world was still being afflicted with the discouraging symptoms of a disastrous depression.

Early that year also the former German military leader, Hindenburg, defeated Adolf Hitler in the presidential election in Germany. In May of that year the man who later was to lead Britain in an inspired manner, not paralleled since the appearance of William Pitt, stood up to speak in the House of Commons. What he said was certainly significant, when one notes what has occurred since that time.

In reference to the Geneva Disarmament Conference then in session, the speaker slowly stated these words: "I would say to those who would like to see Germany and France on an equal footing in armaments: 'Do you wish for War?'"<sup>1</sup> That man was Churchill, and from that time to the outbreak of the next war, his concern with Nazism took precedence over any other subject in Europe.

René Kraus, who has written one of the most praiseful biographies of Churchill, has stated that as far back as 1925

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<sup>1</sup>Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), p. 72.



the former First Lord of the Admiralty had written three essays that should have been closely scanned by politicians of Europe and the remainder of the world.<sup>2</sup>

These received scant attention, and little was really heard from Churchill until May 13, 1932, when he stood up in the House of Commons, and, concerning the topic of the Geneva Disarmament Conference, made use of the Debate on the Adjournment to state that Germany's rise to an equal level of armaments with France would result in war.

Could Churchill really know what was happening in Europe all this time? One of his biographers emphasizes that Churchill could see through the men on the world's stage with unerring penetration, and knew even before 1930 what was occurring under the surface within Germany. The later cries of the Nazis for land for the German population did not fool Churchill.<sup>3</sup>

The depression eventually left every nation with at least some domestic problems, and a wave of pacifism had swept over Europe. This was contrary to the atmosphere that existed before World War I. Facts which Churchill picked up from his many contacts were, for the most part, disregarded by Stanley

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<sup>2</sup>René Kraus, Winston Churchill, (New York and Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1941), p. 283. Concerning the three essays only "a small circle ever knew about them. The first, 'Shall we all commit suicide?', appeared in 1925. This was the period that confused exhaustion with peace. 'Let it not be thought for a moment that the danger of another explosion in Europe is past,' Churchill warned."

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 283-284.

Baldwin, the Prime Minister. The British public was inclined to go along with Baldwin's and later Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. People were afraid of war.

The difference between Churchill and the other Tories was that the latter trusted Hitler. Consequently, they thought it would be useless to sink money into armaments which might never be needed. To some extent, Germany was even supported against France, for the latter was assumed to be the stronger power on the Continent. Churchill felt that France should be supported against Germany, and that Britain should increase her armaments in case of eventual war in the West.<sup>4</sup>

These sins of omission and commission by British Tories continued right up to Munich, and afterward. Yet one author states that Churchill never has made clear that all policy-makers were following a train of logical thought concerning Hitler meeting his doom against Russia in Eastern Europe, after swallowing Austria and Czechoslovakia.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, Frederick L. Schuman holds that the foreign policy of Britain's government after 1931 has been a mystery to most observers. Downing Street let Japan gain the hegemony of Eastern Asia, Germany the domination of the European continent, and Italy the control over parts of the Mediterranean and East Africa. Schuman adds that each year

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<sup>4</sup>Gaetano Salvemini, Prelude to World War II, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1954), p. 509.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

the mystery deepened as British power and prestige declined.<sup>6</sup>

Concomitantly, each year Churchill's warnings became more numerous and intensive. But to a Britain concerned with domestic troubles, pacifism, and disarmament, the age and Churchill appeared to be out of harmony with each other. Philip Guedalla, one of Churchill's biographers, supports this viewpoint.<sup>7</sup>

Churchill had been a Tory, a Liberal, and a Tory again without a misgiving, and had served in many cabinets. However, some persons thought the future Prime Minister to be somewhat too brilliant and too errable to head a cabinet, and that he had been responsible for the failure of the Dardanelles expedition during World War I.

Robert L. Taylor, who has also done a biography of Churchill, says that the interval between 1929 and 1939 in Churchill's life has been variously described as "the lotus years," "the time between," and his "out of step" period.<sup>8</sup>

Bands of marching youth in Germany were beginning to frighten Churchill.<sup>9</sup> He saw as early as 1931 that disarmament conferences, in general, were only a "positive cause of

<sup>6</sup>Frederick L. Schuman, Europe on the Eve, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1939), p. 332.

<sup>7</sup>Philip Guedalla, Mr. Churchill, (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock Co., 1940), p. 241.

<sup>8</sup>Robert Lewis Taylor, Winston Churchill, (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1952), p. 328.

<sup>9</sup>This occurred six years before the outbreak of war.

Friction and ill-will."<sup>10</sup> But as Ramsay MacDonald, who was Prime Minister in the early 1930's, wanted to make a gesture of pacifism at the then coming Disarmament Conference at Geneva, the British leader diminished the appropriation for the Royal Air Force instead of increasing it.

Kraus, in commenting on British policy of this period, states:

If any definite point can be established at which England's sickness passed over into a death-agony, future historians will probably choose the 25th of August, 1931, the day when the first National Government was formed, and Messrs. MacDonald and Baldwin took joint power. The ailment that hitherto had endangered the country's eyes now also affected its heart and its brain.<sup>11</sup>

After World War I the French had feared a new war with Germany, and after 1932 the feeling of insecurity increased. Thus, effective preparation for war, the maintenance of such preparation, and the development of the Maginot Line, were their deterrents to aggression. War, on the other hand, to the British seemed in too remote a future for any particular concern, according to one author.<sup>12</sup>

So after the diminishing of R. A. F. power, Churchill launched on a series of warnings on air defense. In 1933 he

<sup>10</sup>Great Britain, 5 Parliamentary Debates (Commons), Vol. 254 (1931), 955.

<sup>11</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 296.

<sup>12</sup>Arnold Wolfers, Britain and France Between Two Wars, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1940), p. 203. In fact Wolfers adds that the British Government at the start based its military plans "on the assumption that no great war was to be anticipated within the next ten years." This it regarded as a broad margin of safety.

stated that the British were running fifth in potential airpower to France, Italy, Japan, and the United States. Churchill was now on the outside, as a political breach with Baldwin had occurred in January of 1931. The former had withdrawn from the "shadow" cabinet, and was not invited to take part in the Coalition Government. Churchill at that time said it was agreeable with him that he was not included as he had become tired of holding so many offices, and he was opposed to the British government on the India policies.<sup>13</sup> By 1935, however, he so truly recognized the German menace that he would have liked to return to the Admiralty.

This did not occur, however, and in March, 1936, when a Ministry for the Co-ordination of Defense was finally about to be created (after Churchill had argued vehemently for one), Baldwin selected Sir Thomas Inskip as Minister. This took place after Adolf Hitler had reoccupied the Rhineland.<sup>14</sup>

Retrospectively, one notes that throughout the period 1932 through 1935, Churchill constantly advocated the redress of grievances of the conquered nations in World War I. But he never offered any lengthy, specific program of how such a beneficial rectification would be accomplished for Germany.

This lack of a program was investigated thoroughly by

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<sup>13</sup>Lewis B. Namier, Europe in Downfall, (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 151.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., p. 152.

Professor L. B. Namier, who commented that Churchill had coined the maxim that "the redress of grievances of the vanquished should precede the disarmament of the victors,"<sup>15</sup> but where and how this could be accomplished safely and fairly was never stated. Churchill did not examine what likelihood there was of ever exhausting German "grievances."<sup>16</sup>

Through 1935, although Churchill had called for the redress of grievances, nothing was actually done, even though this redress, or even outright revision, would have been the "necessary step in any peace policy which was directed toward the pacification of the dissatisfied nations" and "not difficult to see."<sup>17</sup>

After 1935, however, the British began to rearm, and a few persons of an influential nature<sup>18</sup> looked at the Nazi scene and viewed it with some alarm. Churchill from that year on began to clamor for his own type of collective security, which basically safeguarded Britain by cooperation with the League of Nations, and later by a "Grand Alliance."

After World War II began Churchill soon had almost the entire support of the British populace. His fetish concerning

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid., p. 153.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., pp. 153-154.

<sup>17</sup>Wolfers, op. cit., p. 221. Wolfers states on page 214 that it was the "Conservatives, on the other hand, who later, in the days of Hitler's revisionist moves, argued for the need of a redress of Germany's grievances. Men as divergent in their philosophies as Chamberlain, Churchill, Londonderry, and Eden came out on one occasion or another in favor of negotiated change."

<sup>18</sup>See Chapter II.

the air power problem was carried to an extreme, but it had, for the most part, accomplished its purpose in contributing to the fact that British pursuit planes of an adequate quality were available in the "Battle for Britain" of 1941.

In addition, Churchill's leadership as First Lord of the Admiralty in the first half-year of the war was adequate. During the first months of the conflict most of the action seemed to involve Churchill's Navy and the Nazi submarine menace. Also there was his optimism and eloquence in such speeches as he made to a worried England in 1940.

Ultimately Churchill became one of the most famous figures of the century. He attained the position of Prime Minister primarily because of his innumerable warnings which continued to grow in scope, frequency, and force from 1932 to 1939. In addition, in various crises in the past, he had shown a tendency for striking decisiveness and quick perception in action.

As anyone else would have done, Churchill did err at times. He committed a number of ~~errors~~ errors on what Italy and France might do in certain diplomatic situations, but occasionally exhibited a consistent ~~weakness~~ weakness for anticipating the plans and acts of Nazi Germany.

Why did no one listen to Churchill's warnings? What were, in substance, his warnings? How did his attitude toward Nazi Germany change, as each successive year passed, and

Europe crept closer to the brink of war?

By interpreting chronologically, for the most part, Churchill's most significant comments in regard to Germany during the Nazi era, his thoughts will be revealed. In accomplishing such an interpretation two of the most valuable secondary sources are those of Arnold Wolfers and L. B. Namier. Wolfers describes Churchill's really basic thoughts behind collective security. Professor Namier of the Modern History Department of the University of Manchester, England, has written several worthwhile background works concerning events and diplomacy of this period.

The major primary sources are the books of Churchill relating to the period covered, several of which contain all his speeches, both in and out of the House of Commons, on foreign policy and national defense, and the British Parliamentary Debates. Several biographies of the man were consulted, plus historical volumes relating to the era when Germany moved forward toward the conquest of most of Europe.

Finally, it will be noted that there is much reference made to The Gathering Storm in this work. It is well to note that this book appeared after World War II, and though much of it was probably formulated earlier by Churchill in rough form, some of these conclusions made him appear more of an expert in regard to British foreign policy and Nazism than was actually the case.



## CHAPTER I

### THE WASTED YEARS, 1932 THROUGH 1935

On July 11, 1932 Ramsay MacDonald and Sir John Simon, British Foreign Secretary, returned from Leusanne, Switzerland, where they had been attending a conference on reparations cancellations. On that day Churchill started along his path of warning speeches.<sup>1</sup>

These exhortations, during the ensuing eight years before he was named as Prime Minister, included many topics in reference to Germany and Britain. During what Churchill called "the locust years" and "the wasted years" from 1932 through 1935, his main concern was with at least four topics. They might be lumped together under the following categories: (1) air power, (2) disarmament, rearmament, and the redress of Nazi grievances, (3) the leadership of Hitler, and (4) collective security.

#### Air Power and Germany

One of Churchill's favorite topics, especially in the period from 1932 to 1936, was the importance of air power in the event of a future war. He was desperately interested in

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<sup>1</sup>Kraus, op. cit., pp. 299-300.

this subject, for he saw ahead to the time when giant airplanes would come over an industrial area and drop their loads of death and destruction.

With the exception of such persons as General Billy Mitchell in America, the Italian author and air theoretician Douhet, and Major Alexander P. De Seversky,<sup>2</sup> few persons were contemplating such disasters. Churchill's viewpoint that "air power may either end war or end civilization"<sup>3</sup> was only shared by a few military experts in Europe and America. That view was considered an exaggerated hypothesis by most military and civilian international leaders.

Douhet's theory had appeared in 1933, and was studied by airmen all over the world.<sup>4</sup> In brief, this theoretician said that the way to end a war was to smash the cities of an enemy, and destroy his means of production. This would be a shortcut to victory. The effect of such a theory could be seen in Churchill's statements after 1932 regarding air power.

Churchill concluded on the afternoon of March 14, 1933,

<sup>2</sup>De Seversky's book Victory Through Air Power finally appeared in 1942 after World War II began.

<sup>3</sup>Winston Churchill, "Air Defense," March 14, 1933, While England Slept, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1938), p. 37. This book is a survey of world affairs containing all speeches, both in Parliamentary Debates in the House of Commons, and otherwise, on Foreign Affairs and National Defense, 1932-1938. Titles of speeches from this book will be cited, in addition to dates, to lend clarification and accuracy to this thesis.

<sup>4</sup>H. H. Arnold, Global Mission, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 131.

in the House of Commons that it was absolutely necessary that a better program of air development be put into effect. He thought that an adequate number of airplanes could be utilized as a primary line of defense.<sup>5</sup> When he gave that speech on air estimates Adolf Hitler had been in power for only forty-five days.<sup>6</sup>

Although Churchill was destined to go to extremes in what he thought the actual effects of air power would be in World War II, his warnings possibly contributed to the development of better air force planes after 1935. If Germany had had the air strength in 1939, when the war began, that Churchill said existed, the effect upon the British nation might well be imagined. In fact, the combination of the British Navy with aid from the Royal Air Force was to hold off any invasion of British soil during the war.<sup>7</sup>

On February 7th, 1934, Churchill again expressed concern over the role of air power under the control of any nation bent on aggression for rectification of World War I treaties. He summed up the weaknesses of British air defense by telling

<sup>5</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 275 (1933), 1824. (For purposes of abbreviation, the term Debates will be utilized in place of Parliamentary Debates in succeeding footnotes. The number 1824 refers to the column number in these bound volumes of British political history.)

<sup>6</sup>Kraus, op. cit., pp. 303-304.

<sup>7</sup>Even after the cessation of hostilities in 1945 it was determined that American bombing raids had not destroyed as much of the Nazi war facilities and productive means as had been thought possible.

the House of Commons that due to the inadequacy of aerial defenses the island was now vulnerable to attack as never before in history.<sup>8</sup> The airplane had changed the world by drawing countries and continents closer and closer together. Indeed, he drew the following conclusion on Britain's maintenance of an air "balance of power":

I cannot conceive how, in the present state of Europe and of our position in Europe, we can delay in establishing the principle of having an Air Force at least as strong as that of any Power that can get at us. I think that is a perfectly reasonable thing to do. It would only begin to put us back to the position in which we were brought up. We have lived under the shield of the Navy. To have an Air Force as strong as the air force of France or Germany, whichever is the stronger, ought to be the decision which Parliament should take, and which the National Government should proclaim.<sup>9</sup>

A month later he warned that the day when the roar of hostile airplane engines would be heard over London might not be too distant. This warning was somewhat extreme, unless one concludes that Churchill was exaggerating so that someone would listen and do something about the pacifist inclinations of the populace.

Therefore, because of this air danger, England must concentrate on: (1) a realistic foreign policy, supplemented by (2) any security which can be obtained from international

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<sup>8</sup>Churchill, "Prepare!" Feb. 7, 1934, While England Slept, p. 89. (Titles of Churchill's books are repeated, in place of the use of op. cit., because more than one volume of Churchill's writings were utilized in this paper.)

<sup>9</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 285 (1934), 1198-1199.

conventions, with (3) air power parity backed by valid regulation by these conventions, and (4) a good system of air defense.<sup>10</sup>

In the same talk one notes his usual realistic conclusion. Again his statements were almost identical to what he had said before, that Germany was arming, and no one would stop her. He added that none of the grievances between the victors of the World War I conflict and the vanquished had been redressed.<sup>11</sup> And again a week later he said:

We have not got disarmament. We have the rearmament of Germany . . . Now all our hope is to regulate the unthinkable . . . Regulated unthinkable---that is the proposal now; and very soon it will be a question of making up our minds to unregulated unthinkable.<sup>12</sup>

By the summer of 1934 Churchill was pleading avidly for a combined Ministry of Defense in order to co-ordinate the needs of the three services, calling for a vote of credit to double the Air Force, and inviting Russia to join the League of Nations.<sup>13</sup>

Churchill had lost patience with a Disarmament Conference which had proceeded for nearly two and a half years. Partly as a consequence of the failure of that conference,

<sup>10</sup>Churchill, "The Need for Air Parity," March 8, 1934, While England Slept, p. 100.

<sup>11</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 286 (1934), 2073-2074.

<sup>12</sup>Churchill, "The MacDonald Plan Rejected," March 14, 1934, While England Slept, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup>Quedalla, op. cit., p. 25.

he spoke emphatically in Commons regarding secret air armaments in Germany.

He stressed four probabilities in reference to the German aerial activity, and reiterated them in November of 1934. The first was that the German air force by the summer of 1934 was two-thirds as strong as the British. Second, by 1936 Churchill thought that the German air strength would be equal to that of Britain. Third, by the end of 1936 the German air power would potentially be stronger. Then, too, once the German factories had obtained a lead in airplane production it would be a very hard task to overtake them.<sup>14</sup> During the last half of 1934, these words of Churchill had little effect. However, soon afterward the British began constructing new types of aircraft intended primarily for defensive purposes.

Disarmament talk was still in the air during 1934. And as the German factories produced potential war material, and glowed in the darkness of the Ruhr Valley at night, Churchill became worried. In November of 1934 he was still on his pet theme of that year. He warned of a nightmare of fire and destruction, in which people would be driven from London, while three or four million inhabitants bore the brunt of air attacks, and London docks and buildings crumpled into

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<sup>14</sup>Churchill, "Germany Approaching Air Parity with Britain," July 30, 1934, While England Slept, pp. 129-134. (These points are also stressed by Kraus, op. cit., pp. 315-316, who goes on to lavish particular praise on Churchill's prophecies of July regarding air power.)

rule.<sup>15</sup>

But Churchill emphasized to no avail that if Britain had an adequate air fleet, Germany would not want to run the risk of "exposing itself to intensive bombing attacks from this island upon its military centers, its munition establishments and its lines of communications, at a time when it was engaged or liable to be engaged by the armies of another first-class Power."<sup>16</sup>

He said that there was no reason to assume that Germany might vent its wrath on Britain, since feelings were friendly between the two countries. But preparation of an adequate military defense was necessary, he added, to ward off any "spark" which might ignite and create a situation of major proportions.<sup>17</sup>

On Churchill's warning that the German air force might be doubled by 1937, Baldwin said that he would not look further ahead than the next two years, while he believed that Churchill's figures were considerably exaggerated.<sup>18</sup>

Sir Robert Vansittart, who headed the Foreign Office Intelligence Department, and whose closest friend was Mr. Churchill, had a number of talks with the latter about

<sup>15</sup>Churchill, "The German Air Menace," Nov. 28, 1934, Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>16</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 295 (1934), 862.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 857-871.      <sup>18</sup>Ibid., 882.

Germany's air strength.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, up until 1940 military men in France, Britain, and America, including General George C. Marshall, felt that France and Britain combined were stronger than Germany.

Hitler kept his plans undercover until March 1st of 1935. That was the date on which the Saar Valley area was returned to Germany, after a plebiscite had taken place January 13th in which 90 per cent of the populace voted for the return. With the Saar returned, Hitler had then proclaimed military conscription on March 16th.<sup>20</sup> And the Nazis followed up this announcement by revealing that a military air force would be constituted by April 1st.

A "White Paper"<sup>21</sup> appeared in early March in London which explained the need for an increase in the armed forces of Britain as a reply to German rearmament. With the Saar now returned, and the White Paper public knowledge, Hitler consequently had come out into the open with the projected idea of a new army and air force. The peace strength of the army was placed at 550,000 men. For Hitler, "this was nearly double the 300,000 which he had always maintained was

<sup>19</sup>Curt Riess, Total Espionage, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), pp. 29-34.

<sup>20</sup>Robert M. Hayner, The Twenty Years' Truce, 1919-1939, (Bristol, Britain: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), p. 136.

<sup>21</sup>As Hayner states: "A White Paper conveys information from the Government to Parliament, and (indirectly) to the general public." Ibid., p. 136.



the number required for home defense."<sup>22</sup>

Churchill had been unusually quiet in very early 1935. It was March 19th of that year before he pessimistically looked toward Central Europe and Germany again. He emphasized that since the November debate of the year just concluded, the situation in Britain had "sensibly changed for the worse."<sup>23</sup>

After arguing with other British M. P.'s in Commons, he commented that a cloak surrounded the German military preparations. He noted that the population of Dessau, a German city of industry and center of the great Junkers airplane factories, had increased in the preceding year by 13,000. The best defense gained against attack by air was counter-attack, and the British air force, Churchill added, was in sad need of overhauling. Secondly, he argued, the geographical frontiers of Germany were much closer to London than the seacoasts of Britain were to Berlin, enabling their bombing force to have an advantage. Yet he concluded, in a spirit of earlier British isolationism, "we only wish to live quietly and to be left alone."<sup>24</sup>

Finally, after the announcement of the remilitarization

<sup>22</sup>ibid., p. 186.

<sup>23</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 299 (1935), 1050-1063.

<sup>24</sup>Churchill, "Mr. Baldwin's Mistakes," March 10, 1935, While England Slept, pp. 162-164.

of Germany and the constituting of a new air force, he said that England had entered a period of peril. Thus he added:

We are faced, not with the prospect of a new war, but with something very like the possibility of a resumption of the War which ended in November, 1918. I still hope, and I believe--the alternative would be despair--that it may be averted. But the position is far worse than it was in 1914, and it may well be found to be uncontrollable. We are no longer safe behind the shield of our Navy. We have fallen behind in the vital air defense of this island. We are not only far more deeply and explicitly involved in Continental affairs than we were in 1914, but owing to the neglect of our own defenses we have become dependent upon other countries for our essential security.<sup>25</sup>

Underlying Churchill's thoughts concerning air defense was the possibility that if he had not exaggerated German air preparedness nothing at all would have come of British plans to revamp the R. A. F. This exaggeration, though it led a number of persons to consider Churchill inconsistent with the peaceful times, may have been of beneficial importance in the long run.

#### Redress of Grievances, Disarmament, and German Rearmament

As the Disarmament Conference at Geneva proceeded to fail miserably, Churchill turned away from a discussion of the redress of grievances and disarmament, more and more, to the subject of British rearmament in order to maintain a measure of safety and isolation near the continent. In what has become a famous example of Churchill's eloquence, the future British war leader had this to say in November of 1932 concerning German rearmament:

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

Now the demand is that Germany should be allowed to to rearm. Do not delude yourselves. Do not let His Majesty's Government believe that all Germany is asking for is equal status. . . . That is not what Germany is seeking. All these bands of sturdy Teutonic youths, marching through the streets and roads of Germany, with the light of desire in their eyes to suffer for their Fatherland, are not looking for status. They are looking for weapons, and, when they have the weapons, believe me they will then ask for the return of lost territories and lost colonies . . . <sup>26</sup>

In The Gathering Storm Churchill wrote that actually there had been much support for the rearming of Germany at the Disarmament Conference in 1932.<sup>27</sup> While looking at the European situation realistically, he added in his November speech that: "I would rather see another 10 or 20 years of one-sided armed peace than see a war between equally well-matched Powers or combinations of Powers--and that may be the choice."<sup>28</sup>

In the meantime the spectre of German rearmament began to pursue him in his dreams, and his one thought was to force England to wake up, even though his political policies had relegated him to a back-bench position. He was still talking,

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<sup>26</sup>Churchill, "European Dangers," Nov. 23, 1932, While England Slept, p. 25.

<sup>27</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 73. What he wrote was;

The Times spoke of "the timely redress of inequality," and The New Statesman of "the unqualified recognition of the principle of the equality of states." This meant that the seventy million Germans ought to be allowed to rearm . . . equality between a France of thirty-nine millions and a Germany of nearly double that number!

<sup>28</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 272 (1932), 88.

too, of rectifying some of the just claims of the German people. In fact, his general principle in 1932 was the "removal of the just grievances of the vanquished which ought to precede the disarmament of the victors."<sup>29</sup> But, as Professor Namier has written, he did not propose a specific program of what such a removal would involve.<sup>30</sup>

In this same November address he came up with a hopeful prediction, which was possibly intended to cover up his true thoughts on the matter of the rise of Nazi power: "I do not believe in the imminence of war in Europe. I believe that with wisdom and skill we may never see it in our time."<sup>31</sup> He concluded with the statement that the British nation itself must decide if ever neutrality is abandoned.

Churchill continued to teeter on the fence of neutrality in early 1933. But concomitantly, in his opinion, the best road that was open to neutrality was the development of an adequate defense. Ten days after his mid-March comments on the necessity of air power, he repeated that Britain must do her best to prevent others from going to war. But at the same time, he added, Britain must do her utmost to avoid becoming involved in any great risks, and France must not

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Namier, op. cit., pp. 151-153.

<sup>31</sup>Churchill, While England Slept, p. 31. (Same speech on European dangers as referred to on the previous page.)

disarm, under any conditions.<sup>32</sup>

His yellow caution light warnings continued to gain momentum, bit by bit, week by week, and month by month. Churchill, steeped in ancestral tradition and in war experience, arose again and again to expound in Commons on the subject of the Teutonic country which less than twenty years before had shown the power of its military machine. In early 1933 when Churchill spoke, the House of Commons was usually half empty. What a change there was six years later!

On April 13th he discussed Germany's dissatisfaction with the late war results. Summing up his points in a speech entitled "The Darkening Scene," he commented that Germany actually got off lightly after World War I.<sup>33</sup> There had been no division made of most of the German people, "no portion of Germany inhabited by Germans was detached, except where there was the difficulty of disentangling the population of the Silesian border," and no other nation was carved out of Germany.<sup>34</sup> It seems apparent to the writer, however, that here Churchill was overlooking the fact that

<sup>32</sup>Churchill, "The MacDonaldis Disarmament Plan," March 23, 1933, *ibid.*, pp. 47-52. The MacDonaldis Plan of March 16, 1933, in simple terms would have allowed France to reduce to two hundred thousand men in arms, while Germany would rise to that level.

<sup>33</sup>Previously he had concerned himself with the unredressed grievances of Germany. This speech ran contrary to that concern.

<sup>34</sup>Churchill, "The Darkening Scene," April 13, 1933, *ibid.*, p. 61.

a Polish Corridor running west of the international city of Danzig had been established. Later this was one of the biggest factors Hitler utilized in his speeches regarding the separation of Germany from one of its parts in that area near Danzig.

On that same day in April he added that if Germany regained full equality with France "while her own grievances are still unredressed,"<sup>35</sup> a spark of any type might well set off another European conflagration. He grimly surmised, only weeks after Hitler's assumption of power, "you have dictatorship--most grim dictatorship."<sup>36</sup>

In his volume of collected speeches, While England Slept, Churchill concluded this section on "Germany Disarmed," and his April warning, with a final remark. He said that the British should attempt to maintain peace without becoming a thorn in the foreign offices of the European powers.<sup>37</sup>

In October, 1933, a small reaction to Churchill's cries for defense occurred. Isolated though he was, it was through Churchill's influence that the Union of Conservative Associations accepted a resolution concerning defense. This stated that the Conference was anxious that something be done in regard to the inadequacy of provisions made for defense. And Kraus states that this was "the first time since the

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<sup>35</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 276 (1933), 2797-2800. (Churchill seemed to pick the 13th of a month occasionally to give speeches, perhaps as a bad luck symbol for Hitler.)

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Churchill, "The Darkening Scene," April 13, 1933, While England Slept, p. 84.

establishment of Nazism that any authoritative body in England had taken a stand for preparedness."<sup>38</sup>

In summarizing Churchill's stand up until late November of 1933, a number of factors could be considered. In 1932 Churchill was following the line of a return to a type of "splendid isolation," as other British politicians and government departmental leaders were doing. But this was soon affected by an increasing sense of realism and far-sightedness.

Earlier he still had had the hope that France and her allies could cope with any trouble on the continent. For example, one notes in May and November speeches of 1932 Churchill believed that there was an element of danger if France disarmed. But if Britain must be involved in continental affairs, it was because of the problem of air power in Europe, which was bringing countries closer together. Thus, if Britain were to stay detached, early rearmament, with the emphasis on air defense, was essential.

Finally, he had pressed for the redress of grievances of the nations who had lost territory in World War I, but his call for treaty revision was ignored. Later, when German rearmament gathered even more momentum Churchill abandoned this position.

By November of 1933 Hitler had been in control of

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<sup>38</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 311.

the Nazi state only nine months. Yet after that time German unrest became more prevalent, according to Churchill. None of the grievances of the potential aggressor had been rectified.

At this point Churchill renewed his cry for air defense, since he believed that Britain was growing weaker. Too, for the first time he began to hint of a policy of collective action to meet the Hitler menace, rather than one of mere reliance on France and her Central European alliances.

Consequently, Churchill was placing little emphasis on the "enormous" armies of Czechoslovakia, Poland, and even France, as being a deterrent to Nazi aggression.<sup>39</sup> There were just too many Germans compared to the population of France. And secondly, Churchill knew the reputation of past Teutonic military achievements, and the need for land, interwoven into the expansionist program of the Nazi party. As long as Memel, Sudetenland, and Austria held predominately German populations, this would be especially true. But timely rearmament might still keep England safely out of any skirmishes on the continent, he hoped. He continued to follow this attitude somewhat closely for several years.

Churchill and Hitler, 1932-1935.

Before turning to a consideration of collective

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<sup>39</sup>Churchill, "The League and Germany," Nov. 7, 1933, While England Slept, p. 80.



security, and the final comments on 1935 events, it must be noted that Churchill had not known at first what to make of the character and actions of Adolf Hitler. From the beginning he had seen through Nazism better than he had Hitler, although The Gathering Storm does not give this impression.

It was on January 30, 1933, an ill-fated day for Europe, that the former war veteran from Austria, Adolf Hitler, assumed the position as head of the German state. Hitler soon lost no time in putting into effect his many plans, as outlined in a volume written in the 1920's entitled Main Kampf.

Yet before Hitler became Chancellor, Churchill's concern over air power was already apparent, and soon became one of the topics which caused the German leader's growing dislike of Churchill.

Regarding the subject of Hitler, Churchill wrote at one point in his first volume of the Second War's events, The Gathering Storm, that the aging Marshal Hindenburg had commented: "That man for Chancellor? I'll make him a post-master and he can lick stamps with my head on them."<sup>40</sup>

As time moved forward, however, Hitler consolidated his position in Germany, with the aid of the Reichstag building fire, and the death in 1934 of Hindenburg. The German leader used the latter's death as an excuse to combine the offices of President and Chancellor for himself.

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<sup>40</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 69.

In Great Contemporaries, most of which was written before 1936, Churchill has this to say of Hitler, while the Weimar Republic went through the demoralizing throes of economic depression:

Corporal Hitler was fighting his long, wearing battle for the German heart. The story of that struggle cannot be read without admiration for the courage, the perseverance, and the vital force which enabled him to challenge, defy, conciliate, or overcome, all the authorities or resistances which barred his path.<sup>41</sup>

He also added that "when Hitler began, Germany lay prostrate at the feet of the allies. We may yet see the day when what is left of Europe will be prostrate at the feet of Germany," and, "whatever else may be thought about these exploits, they are certainly among the most remarkable in the whole history of the world."<sup>42</sup>

But on the other hand, in this same article of 1935, Churchill commented that "Hitler had risen by violence and passion; he was surrounded by men as ruthless as he."<sup>43</sup> Then Churchill, as he had done on German air strength, exaggerated the overall military strength of Germany. For he added:

It was not till 1935 that . . . Hitler, casting aside concealment, sprang forward armed to the teeth, with his munition factories roaring night and day, his airplane squadrons forming in ceaseless succession, his submarine crews exercising in the Baltic, and his armed hosts

<sup>41</sup>Winston Churchill, Great Contemporaries, (New York: G. F. Putnam's Sons, 1937), p. 228.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 226.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

tramping the barrack squares from one end of the broad Reich to the other.<sup>44</sup>

Here, Churchill erred for Hitler in 1935 was certainly not armed to the teeth. Even by 1939 the German military machine was still short too many planes and new tanks to launch a really all-out war against the European powers of Britain and France.

Churchill concluded his piece in the Great Contemporaries on the German leader by stating that at times Hitler appeared cool and competent to many persons. But, Churchill wrote in 1935, Hitler had made many speeches marked by candor and moderation, which did not seem to fit the pattern of armament production going on in Germany. For, "meanwhile the factories gleam at night as war materials pour forth," Churchill summarized.<sup>45</sup>

And after the Saar Plebiscite and annexation, when Hitler felt he could reveal his military plans, Churchill wrote:

This moral triumph for National Socialism, although the result of a normal and inevitable procedure, added to Hitler's prestige, and seemed to crown his authority with an honest sample of the will of the German people. He was not at all conciliated, still less impressed, by the proof of the League's impartiality or fair play. No doubt it confirmed his view that the Allies were decadent fools. For his own part he proceeded to concentrate on his main objective, the expansion of the German forces.<sup>46</sup>

Concerning conscription, which followed upon the heels

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., p. 230.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>46</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 109.

of the Saart's return to Germany, nineteen countries protested formally thru decess of universal military service. But Churchill wrote later, not one state, or one group contemplated a protest by use of force. Consequently, Hitler proceeded with his plans for remilitarisation of the Rhineland.<sup>47</sup>

Yet as time passed, and Hitler increased his prestige, Churchill still had the better of it in the bitter personal warfare which developed between himself and Hitler. Churchill often contradicted Hitler in such a way as to cause him to lose his temper.<sup>48</sup> Churchill's command of the English language, demonstrated by his receipt of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1935, in which he mixed just the right blend of color, with a touch of personal emphasis, was the main factor in Hitler's dislike of Churchill's criticisms of him.

By June of 1935 Churchill had become a restless tiger as he saw dark clouds moving ever closer, both in the reality of daily existence, and in his dreams at night. When he knew that the progress of unfortunate circumstances was no longer to be halted, he published his first objective analysis of the German leader in a magazine, The London Strand, entitled "The Truth About Hitler." To Churchill, after that time, Hitler

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>48</sup> In fact, Robert L. Taylor, who has had published what he terms an informal study of Churchill, says that "nobody has yet come up with a better thumbnail biography of Hitler than Churchill's Reddibirsty gutterwipes," Taylor, op. cit., pp. 221-223.

was a fanatic who was feeling the German people, and an avenger of German honor, not a world revolutionist.<sup>49</sup>

Collective Security

Even though Hitler had only just become Chancellor in early 1933, the Nazi party had been causing trouble within the Reichstag and Germany for nearly three years. In collaboration with the Communists the Nazis had forced rule by special decree to be the pattern within the Weimar Republic.

The unstable situation within Germany caused Churchill to state that Britain should not take any risks in trying to stabilize the general situation in Central Europe. Yet Churchill also stated that isolation was, at that time, "utterly impossible."<sup>50</sup> Consequently, talk of disarmament should not be carried to extremes, as those powers that Britain might at some future time need for aid would be weakened. And Churchill's final important remark of his last speech of 1933 concerning foreign affairs was one which indicated a desire for detachment from the European continent. This should be done, he added, without endangering peace.

During 1934 Churchill began talking about the possibility

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<sup>49</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 324.

<sup>50</sup>Churchill, "The League and Germany," Nov. 7, 1933, White England Slept, p. 81.

of collective security, and collective action, if necessary, with Britain also rearming to remain in a secure position. He referred to collective security more and more. This security would be based upon the moral principles of the Covenant of the League of Nations, and the strength of its members.

Consequently, as 1935 moved past the half-way mark, Churchill was still calling for a change in defense preparations, especially in regard to a strong air arm. It was now too late to apply his earlier formula: "Redress of the grievances of the vanquished should precede the disarmament of the victors."<sup>51</sup> The alternative evolved into a call for collective security, but not the type of collective security that most experts visualized.

Collective security as a repetitious phrase was continually emphasized in late 1935 and throughout 1936 by Churchill, but in its strictest applied sense was disregarded in Europe until 1939, which was too late. Yet the member from Epping, as he was frequently called in the House of Commons, could not be called a strict exponent of collective security. He was more of a fencestraddler, as there were two schools of thought in regard to this subject, traditionalist and collectivist.<sup>52</sup>

Arnold Wolfers clarifies this difference by stating

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<sup>51</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 257.

<sup>52</sup>Wolfers, op. cit., pp. 224-228.

that the traditionalists were concerned with geographic areas and geographic necessity, and discussed foreign affairs not in general and abstract terms, but with specific allusions to this or that particular country. They made reference to British military requirements to hold Germany in check, and to commitments in Western Europe as opposed to Eastern Europe. The collectivists talked of security in general, or of arbitration and disarmament. They avoided mentioning specific countries and used the terms "victims of aggression" and "potential aggressor."<sup>53</sup> This group came to lay emphasis on collective security, and thus gained the name collectivist.

Wolfers also elaborated upon Churchill's beliefs regarding collective security. Wolfers says that Churchill and a group of Conservative friends took an attitude which differed from that of both the traditionalists or collectivists. Churchill, in the traditionalist sense, advocated a policy of national interest, but, in addition, one which was based completely upon a sanctionist league. He did advocate "collective security," but it was a different type from that of the collectivists. Churchill was not concerned "with any abstract consistency of nations, with the rule of law, or with the punishment of aggressors, although he did use these terms. His one and only concern, now as always, was Britain."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 344.

Churchill feared an eventual German attack, Wolfers continues. Thus Churchill was seeking to defend the safety of the British Isles against such a threat. The means, which Britain should employ to safeguard itself, were the same in Churchill's thoughts as in those of the collectivists. This was because Britain's national interests coincided with those of collectivist internationalism and civilization.<sup>55</sup>

Churchill had at first opposed the League to some extent, Wolfers adds later, because it would entangle Britain in other people's quarrels. Churchill turned to collective coercion later because he thought that Britain would need allies against Germany. Thus "collective" security came to mean three different things, according to Wolfers: "an international organization of peace against potential aggressors; a common defense of the democracies against Fascist aggression; and a grand alliance of Britain and her friends to protect British security from a German attack."<sup>56</sup>

Churchill added that a strong League of Nations and a strong British Navy were "allied insurances for our peace and safety."<sup>57</sup> This was also the stand of France in reference to this issue, because by 1935 both the French and Churchill thought of the League in terms of the German menace.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 341.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 341-343.

<sup>57</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 305 (1935),

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<sup>58</sup>Wolfers, op. cit., p. 342.



The Culmination of the Wasted Years, 1935

In 1935 the British "White Paper" showed that the island was now moving toward new developments in armament. However, Hitler had the Saar region, Hitler's conscription law was in effect. Hitler had gained prestige by settling the old feud between Poland-Germany by the Non-Aggression Pact of the year before.

As Churchill saw the situation in 1935, Hitler's prestige was increasing because of several factors. One was English disregard of changes being brought about within Germany. Another was the failure of the disarmament discussions. A third was France's continued fear of Germany. Then, too, the United States, moving toward a leading world position, preached simple disarmament, but had not disarmed completely, according to Churchill.<sup>59</sup> Finally, Italy was increasing her armaments, while Britain was cutting hers, he finished.<sup>60</sup>

In May, he also talked of increasing tension appearing throughout Europe in regard to Nazi Germany. This was the result of several factors. The first, an internal reason, was that Germany was solving its unemployment problem by war preparations. Externally, this preparation was placing increasing tension upon countries near Germany, as new developments in types of transportation, which could carry new weapons,

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<sup>59</sup> Here Churchill erred for actually the United States had only a one-hundred-thousand man army with obsolete weapons.

<sup>60</sup> Churchill, Great Contemporaries, p. 230.

shortened the time consumed in mobilization and invasion potential.<sup>61</sup>

In addition, other May statements called for Britain to awaken to the fact that the shield of the Royal Navy was outdated by the airplane's development,<sup>62</sup> and that the Nazi party system had crept into the neighboring industrial nations of Poland and Czechoslovakia.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, Churchill warned of the large amount of German propaganda, which he termed the newest type of weapon in the German secret arsenal of armaments.<sup>64</sup> Within England there was a Fifth Column movement which was rapidly growing, and utilizing the Nazi propaganda to undermine British morale. The small British Fascist group was led by Oswald Mosley. Churchill was very discourteous toward him, and usually sat in a forced and restless mood while listening to Mosley's remarks.<sup>65</sup>

Finally, in the summer of 1935, Churchill became really disheartened with British diplomacy when the Anglo-German Naval Agreement was negotiated. This agreement, concluded June 18, swept away the naval armament restrictions of the

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<sup>61</sup>Churchill, "The Increasing Tension," May 22, 1935, While England Slept, p. 186.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>63</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 302 (1935), 1492-1495.

<sup>64</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 330. <sup>65</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 220.

## Versailles Treaty.

The agreement itself, announced on June 21, was denounced by Churchill twice in July of that year. A specific provision of the treaty involved abolition of the use of the submarine. This was a safe offer for the Germans to make, Churchill summarized, because they were fairly sure that not all the other countries would agree to this abolition.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the Germans, when they felt it necessary, could circumvent this provision.

Again, in fact, Churchill wrote later, His Majesty's Government did not consult the French or even inform the League of Nations that they were going to enter such a two-way pact.<sup>67</sup> Actually, he commented less than a year later, (May 15, 1936), when Germany's naval tonnage reached one-third of the total British amount, this agreement would eventually certainly be cancelled.<sup>68</sup>

Richard Howard Powers, in an article on Churchill's parliamentary commentary on British foreign policy between 1935 and 1938, quotes him as saying that the naval pact was against

<sup>66</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 140.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-138.

<sup>68</sup>Winston Churchill, "Our Navy Must Be Stronger," May 15, 1936, Step By Step, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1939), p. 18. Step By Step, covering the period 1936-1939, is a book containing a collection of fortnightly newsletters on Foreign Affairs and National Defense, in the original form as penned by Mr. Churchill. Each letter has its own title, used during those three years, which will be cited with the date of writing for clarification.

the logical position of Britain. But on the other hand, Churchill remarked, it was "a separate arrangement for ourselves, of a perfectly innocent character."<sup>69</sup> At this point he has contradicted himself. This was another reason for some of his warnings having little effect. However, the Germans would have had to build for years to achieve 35 to 50 per cent of the British naval capacity. The reasons behind this agreement being against the logical position of Britain were German rearmament and withdrawal from the League, plus the effect on British-French relations. Most persons in Britain felt that France's strong army could stop Germany in case of trouble on the continent, while the British Navy could, without a doubt, hold its own on the high seas.

His true feeling on the naval agreement<sup>70</sup> seems to have been expressed in the following, although this appeared later:

I do not believe that this isolated action by Great Britain will be found to work for the cause of peace. The immediate reaction is that every day the German Fleet approaches a tonnage which gives it absolute command of the Baltic, and very soon one of the deterrents of a European war will gradually fade away . . . What had been done was to authorize Germany to build to her utmost capacity for five or six years to come.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>Richard Howard Powers, "Winston Churchill's Parliamentary Commentary on British Foreign Policy, 1935--1938," Journal of Modern History, Vol. 26, June, 1954, pp. 179-182.

<sup>70</sup>This viewpoint coincides with a similar stand, July 11th, 1935, House of Commons.

<sup>71</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 140-142.

By the end of October, 1935, Churchill was citing the enormous figure of 800 million pounds spent by Germany for indirect military preparations. Germany, he said, was a wholly armed camp.<sup>72</sup> Again, this statement was probably intended to stir up some interest in the British, many of whom followed Baldwin's lead of paying little attention to facts gathered from the Continent itself by news agencies and the British Intelligence Service.

As 1935 closed Churchill was still calling for British rearmament to speed up. He was also following his policy of collective security, as he saw it, by calling for the peoples of the League of Nations to make it succeed through trust and faith. The Italian invasion of Ethiopia certainly had begun to weaken the League.

Summarizing this period one notes that Churchill had begun to write about and discuss the general situation of Central Europe, and by July, 1932, a whole string of warning speeches, rising in emphasis and crescendo throughout the next eight years, had their beginning.

The first important step that Hitler had taken was the rebirth of German armament, and Churchill spoke of this when he noted that the Nazis were essentially in control of the government. The French feeling of insecurity ever since the end of the first great war also seemed to permeate the

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<sup>72</sup>Churchill, "The Italian Complication," Oct. 24, 1935, While England Slept, p. 227.

atmosphere around Churchill.

During 1932 Churchill first commenced speaking of the redress of grievances for Germany, but never formulated any more of a program than anyone else on the subject. Secondly, it is to be noted in retrospect that he was thoroughly interested in keeping Germany from attaining any status of arms which might scare France.

In the early part of the year 1933 Churchill devoted himself to promoting the recognition of the need for air defense.<sup>73</sup> If the French remained armed, they could cope with any troubles in Europe that might arise. This way Britain would not become involved in any great risks, and could steer clear of European commitments. At that time Churchill was already beginning to understand Nazism as a program of fiery passion, with a core of nationalistic fervor at the center.

Although October, 1933, found a few cries being raised for strengthening British defenses, nothing was done. Churchill said a month later that Britain was growing weaker, and he renewed his cry for air defense.

At this point he recognized the eventual weakness of Poland, Czechoslovakia, and even France, and he began hinting at collective action backed by the League, with British

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<sup>73</sup>Wolfers, *op. cit.*, p. 373, states that in 1934, in spite of Germany's reputation for thoroughness and military efficiency, "only those few who shared Winston Churchill's special gift for accurate and pessimistic predictions foresaw the speed with which the Germans would move and the dimensions their future air force might reach."

rearmament taking place. His contacts with several steady men of the British Intelligence Service helped him collect facts which frightened him.

From 1934 on Churchill had to face a different situation as Hitler and the Nazis had purged Germany of any remaining political opposition. Also, none of her grievances had been the subject of change, or consideration for change.<sup>74</sup>

During 1934 Churchill devoted himself to several topics of discussion, some related to the others. The first was air defense, including parenthetically air power parity, and the second to put Russia into the League of Nations. The third and fourth, in their rough chronological order, were demands for a realistic foreign policy with concomitant security obtained from international conventions, and the establishment of a Ministry of Defense, which would coordinate the needs of the three services. Later in the year he pressed forward his views on the probable bombing of London. Also during that year he lost patience with the Disarmament Conference. According to Churchill, it was not accomplishing anything, and it must be remembered that before 1932, he had scorned disarmament conferences in general as "a positive cause of friction and ill-will."<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup>Wolfers, *op. cit.*, p. 221: ". . . that redress of grievances or even outright revision was a necessary step in any peace policy which was directed toward the pacification of the dissatisfied nations was not difficult to see . . ."

<sup>75</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 254 (1931), 955.

Here Kraus praises Churchill as the man who early in this decade saw what was coming on the European continent. It seems to be the natural thing for some of his other biographers to follow along with this viewpoint, as do a number of historians of this period. His speeches "commanded attention, but did not, unhappily, wake to action the crowded, puzzled Houses which heard them."<sup>76</sup>

Wolferen states that if Britain had been willing to retire into her one-time "splendid isolation" after World War I, British influence upon France and Germany would have been slight. However, the British became almost as involved in Western Europe as France.<sup>77</sup>

Sir John Simon, a member of the House of Commons, commented that the former conditions for isolation had disappeared, and that Britain could not increase her influence for peace by declaring that it did not matter what her neighbors in Europe did or did not do.<sup>78</sup> Austen Chamberlain had said essentially the same thing in 1925.<sup>79</sup>

During 1934 one more factor was important in relation to Churchill's consideration of the maintenance of peace by

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<sup>76</sup>Hanier, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>77</sup>Wolferen, op. cit., p. 254.

<sup>78</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debatas (Commons), Vol. 281 (1933), 59.

<sup>79</sup>Wolferen, op. cit., p. 254.



armament and other methods. The fact remained that he did not want France to disarm, for this would be inviting inevitably disaster. Britain's objective, whatever the motives behind it may have been, seemed to be to "attempt to endow Germany with a happy medium" of power lying somewhere between the Versailles level and a "maximum level" of Britain's determination.<sup>80</sup>

Now that it was too late to apply any formula for the rectification of grievances, Churchill in March, 1935, advocated a good air force for defensive purposes. Churchill believed that a good defense could also be utilized in this case as an adequate offense.

Churchill was not concerned with any abstract European community thoughts in regard to collective security. As he saw it, collective security was basically for the protection of Britain. Only in that respect was he truly a collectivist. He wanted Britain to back the League more wholeheartedly, and to put teeth in sanctions against aggressors. The reason for this support was that Britain's national interests coincided with the interests of the world.

As he put it: "The fortunes of the British Empire and its glory are inseparably interwoven with the fortunes of the world. We rise or we fall together." A strong British

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<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

navy and a strong League, Churchill said, were "allied insurances for our peace and safety," serving both the security of Britain and the moral cause of humanity.<sup>81</sup> He had thought that disarmament conferences were essentially a waste of time, and that the French, if they remained strong militarily, could hold the Germans forever. His main thought was the protection of Britain, at all costs.

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<sup>81</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 305 (1935), 361.

## CHAPTER II

### FROM 1936 TO THE MUNICH PACT

Winston Churchill's desperate faith in his type of collective security<sup>1</sup> continued into 1936, as Germany grew progressively stronger and stronger under Hitler. By March of that year Churchill was still concerned with the matter of German rearmament, which now had developed into an obsession with him.

On March 7th Hitler had pulled off another coup of diplomacy by marching his troops into the Rhineland area. Immediately, the remilitarization of this region began to take place. The German leader concomitantly denounced the Locarno Treaty of 1925 in which Germany, France, Belgium, Italy, and Great Britain had agreed to place the Franco-German and the Belgian-German boundaries, as drawn in the Versailles Treaty, under the collective guarantee of those five signatories.

Despite the pessimistic pleas of German military leaders, Hitler bluffed successfully, and no retaliatory action by the countries of Europe ever took place. Thus Hitler welcomed, in 1936, a chance to sit back and watch Germany's strength

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<sup>1</sup>See Chapter I, p. 31.

continue to expand. The employment problem had practically disappeared, as the rearmament program was placing many persons at work in the war industries. This led Churchill to comment on the third day after Hitler had occupied the Rhineland area, that, if the German government goes on from that point, "there is bankruptcy; if they stop, there is tremendous unemployment."<sup>2</sup>

#### Aftermath of the Rhineland Reoccupation

At that time a typical British view of the reoccupation of the Rhineland was: "After all, they are only going into their own back-garden."<sup>3</sup> This reoccupation was not the real problem, Churchill declared emphatically. The real problem, he said, was the continuous process of munitions production in Germany.<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, he also had predicted the Rhineland seizure before it occurred. After that, he saw as the next objective German expansion in Central Europe.<sup>5</sup> He warned of troubles or incidents which might be used to the Nazi advantage in that area. Though some consideration was given to his warning, E. G. Hicks said in Commons that Churchill saw "too

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<sup>2</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 309 (1936), 2008.

<sup>3</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 196-197.

<sup>4</sup>Churchill, "The Violation of the Rhineland," March 26, 1936, While England Slept, p. 254.

<sup>5</sup>Churchill, "An Amazing Prophecy," March 2, 1941, The New York Times Magazine, p. 6.

many bogies floating around."<sup>6</sup> Hicks continued with the statement that the Government was not ignorant, and that they knew what was going on in Europe. Mr. Lloyd George agreed with Churchill to some extent, and then he added that "the time has come for a thorough reconsideration of the problem of national defence."<sup>7</sup>

In the words of Churchill, Hitler was at that period bringing home trophies, for,

one year it is the Saar, another month the right to have conscription, another month the right to gain from Britain the right to build submarines, another month the Rhineland. What will it be next? Austria, Memel, other territories and disturbed areas, are already in view.<sup>8</sup>

Consequently, as the German leader continued to bolster Germany's military forces, Churchill continued his campaign against German armament. It seemed that their personal duel would be fought out to the bitter end, one way or the other.

Continuing with his forecasts, Churchill really emphasized in no uncertain terms in the British Commons what a danger the fortification of the Rhineland would be to Holland and Belgium. It is noteworthy that at this time also the future wartime British leader foresaw Hitler making a second attempt to gain control of or annex Austria. It was at this time that he proposed two practical foreign policies. One,

<sup>6</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 309 (1936), 2019-2026.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., 2026-2037.

<sup>8</sup>Churchill, While England Slept, p. 252.

which concerned France, came almost too late, while the other ultimately did not succeed because of the lack of coercive strength in the League of Nations.

The first policy was that an alliance between France and Britain would be necessary for the future protection of European peace, but only if real collective security in the League of Nations and respect for international law could not be secured. Under this collective policy states which were rapidly becoming alarmed at German armament should combine and make pacts of mutual assistance in case of aggression. He added that these should be approved by the League itself. Secondly, once the powers and the little countries of the continent were joined together, they should guarantee Germany that if anyone invaded or violated German soil the entire group would rise up and punish severely that offender.<sup>9</sup> Churchill stated that he was searching for a way to stop war, and, as he visualized it, pious sentiments and vacillating appeals would not stop it. Consequently, practical arrangements would be the only deterrent to war.

Several weeks later in Commons Churchill predicted that about 1940, as a result of French fortifications built opposite Germany in France, the need for an economy of forces would make it necessary for the main groups of Nazi military might

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

"to swing around through Belgium and Holland,"<sup>10</sup> This Biltkrijs did come to pass, too. Churchill was not alone in this viewpoint, as other experts also had this same belief.

It was about this time that Churchill began his fortnightly letters concerning foreign policy and national defense, which were later published together in 1939 under the title Step By Step. These letters, which often give an even clearer insight into his thoughts than the Debates, were written during a critical period of the 20th century, March, 1936, through February, 1939, when even Chamberlain and his most ardent supporters began to realize that Hitler was not to be satisfied with control over just those areas of strictly German speech and custom.

There seemed to exist four realities in Europe, Churchill said in the second of these letters. The first was the rapid and tremendous rearming of Germany, and the second was the Reich's recent actions which had destroyed confidence that she would respect treaties concluded before or after 1933. The third fact, which Churchill elaborated upon, had been the inoculation into the German populace of the thought that all elements of the German population outside of the Third Reich must, eventually, as a natural consequence, be incorporated within Germany. Finally, echoing the views of the

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<sup>10</sup> Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 310 (1936), 2184-2186.

economists, he said that economic pressures, as mentioned, were such that either an internal or external explosion would occur in a comparatively short time.<sup>11</sup>

After the Rhineland was reoccupied, Churchill said that there was no doubt that the superior strength still lay with the Allies of the former war.<sup>12</sup> In Germany, Hitler was able to brag to his generals that his intuition had succeeded again, and that it was indeed beneficial to the German cause when the countries of Europe were so divided and tame.<sup>13</sup>

#### Aftermath of the Ethiopian Conquest

Hitler could rely and reflect upon the Ethiopian episode of the year previous as another example of the collective weakness of the European nations. Comparatively speaking, Churchill preferred to concentrate on Germany, rather than the Abyssinian situation. No one ~~seemed~~ seemed to want to offend Italy, which invaded the North African state of Ethiopia in 1935.

When the League of Nations had introduced economic sanctions against Italy as a retaliation against the latter's tactics, they did not succeed to the extent that Mussolini's

<sup>11</sup> Churchill, "Stop It Now," April 3, 1936, Step By Step, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 195.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 199.



Fascist state was permanently damaged. But Churchill blamed the policy of sanctions for having separated France and Italy.<sup>14</sup>

Regarding the subject of Italy and Churchill's viewpoints as an independent member of the Conservative party, in Commons Arthur Greenwood commented that Churchill was always trying to have things two ways. He said, "I have no doubt that he has perhaps succeeded in justifying his appointment to high office if the worst happens, and the National government is returned."<sup>15</sup>

After Benito Mussolini's success in Ethiopia was assured, however, Churchill asserted:

The day will come when, at some point or other, on some issue or other, we will have to make a stand, and I pray to God that when that day comes we may not find that through an unwise policy we have been left to make that stand alone.<sup>16</sup>

In June of 1936 Churchill wrote that what had happened in Italy certainly showed that a nation should not deal in shams, such as sanctions without teeth. Secondly, if the nation on the other side was sure that democratic countries do not mean to enter into any conflict, it would be better to avoid becoming embroiled in skirmishes between nations.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup>Powers, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>15</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 305 (1935), 368.

<sup>16</sup>Churchill, "Mr. Eden's Resignation," Feb. 22, 1938, While England Slept, p. 384.

<sup>17</sup>Churchill, "Why Sanctions Failed," June 26, 1936, Step By Step, pp. 28-35.

His attitude toward Germany occupied so much of his time that Walter Hall and Richard Powers both agree that he was "blind" on the importance<sup>18</sup> of the Spanish struggle.<sup>19</sup> Frederick Schuman, however, comments that on July 19, 1937, Churchill and Lloyd George questioned the British Cabinet, just before Commons adjourned, regarding German batteries installed around Gibraltar being a threat to passage of British ships through Mediterranean waters in case of an emergency. The Ministers only shrugged their shoulders.<sup>20</sup> Churchill was also castigated by one Hanson Baldwin who said, "Churchill's single-minded concentration upon the defeat of Hitler made him underemphasize the importance of maintaining a moderately strong Germany as a counterpoise to Soviet Russia," though the latter did predict correctly when he stated that Russia would become very strong after World War II.<sup>21</sup> But, Baldwin, a top reporter who has received the Pulitzer prize for news-writing, commented that Churchill was the most prominent of those "who raised warning flags before World War II."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Powers, op. cit., p. 180.

<sup>19</sup>The Spanish Civil War broke out in 1936, and evolved into a struggle between the Communists, supported by Russia (and by adventurers from various nations), and the Fascists, supported by Italy and Germany.

<sup>20</sup>Schuman, op. cit., p. 309.

<sup>21</sup>Hanson W. Baldwin, "Churchill Was Right," Atlantic Magazine, July, 1954, Vol. 194, No. 1, p. 25.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

In Germany Hitler could see what Mussolini was accomplishing in Ethiopia. The action of the League of Nations was not adequate nor sanctions successful. Referring to the standards that should have been utilized after Italy's conquest of Ethiopia, Churchill later stated, during World War II, that the French had a considerable case to argue with British Ministers.

Britain, in the early 1930's, urged France to disarm. But neither took enough responsibility in leading the League of Nations. Then Britain made a naval treaty in 1935 with Germany, which did not include any reference to submarine construction. This did not contribute to an improvement of relations between the two Western powers.<sup>23</sup>

Churchill also remarked that "more than once in these fluid years French Ministers in their ever-changing Governments were content to find in British pacifism an excuse for their own."<sup>24</sup>

Besides all other factors, Churchill became very discouraged with the bungling methods of the Baldwin-MacDonald team. Regarding them he stated that "they were perfectly

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<sup>23</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 182.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 193. While on the subject of France it is interesting to note that here the far-sighted Churchill erred. . He placed too much faith in France, and said that it would never be the country to betray democracy's cause. However, the French concluded a quick peace with the Germans in 1940, which ended his faith. See "Vive La France!," June 25, 1937, Step By Step, p. 121.

equipped to give the country a rest-cure, which could be prolonged indefinitely."<sup>25</sup> England seemed to be suffering from a case of sleeping sickness when the island was now only ten minutes by air from the continent, he warned.

The munitions program of Britain was not progressing at a fast enough pace to satisfy Churchill,<sup>26</sup> who noted that Germany had organized its industry on a war basis.<sup>27</sup> Therefore in the summer and fall of 1936 he lambasted what he thought was a lack of activity along air production lines.<sup>28</sup> Actually, more and more of the British budget was spent for development of up-to-date aircraft from 1935 on to the opening of the war.

#### The Axis Powers

By autumn of 1936 Hitler had put into effect a Four Year Plan for greater economy and efficiency in war, and had succeeded in tying two allies to him. The October Protocols of 1936 cemented the friendship between Hitler and Mussolini, which laid the foundation for the Rome-Berlin Axis. They both specifically agreed to oppose Communism. And Hitler could hope that Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia would eventually

<sup>25</sup>Kraus, GRS 618, p. 335.

<sup>26</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 312 (1936), 1441.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., 1442-1443.

<sup>28</sup>Churchill, "The Gathering Storm," Oct. 30, 1936, SKSP BY STEP, pp. 57-58.

lead to the Nazi hegemony over Austria.

The Anti-Comintern Pact with Japan, November 27, 1936, came upon the world scene almost side by side with the Rome-Berlin Axis. Italy joined the Anti-Comintern Pact itself on November 6, 1937, and then withdrew from the League of Nations December 11, following the 1933 examples set by Germany and Japan. Also, on July 11, the German-Austrian agreement was announced, by which Hitler supposedly recognized the "full sovereignty" of Austria.<sup>29</sup>

In the meantime, as usual, Churchill continued his pleas in the Commons, his letters, and his discussions, while continuing to vote with the Government.

Finally, in November Churchill began utilizing a new style of attack, as he cited a number of points of optimism compared with his pessimistic speeches and letters of the year passed by. He was hoping that the Axis powers would take heed of the potential power of Britain, its allies and empire, and possibly the United States.

He began in a debate on collective security in the Commons on November 5th by advocating that Britain arrive at a planned, chronological, workable pattern for the next few years. His plan, in simple terms, was to stand by the collective security of the League with the other powers, who were then advocates of non-aggression. He stated that if Germany

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<sup>29</sup>Salvemini, op. cit., p. 503.

was afraid of Russia, she could also join the system of collective security.

He was wrong in his statement that only the next twelve months would tell whether a war could be averted;<sup>30</sup> but to what degree? Austria was gathered into the German Reich only a little over a year later, and the Sudeten question was on the Hitler agenda right afterward.

His note of November 13th in his fortnightly letter collection hit a high note of optimism. He wrote of Britain's increasing rearmament on a great scale, and how this revival would be sustained. He pointed out that the British fleet was still the most powerful in Europe. The German Navy needed time to develop, and new inventions would eventually also diminish the threat of submarine warfare. Britain would certainly soon improve her air power stature, and she also was definitely not alone in the Mediterranean. Such nations as France, Greece, and Turkey were on the side of the British.<sup>31</sup>

On the day that the Anti-Comintern Pact between Germany and Japan was concluded, Churchill stated that as this was an alliance agreement directed essentially against Russia; then, if war began in the German area, as surely as the sun rises in

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<sup>30</sup>Churchill, "Collective Security," Nov. 5, 1936, While England Slept, p. 311. This was the beginning of Part Three in this book, entitled appropriately: "Germany Armed."

<sup>31</sup>Churchill, "In Mediterranean Waters," Nov. 13, 1936, Step By Step, p. 62.

the morning, Japan would light a second conflagration in Asia.<sup>32</sup> And, while the Germans continued on their road of ornament for conquest, the Japanese began undeclared warfare in China.

Of course, on the other side of the picture, he thought that the danger of a Russo-German agreement was receding. He argued this was because Russia now sat between Japan and Germany as a result of the Anti-Comintern Pact. Therefore, the Russians probably would not make an agreement with either Germany or Japan which would place the Soviet Union on the other side of the fence from Britain. Churchill hoped at this time that Russia would show her diplomatic position in Western Europe. This did not occur, however, until 1939.<sup>33</sup>

From 1937 to 1939 Churchill was again proved correct when he rested on the assumption that only union with Russia would prevent catastrophe.<sup>34</sup> Not until 1938, one notes, did he suggest the possibility of a really tight Franco-British-Russian alliance.<sup>35</sup>

He was blinding that the Russians must take some sort of stand in European affairs. Joachim von Ribbentrop, who was to hold positions as Ambassador to Britain and German Foreign Minister, had told Hitler to start worrying when

<sup>32</sup> Churchill, "Germany and Japan," Nov. 27, 1936, Ibid., pp. 65-66.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>34</sup> Powers, op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>35</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 274.

Russia and Britain got together.

Continuing to be more optimistic than he probably felt inwardly, Churchill commented in December, 1936, on: (1) the strength of British sea forces, (2) the strength of the Empire, (3) the expanding air force, (4) the resources and finances of Britain, which could be obtained easily, and (5) the strength of the French army and its fortifications. He did add that the army in Britain was in a weak condition.<sup>36</sup> In Commons he had said about the same thing, citing the French army's superior numbers, and the superiority of air power when British and French forces were grouped together.<sup>37</sup>

Yet he still retained his faith in the League as 1937 began. Churchill hoped that at Geneva, the League headquarters, the peace of the world would be secured through the coming year, but concomitantly deduced that the rearmament of the peaceful powers must progress as an additional safeguard for peace, as "the world danger" is growing.<sup>38</sup> When Hitler declared on January 30th that the "German Government have assured Belgium and Holland that they are prepared at any time to recognize and guarantee these states as inviolable

<sup>36</sup>Churchill, "The Pledge of France," Dec. 11, 1936, Step By Step, p. 69.

<sup>37</sup>Churchill, "The Locust Years," Nov. 12, 1936, While England Slept, p. 322.

<sup>38</sup>Churchill, "No Intervention in Spain," Jan. 8, 1937, Step By Step, p. 77.



neutral territories,"<sup>39</sup> Churchill was completely skeptical.

Now there came a very illustrative example of Churchill's change on certain issues. In March of 1937 he severely criticized Hitler for raising the colonial question, because he said Germany had little basis for it as they were continuing to rear.

In April of 1936 Churchill had called for a redress of grievances,<sup>40</sup> but in November of that year he momentarily repudiated his proposal that Germany's claims for colonies lost in Africa after World War I be considered.<sup>41</sup> During that same November he began stressing more of a really concrete collective security policy.<sup>42</sup> Then as late as December of 1937 he proposed, however, discussions of a restoration of war conquests to Germany, and said that colonial concessions might be considered if other world powers who had gained from the World War I treaties would contribute their efforts to finding a harmonious solution.<sup>43</sup>

Since the colonial question and redress of grievances

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<sup>39</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 338.

<sup>40</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 310 (1936), 2489.

<sup>41</sup>Churchill, "Germany's Claim For Colonies," March 5, 1937, Step By Step, pp. 84-100.

<sup>42</sup>Powers, op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

were not being settled, Churchill abandoned any fence-  
 spreading at this point, and began his definite policy of  
 constantly advocating more security based upon the League<sup>44</sup>  
 of Nations and its Covenant. This is supported by a news-  
 letter on the German colonial question written by Churchill  
 in March, 1937.<sup>45</sup> Consequently, Churchill felt there was  
 no further use at all in discussing German claims. It was  
 just part of their propaganda claim for more living space.

Optimism, with an underlying tone of discouragement  
 and pessimism, pervaded his Commons address of March, 1937.  
 At this point he stated that Britain now had a policy in  
 foreign affairs based upon the Covenant of the League of  
 Nations and upon special agreements with France. In  
 addition, he said, if the present policy of national  
 defense is pursued resolutely for four or five years,  
 Britain would be in a "more agreeable position than any  
 which we have occupied since German rearmament began in  
 earnest."<sup>46</sup> He concluded that Britain would be fortunate  
 if some type of conflict did not break out in the European  
 region before 1940, and that the most of the British  
 populace supported the present program of national defense  
 preparations.

<sup>44</sup>Churchill, November, 1936, Preface, White England  
Step, p. viii.

<sup>45</sup>Churchill, "Germany's Claim For Colonies," March 5,  
 1937, Step By Step, pp. 84-100.

<sup>46</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 321 (1937), 573.

The fact that "we are an undefeated people" should not sway British thoughts on the fate of Europe,<sup>47</sup> he added, Nevertheless, "do not underestimate England," Churchill told Herr von Ribbentrop one day in 1937, "for Britain is very clever. If you plunge us all into another Great War, she will bring the whole world against you like last time."<sup>48</sup> And that is what finally occurred, when Britain, France, Russia, and others were all allied against the Nazi system in 1941.

In reference once more to the League, on February 5th Churchill wrote that European security definitely must depend on the Covenant,<sup>49</sup> while in June in a state of worry he hoped that Italy would not become an active member of the Anti-Comintern Pact. If this happened the League would suffer for it.<sup>50</sup> Italy, however, joined it in November of that year.

In the autumn of 1937 Churchill wrote in his newsletter, entitled ironically "War Is Not Imminent," that the British, with the help of the United States, could play a significant part in alleviating our fears.<sup>51</sup> He at that time seemed to be

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 574. <sup>48</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 223.

<sup>49</sup> Churchill, "Europe's Peace," Feb. 5, 1937, Step By Step, p. 84.

<sup>50</sup> Churchill, "The Rome-Berlin Axis," June 11, 1937, Ibid., p. 117.

<sup>51</sup> Churchill, "War Is Not Imminent," Oct. 15, 1937, Ibid., p. 149.

on the verge of complete inconsistency, if one notes the given above. There appears, however, to have been a layer of optimism at the surface, while in contradiction was the statement made on Armistice Day, which said that there was no armistice in Europe but just war without arms, and "statecraft is bankrupt."<sup>52</sup> This latter statement is evidence of his underlying pessimism, which was affected by the success of his correct predictions in relation to the Nazis, and his deep convictions about trouble on the horizon for 1938 or 1939.

Consequently, as 1937 closed, Churchill, still supported by only a few backers, followed his desperate hope that the crumbling League of Nations could hold together, and he devoted three paragraphs in a Debate on the Adjournment in Commons four days before Christmas to the importance of the British backing the League.<sup>53</sup>

There was a good reason why Churchill's popularity did not increase between December, 1936, and the end of 1937. To elaborate, in the former month his stature took a dip when he wanted a delay for more consideration by policymakers of the question of the abdication of Edward the VIII. Baldwin

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<sup>52</sup> Churchill, "Armistice or Peace?" Nov. 11, 1937, ibid., pp. 158-159.

<sup>53</sup> Churchill, "The Dictators and the Covenant," Dec. 21, 1937, While England Slept, pp. 371-373. He also added that "we are ready to discuss in a friendly spirit the restoration of war conquests, provided every other country, or the bulk of the countries, that made such conquests is ready to join with us and discuss the situation on equal terms."

wished for a speedy decision, which would oust the King from his throne. The Times of London had a field-day underlining the proceedings over the abdication with the headline "Mr. Churchill's Bad Day." After the abdication Baldwin received a new lease on life, and Churchill's rising star waited for awhile to recover from this untoward incident.<sup>54</sup>

In 1937, although still a very conservative politician in domestic affairs, it might be said of Churchill, as he had already written of the Duke of Marlborough while referring to the year 1700, that a loose figure with a non-party outlook, a foreign policy resembling that of the Whigs, and a domestic policy resembling that of the Tories, was found moving along the central line of impending national requirements.<sup>55</sup>

Chamberlain, the great appeaser, continued to share the view about Churchill that Baldwin had held while in office. Chamberlain and Baldwin felt that the member from Epping would only be needed in times of war, and thus "Mr. Churchill was left crying in the wilderness."<sup>56</sup> With Churchill was a small group of persons on Parliament's back benches. Nevertheless, they were not influential in causing Chamberlain to include Churchill in the inner circle of foreign policy advisers.<sup>57</sup>

It must be added in support of Churchill, that this "little lost legion," as Guedalla called them, included during 1936 and 1937 such outstanding figures as Sir Austen

<sup>54</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., pp. 260-263.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 268.

<sup>57</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 349.

Chamberlain, (who died in 1937), Sir Henry Croft, Sir Robert Horne, Sir Edward Grigg, Brendan Bracken, Duff Cooper, Anthony Eden, and Lords Winterton, Lloyd, and Milne,<sup>58</sup> all of whom were well-known for one reason or another in Britain.

Neville Chamberlain and his followers certainly did not want someone within their inner circles who would set off a verbal conflict between British and German leaders. The personality clash between Churchill and Hitler had already begun, because of Churchill's warnings on Hitlerism, and the Nazis were calling the former a warmonger. In fact, Churchill's steady behind the scenes prodding of men who had not yet completely recognized the Nazi dangers finally led Joseph Goebbels, Germany's leading propaganda exponent, to call him a German hater.<sup>59</sup>

In a final statement of 1937 Churchill concluded his year's warnings on another pessimistic level, somewhat opposed to most of the hopeful speeches and writings of the previous eleven months. Yet this only served to show the underlying pessimism and danger signals of prior warnings.

During the whole of the year of grace 1937 the more highly educated portions of the human race have been aiming upon a scale never before imagined. All the

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<sup>58</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 82, 118, 228, and Salvemini, op. cit., p. 499.

<sup>59</sup> Taylor, op. cit., pp. 339-340.

preparations of the years before the outbreak of the Great War were upon a petty scale compared to this.<sup>60</sup>

### The Eden Resignation

And now the fateful year of 1938 began. It got off to a bad start as far as Churchill was concerned. In February Chamberlain himself announced that he would assume personal charge of England's foreign affairs in place of Anthony Eden, though Lord Halifax replaced Eden in the cabinet as foreign minister.

The whole issue, concisely, involved the fact that Eden was endangering British foreign policy by his failure to subordinate himself somewhat to the wishes of Hitler and Mussolini. Eden felt that Germany and Italy should not be encouraged by appeasement, since that would upset the balance of power in favor of the Fascist states. Churchill basically was in agreement with this viewpoint.<sup>61</sup>

With all the other countries of Europe involved in domestic problems, or feigning neutrality, Eden in January of 1938 welcomed President Franklin Roosevelt's secret suggestion

<sup>60</sup> Churchill, "Panorama of 1937," Dec. 23, 1937, Step By Step, p. 167.

<sup>61</sup> In respect to the German situation and the British balance of power, Churchill stated that he must oppose the strongest power on the continent. "Therefore, we should not be afraid of being accused of being pro-French or anti-German. If the circumstances were reversed, we could equally be pro-German and anti-French." Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 207-210. Salvemini in Prelude to World War II utilizes this quote in the same manner.

to seek a solution to European difficulties by a conference in Washington. When Chamberlain discovered that this might displease the dictators, the abyss between Eden and himself grew perceptibly. Subsequently, when peaceful overtures of a condescending type were made to Italy in February by Chamberlain, Eden resigned.<sup>62</sup>

In agreement with Churchill, and concerned about the safety of Belgium and France, Eden had opposed Hitler's policies. But the Cabinet was lukewarm when Eden "insisted" that staff conversations between Britain, Belgium, and France, should take place to enable joint action which might become necessary in the near future.<sup>63</sup>

According to Churchill himself, Sir Austen Chamberlain and he supported Eden. Was Churchill in agreement with Eden that Eastern Europe should be left to Hitler on the condition that Hitler left Western Europe alone? Churchill in The Gathering Storm stated that he had told Ribbentrop that Britain "would never disinterest herself in the fortunes of the Continent to an extent which would enable Germany to gain the domination of Central and Eastern Europe."<sup>64</sup> However, on page 30 of this same volume, noteworthy is this

<sup>62</sup> Then, as one author put it concerning Chamberlain's policy: "The celebrated umbrella soon came into play and was brandished like a popgun in the face of the Fascist cannons." Taylor, op. cit., p. 341.

<sup>63</sup> Salvemini, op. cit., pp. 498-499.

<sup>64</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 222-224.



quote: "I did not at any time close my mind to an attempt to give Germany greater satisfaction on her eastern frontier," Churchill does not say where that satisfaction was to stop.

Salvemini comments that one could also wonder what was to happen in the areas south and east of Germany where there were people of German language and culture. He states that there was a possibility of Austria, Nepal, and other disputed areas such as the Polish Corridor, being destined to appease Hitler in Churchill's mind.<sup>65</sup>

In The Gathering Storm Churchill stated that he really slept poorly for the first time in years on February 20th, after Eden's resignation. The visions of probable future war deaths worried him.<sup>66</sup> And in February, 1938, on the occasion of the Eden resignation, Churchill had, for the first time, abstained from voting with the Government.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Salvemini, op. cit., p. 499. Salvemini adds that "among the Tory members of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons, with whom Churchill in 1936 and 1937 co-operated in demanding more efficient war preparations, are to be found Sir Austen Chamberlain, Sir Robert Horne, Sir Edward Grigg, Lord Vinterton, Mr. Bracken, Sir Henry Graft, Amery, Viscount Wolmer, Lord Lloyd, Lord Milne, & all people who approved of the policy of "appeasing" Hitler through granting him greater satisfaction on Germany's eastern frontier."

<sup>66</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 257.

<sup>67</sup>Powers, op. cit., p. 182. According to Powers, the German annexation of Austria did for Churchill what even Poland "could not quite accomplish for Chamberlain." (This was indeed a strong stand for Powers to take.)

Richard Powers, a strong Churchill backer, differs with another author, Keith Felling, who has written a volume on Neville Chamberlain. Felling stated that Churchill was among the "normal supporters" of Chamberlain's government right up until the post-Munich debate. As has been stated, Churchill did not vote with the government on the occasion of Eden's resignation.<sup>69</sup>

By May, 1938, Churchill was following the direction of the labor group's foreign policy, when he attacked the present air defense of Britain again.<sup>70</sup> Even after Eden's resignation, and the beginning of an even more definite appeasement policy, Churchill stated that Austria might remain a sovereign state if the pressure exerted by Hitler and the Nazi Party within and outside of Austria was lifted.

Also, he commented that Czechoslovakia would assuredly fight for its independence.<sup>71</sup> Churchill definitely made a mistake for Czechoslovakia did not fight for its freedom. These comments showed that Churchill was also definitely concerned with what would happen if Central Europe slowly disappeared into the Nazi orbit, piece by piece. A few days later in Commons he again called for a significant foreign

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>69</sup> Great Britain, 5 Parliam. (Commons), Vol. 332 (1938), 235-247. Powers, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>71</sup> Churchill, "Garry On," March 4, 1938, Speeches, pp. 189-190.

policy without continual choppy bumps and changes. He then reached back and stated that the irreparable damage to the world's security had occurred in the years 1932 to 1935 in the tenure of the Foreign Office under Sir John Simon, then Chancellor of the Exchequer.<sup>72</sup>

Casse Otto: Austria

Now came the annexation of Austria (Anschluss), which in West circles was referred to as Casse Otto. Churchill wrote later, after Casse Otto had gone into operation, that it was formulated as early as the summer of 1936, and subsequently reviewed in June and November of 1937.<sup>73</sup>

Hitler was happy over his accomplishments in reference to rearmament and conscription, and the Rhineland reoccupation. He was on friendly terms with another Fascist state, Italy. He wished to waste no time in putting Casse Otto into operation, and as part of this plan assumed supreme command of the German armed forces.<sup>74</sup> He, Hitler, would then have an open door to Czechoslovakia, thus revealing a path to the portals of all Southeastern Europe.

As the critical year of 1938 opened, Churchill was still pressing for (1) a Grand Alliance of the peaceful nations,

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<sup>72</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 332 (1938), 246.

<sup>73</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 259.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 260-261.

(2) a steady-forward British foreign policy; and (3) good relations regarding Franco-Belgian military matters.

On February 17th his comment stated "It's not all over yet" especially in what he hoped for a peace-making Germany he felt was going through the process of Europe.<sup>15</sup> Then he said that a month later Austria was under the domination of Germany, and Hitler's power was extended further. At that point, Churchill's answer varied again.

With Austria in the hand situation after March 12th, he implied March 12th that demands to aggression based upon the Government of the League should take place in harmony with the preparation and trials. He was at this point very realistic. If a step was taken to ascertain which process of the second week would join with Belgium and France, and this step failed to draw in any other allies then Britain would possibly see the greater part of Europe.<sup>16</sup> Along with Churchill's explanation Belgium and its associated Poland could not see through and were not, and, indeed, this came to pass.

On March 12th, after the Assembly, France and Austria proposed their plans with to all circumstances in case of

<sup>15</sup> Churchill, "The History of the Second World War," Vol. 1, p. 193.

<sup>16</sup> Churchill, "The History of the Second World War," March 20, 1938, pp. 192-193.

aggression. Field-Marshal Herman Goering assured the Czech government of Germany's determination to respect the territorial integrity of that country. Britain took formal note of this assurance.

On that same March day, Churchill spoke in Commons on the seriousness of the situation, calling forth his expressive powers of vocabulary to state that the importance of the Anschluss must not be overlooked. Other countries had better take effective measures for self-protection by grouping together. He added that Vienna was the center of the communications of the sovereign states which had constituted the old Austro-Hungarian empire. With control of part of the Danube and Vienna, Germany potentially held the economic and military control over the road, rail, and river systems of southeastern Europe.<sup>77</sup>

The next topic concerned the Czech nation. Churchill argued that Czechoslovakia was now isolated, both economically and militarily. The through trade outlet at Hamburg secured by the World War I peace treaty could be closed at a moment's notice. Concluding, he said that the only chance for peace was still a Grand Alliance of the great and small powers against the spreading web of the Nazis.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>77</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 333 (1938), 95-99.

<sup>78</sup>Churchill, "The Annexation of Austria," March 14, 1938, While England Slept, pp. 389-392.

In the final selection in the book While England Slept, he was gravely concerned with his usual topic: obtaining deterrents to Nazi expansion and aggression. He then looked ahead and saw two reasons (only one of which later could be said to be valid) why a major land war might not break out over the case of Czechoslovakia. These two reasons also appeared in Current History magazine in October of 1938. First, Churchill said that Germany was not ready for an ordeal such as a major land war. However, Hitler in the autumn of 1938 was ready to go ahead with plans for a military campaign against Czechoslovakia. There is no doubt that the Nazis were adequately prepared at that time for what they anticipated would be a short skirmish against a weaker neighbor. Secondly, Churchill emphasized sardonically, the Germans were acquiring everything they wanted without a struggle, so why should they change their mode of operation.<sup>79</sup>

However, even at this time, Churchill implored, a nation such as Britain should come forward to save civilization. Thus, the future Prime Minister continued his warnings throughout 1938, upon the need of a Peace Front in Europe, on the menace of political instability in France, on the threat to British trade-routes as the result of Ireland's obstinately refusing to let its neighbor, Britain, set up naval bases on Irish soil; on the space which might be utilized by a Ministry of Supply, and on the creeping shadow slowly crossing Czechoslovakia.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., pp. 395-404, and "What Can England Do About Hitler," Current History, October, 1938, Vol. XLVIX, No. 2, pp. 13-15.

<sup>80</sup> Guedalla, op. cit., p. 270.

In reference to these points Poyers states that his position from 1935 into 1938 "was much nearer to the majority of his party than has been generally recognized or than he admits." 61 However, the writer believes that only in so far as voting with the government on Britain's policies was Churchill in agreement, his constant warnings were inconsistent with his policy of invariably voting with the Conservatives. His voting policy was partly due to his faith in the League and collective security, while his warnings were intended as a secondary safeguard as the League had partially lost its effectiveness after the Ethiopian incident.

Churchill's warnings became more urgent, but for the complete meaning behind them one has to read between the lines, so to speak, because he sometimes exhibited a tendency to be optimistic in citing the elements of strength of the League members. This was to deter Nazi and Soviet thoughts of expansionism. The calm after Munich was only a prelude, an interval, before the Munich incident which finally turned European foreign affairs upside down, and led to the Polish invasion during the first hours of September, 1939.

Churchill's popularity was slowly increasing. However, when he began stressing the relatively small size of modern Europe caused by transportation improvements, this point had little effect. Many Englishmen could hardly pronounce

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DiPoyers, op. cit., p. 182.

"Czechoslovakia", and to some of them Central Europe appeared more remote than America.<sup>82</sup> Thus Churchill's warnings of the time when the Nazi and Fascist legions would rule the whole continent continued, for the most part, to fall on deaf ears.

However, Churchill still stuck by the principles of the Covenant, commenting that, even though Britain was forced to fight, she would still adhere to these ideals set up after World War I.<sup>83</sup> This was a moral basis for joining with France, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Hungary, and the Czech nation, plus Poland, Scandinavia, Russia, and the Baltic states to group with Britain. Consequently, in that way the League of Nations might be strengthened, or as Churchill put it, recreated.<sup>84</sup>

By June, 1938, he emphasized that the Spanish Civil War was past history as applying to who would eventually be victorious, and that Czechoslovakia was now the immediate danger spot in Europe.<sup>85</sup> He said in August, with a note of both optimism and his usual underlying fear, that war was still not inevitable, but that Europe was moving toward a

<sup>82</sup> Strauss, op. cit., p. 351.

<sup>83</sup> Churchill, "National Service," June 9, 1938, Step By Step, pp. 217-218.

<sup>84</sup> Winston S. Churchill, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1941), pp. 22-24. This book contains all speeches in and out of the House of Commons and as Prime Minister from 1938 into 1941. Many are radio addresses and talks made to clubs in and near London on foreign affairs and national defense subjects.

<sup>85</sup> Churchill, "Shadows Over Czechoslovakia," June 23, 1938, Step By Step, p. 221.



climax of events.<sup>86</sup>

He also said that, if any type of trouble broke out in Rumania's province of Transylvania, Hitler would use that occurrence as a pretext to enter that area. This would constitute a definite danger to Czechoslovakia.<sup>87</sup> Furthermore, if the Czech national interests and territory were to be the next objective, and the Nazi conquest of Austria was not retracted, then France and England should go to war to protect that elongated nation with its Silesia iron works.<sup>88</sup>

He commented in late August that the anxieties of Europe mainly rest upon the shoulders of Hitler. He said that Hitler had raised his country from defeat, and brought it back again to the foremost ranks of power. He concluded that it would be fatal for the German leader "if he were to cast away all he has done for the German people by leading them into what would almost certainly become a world war."<sup>89</sup>

He also during that month wrote about probable future American support against the dictator governments.<sup>90</sup> Too, on August 18th, discussing German maneuvers close to the German-Czech border, he wrote in reference to world opinion that an

<sup>86</sup> Churchill, "Maneuvers in Germany," Aug. 27, 1938, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, p. 49.

<sup>87</sup> Churchill, "What Can England Do About Hitler?", Current History, p. 13.

<sup>88</sup> Powers, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>89</sup> Churchill, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, p. 50. This was the same speech as referred to in footnote 86, and was given at Theyden Bois.

<sup>90</sup> Churchill, "The United States and Europe," Aug. 4, 1938, Step By Step, p. 236.

episode like the trampling-down of Czechoslovakia by an overwhelming force would change the whole current of human ideas and would eventually draw upon the aggressor a wrath which would in the end involve all the greatest nations of the world.<sup>91</sup>

By mid-September he was convinced that there was a possibility of an impending clash between German and Czech troops. A firm course of diplomatic action must be followed to preserve peace, Churchill finished.<sup>92</sup>

The Munich Pact was just days away, and Churchill had no way of knowing that Prime Minister Chamberlain would soon bring back from that German city what was popularly termed "peace in our time," and then lose it as Germany annexed, with the exception of Slovakia, the remainder of the Czech state.

#### This Period in Retrospect

In summary, it can be noted that another three-year period had slipped by without such countries as Britain and France considering any real coercive action against any actions of Nazi Germany. Several times Churchill seemed to be gaining converts to his train of thought, but then something would happen that would prevent his warnings being utilized.

His loss of prestige in the abdication difficulties, and the fact that he was an Independent Conservative, having previously changed parties several times, did not help his

<sup>91</sup> Churchill, "German Honors," Aug. 18, 1938, ibid., p. 240.

<sup>92</sup> Churchill, "The European Crisis," Sept. 15, 1938, ibid., pp. 246-247.

cause. Also, there was the fact that Chamberlain, unless absolutely necessary, was not about to let Churchill into the inner orbit of top policy decisions among the British foreign policy experts and governmental leaders. If Churchill had been given an important post in determining foreign policy, it would have conflicted with a policy of appeasement designed to save peace in Europe.

Churchill's diehard faith in his type of collective security found a basic foundation when in March, 1936, Hitler began the remilitarization of the Rhineland. This meant that from the Ruhr Valley, to Basel, Switzerland, and along the French-German border above Metz, troops would soon be stationed, and new fortresses for military purposes would be constructed. Yet this reoccupation of the Rhineland was only part of the whole program of German rearmament. The continuous growth of German munitions programs was what worried Churchill. Because of these German military preparations a number of important personages, such as Lloyd George, the great British leader of World War I, were beginning to see that something should be done in consideration of the problem of national defense.

Then, too, several times, in 1931 and 1934, events occurred which showed that Germany was unable to forget that the new little state of Austria was predominately Germanic in population, custom, and culture. It was apparent to Churchill that Hitler eventually would again compare himself with the

problem of Anschluss. In 1936 Churchill foresaw another attempt of Hitler to dominate Austria, if not annex it.

Also in 1936, Churchill was concerned over the fortification of the Rhineland as a danger to the Netherlands and Belgium. From that time forward on several occasions he referred to the danger that Austria, Belgium, and the Netherlands did not seem to notice.

In that same year Churchill thought that defensive pacts for mutual assistance between the states of Europe, approved by the League of Nations, would aid the cause of peace. He stated that Britain and France must have an alliance, but only if real collective security could not be obtained. Furthermore, the Ethiopian conquest showed the League of Nations to be a sham, he said.

While Churchill looked at the possibility of practical arrangements, such as military staff conferences between the French, British, and Belgians, Chamberlain, who was not as yet Prime Minister, was calling for the settlement of Germany's colonial claims. This was an attitude that Churchill dropped in 1935, when Hitler began conscription and reconstituted an air force.

He was also frightened in July, 1936, by the statement of the Secretary of State for War, one Duff Cooper, that the conditions for war were worse than in 1914. Consequently, in November of 1936 Churchill began a new style of attack upon Nazism. He became more optimistic on the surface, but more

possibilities regarding the implications of his statements. Under the unrelenting of optimism Churchill was frightened for his homeland. The optimistic attitude was for the benefit of the Nazis themselves, who had taken note of the many criticisms Churchill was throwing at them. He warned of crucial times ahead, too. He emphasized that Britain must develop a planned, workable pattern concerning foreign issues, and must stand by the League Covenant.

It is significant that Churchill's basic belief in the League of Nations as a peacemaker became an obsession with him, as air power had earlier, and he was unable to shake off the effects of this belief. Yet the League failed to halt the war in China, and had failed in keeping Italy's new colony, Ethiopia, an independent nation.

Inversely, as 1936 closed, Churchill was emphasizing the factors in favor of the Allies. He pointed out the fact that Britain was now rearming. He thought that submarine warfare would not be so effective as in World War I because new devices would counteract this advantage.<sup>93</sup>

Also in 1936 he pointed to France as a strong ally. One must remember that leading military experts, right into

<sup>93</sup>Regarding new devices Churchill, in June of 1935, at the Government's invitation joined the newly formed Committee on Air Defense Research, "and thus came into close touch with the development of scientific methods and devices, foremost among them radar." Memiors, op. cit., p. 157.

World War II, thought that the French Army was the strongest on the continent. In addition, the British Navy was still lying like a sleeping lion, ready for the call which would protect the island nation from aggressive acts.

At that time he also alluded to the possibility of including Russia within a circle of powers opposed to Nazism. Also, he thought that rearmament might still keep Britain detached from the actual European theater of events.

From the close of 1933 on into summer, 1936, he definitely backed collectivism, as Britain had refused to maintain a relative or parallel development of rearmament approximating the effectiveness of German war production. Yet the appeasement policy continued to overshadow British foreign policy. This frightened Churchill possibly more than he cared to admit. Guedalla states that Churchill's sense of acute danger "was indicated by a mild tone towards Germany, with more than one appeal that its autocrat 'should now become the Hitler of peace.'<sup>94</sup> And from 1937 to the outbreak of war Churchill's basic dislike for Communism disappeared, as he saw that Russia would be needed to prevent a catastrophe in Europe.

There was no longer a trace of the thought that Germany's grievances should be redressed. This is shown, for

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<sup>94</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 266.

example, in September of 1937. At that time Churchill referred to Germany's colonial claims in a disgruntled tone. He said that the question of colonies, or loans, for that matter, was out of tune with the times. Germany was spending nearly a thousand million pounds in each year for rearmament, while Britain "cannot hand over colonies irrespective of the wishes of their inhabitants and of a great many other considerations."<sup>5</sup> Here, then, was one of the major shifts in his attitude toward Germany after 1935.

Without the possibility of a Russian alliance, Churchill was skeptical in 1937 of Hitler's guarantees of Belgium and Holland. In May of 1937 he spoke of the weakness of the Belgian border. In Holland, the Dutch, while expressing their unqualified neutrality, made preparations if need be, to flood part of their land in the event of German invasion.

As 1937 came to a conclusion, Churchill continued to support the League, and noted that the tremendous rearmament that was taking place in some European countries was certainly detrimental to peace prospects.

With the Eden resignation in February of 1938, Churchill really became discouraged. At this point, as an independent Conservative, weaving his way among the foreign policies of several parties, Churchill ceased voting with the Government.

In that month he again called for a determinative

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<sup>5</sup>Churchill, "Friendship With Germany," Sept. 17, 1937, Step By Step, pp. 141-143.

foreign policy, devoid of appeasement offers. At the same time in the House of Commons he called for a Grand Alliance of the peaceful nations of Europe, and as an accompanying safeguard, stressed the necessity of maintaining French-British military unity.

Alone Britain and France could not avert a new war now, Churchill stated, but with a group of nations banded together aggression would be halted. But his demand in Britain for an objective foreign policy failed to change the situation there, even though the annexation of Austria was only a month away. And as for the "Grand Alliance," the countries of the second rank in Europe failed also to heed him. Yet as the roll of Nazi drums grew louder and the wheels of Germany's rearmament hummed to a faster tempo, Churchill began to think less in terms of solving Europe's problems than of Britain's safety.<sup>96</sup>

With the annexation of Austria, Germany gained direct contact with Italy, Hungary, and Yugoslavia. Also, Czechoslovakia was surrounded on three sides by Nazi Germany after the completion of Case Otto. Churchill warned after that event that Vienna was the center of communications for a strategic area in Central Europe, that the Nazis would spread out from that center, and that the Czech nation had better heed his warnings.

While advocating that the Little Entente powers

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<sup>96</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 254.



(Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Czechoslovakia) join with Russia in strengthening collective security, Churchill also added that if Czechoslovakia were dismembered in any way, France and Britain should go to war. While holding this view about French-British military action, Churchill remarked that the menace of political instability in France was growing to effective proportions. How effective these proportions were can be seen by the events during and after Munich. The French alliance system slowly crumbled piece by piece, with the loss of Czechoslovakia, the German-Russian Non-Agression Pact, and the invasion of Poland. Furthermore, the French military forces were defeated in a matter of weeks in the German spring campaign of 1940.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MUNICH PACT, POLAND, AND WAR

Munich, as a term suggesting the acquisition of a controversial territory, will not soon be forgotten in the discouraging annals of modern European diplomacy. For most of the European powers it represented a very low ebb in their relationship with Nazi Germany.

The situation involved a specific section of westernmost Czechoslovakia, known as the Sudetenland, and predominantly German in speech, custom, and ancestry. As soon as the Austrian annexation came to a successful bloodless conclusion, Hitler began speaking publicly of that area.

In the Sudetenland, Hitler argued, although he himself knew this was an exaggeration of the facts, the German population was the object of political, social, economic, and even religious discrimination. Of course, there was the fact that the Czech "Maginot Line" existed in this area, which Hitler and his military advisers knew would cause any direct land attack to be subjected to a tremendous barrage of shot and shell.

Although the French had a treaty with the Czech nation, they did not want to make any harsh demands on Germany to

keep her influence rational in that area of political fervor. This reaction was primarily due to Britain's hesitancy. Chamberlain was cool toward the Czech interests, because he thought that possibly Central Europe was out of the range of immediate British interests, that the Sudeten area was actually German in population anyway, and the entire matter conflicted with his policy of compromise with Hitler.

There is little doubt that Chamberlain was influenced by what was known as the "Cliveden set." This group of persons often spent the week end at Cliveden, Lord Astor's country estate at Taplow, Buckinghamshire. They gained some notoriety especially after 1937 when such men as Lord Halifax, Geoffrey Dawson, editor of The Times (which had begun to urge the restoration of the German colonies), and the German Ambassador were included in this group.<sup>1</sup>

Chamberlain, after twice flying to Germany to confer with Hitler, actually gained nothing, while attempting to induce the Germans to be lenient toward their next-door neighbor. Chamberlain was mistaken in thinking that Hitler would ever be satisfied by just acquiring this small area on his doorstep.

Mussolini, however, played a leading part in organizing

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<sup>1</sup>In addition to the material in the text above, Riess, op. cit., p. 58, added, "Foreign Minister Eden was not alone in his dislike for the Cliveden set and the other circles which so strongly influenced Prime Minister Chamberlain. Winston Churchill, too, protested repeatedly; Duff Cooper and Hore-Belisha spoke pessimistically . . ."

a four-power conference which met in Munich on September 29th. At that conference the Czech republic lost its western border protection as Hitler obtained the Sudeten area. Hitler conceded that he would respect the rights of the remainder of that nation, including Bohemia, Moravia, Slovakia, and Ruthenia. These regions extended inside Czechoslovakia from west to east from the Sudetenland. Finally, Poland and Hungary also proceeded to annex small parts from the Czech nation.

### The Error of Munich

By allowing the Germans to have their way at the Munich Conference on September 29th, Britain and France obviously committed a grave error. At the end of that month the Germans gained immensely by just obtaining the Sudetenland alone. Churchill's considered judgment on Munich might best be summarized in two sentences: "There is no merit in putting off a war for a year, if when it comes, it is a far worse war, and one harder to win," and, "I remain convinced . . . that it would have been better . . . to fight Hitler in 1938 than it was when we finally had to do so in September, 1939."<sup>2</sup>

The reasons at that time for Churchill's desire to fight immediately, rather than later, included the strength of the Czech army, which, if utilized, was 35 divisions, and

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<sup>2</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 339. (Nazi, op. cit., p. 161, utilizes these same two quotes.)

the Skoda arsenal works, which in the 1938-39 period alone nearly equaled the output of British arms factories. Also, Czechoslovakia could be a potential air base to use against Nazism; Poland might have helped if there had been more decisiveness in the policy of the allies in Central Europe; the road to the Black Sea was open, and Germany then was reaching the third, but not as yet the fourth year of really intensive war preparations.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, on September 21st, 1938, Churchill said in a statement to the press that "the partition of Czechoslovakia under pressure from England and France amounts to the complete surrender of the Western Democracies to the Nazi threat of force." He added that the partition would not bring security or peace to England or France, and that on the contrary it will weaken these two nations.<sup>4</sup> It can be said that only in relation to air potential was Britain strongly improving her strength in 1938. Part of this improvement was certainly due to the warnings of Churchill earlier on air defense.

Thus, prior to the meeting at Munich, Britain and France had considered seriously opposing Hitler's demands. War clouds appeared on the horizon on September 28th when a partial mobilization of French troops took place, and about noon of that day actual orders from the Admiralty to the British fleet

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<sup>3</sup>Senior, op. cit., p. 161.

<sup>4</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 303.

were received which authorized mobilization.<sup>5</sup>

On the other side of the French border, in Germany, a potential plot to take over the Government from Hitler was being formulated. The plan involved some of the leading German generals, while meanwhile both military and naval advisers counseled Hitler not to go against what they considered heavy odds.<sup>6</sup>

However, circumstances did not become critical, and subsequently Chamberlain returned to London, satisfied that he had settled the question of German expansionism, once and for all. But Churchill, more aroused than previously, if that were possible, made a number of stinging criticisms concerning the Munich meeting, which was certainly one of the most crucial political and diplomatic changes of the 1930's.

His train of thought is represented by the statement that: "France and Britain had to choose between war and dishonor. They chose dishonor. They will have war."<sup>7</sup> Referring to the fact, he warned that "one pound was demanded at the pistol's point. When it was given, two pounds were demanded at the pistol's point. Finally, the dictator consented to take one pound 17s. 6d. and the rest in promises of good will for the future."<sup>8</sup>

During the two days of debate in Commons on the Munich

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 303.      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 311-314.

<sup>7</sup>Churchill, "The Munich Agreement," Oct. 5, 1938, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 56-65.

<sup>8</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 339, (1938),  
361.

agreement he remarked that,

so far as this country is concerned, the responsibility must rest with those who have had the undisputed control of our political affairs. They neither prevented Germany from rearming, nor did they rearm ourselves in time. They quarreled with Italy without saving Ethiopia. They exploited and discredited the vast institution of the League of Nations and they neglected to make alliances and combinations which might have repaired previous errors . . .<sup>9</sup> And by this time next year we shall know whether the Prime Minister's view of Herr Hitler and the German Nazi Party is right or wrong. By this time next year we shall know whether the policy of appeasement has appeased, or whether it has only stimulated a more ferocious appetite . . .<sup>10</sup>

He added that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe would now make the best deal that they could with the Nazi machine in Germany. This did not take into consideration Poland which, for its size, had a relatively large number of men under arms. While still advocating cordial relations between England and Germany, he emphasized that there could never be friendship with the German government then in power.<sup>11</sup>

He said that it seemed that British existence must depend upon the whims or pleasures of the Nazis. It was to prevent this happening that Churchill said he had urged the maintenance of every bulwark of defense. These were: (1) the quick creation of an air force superior "to anything within striking distance of our shores;" (2) the banding together of the nations of the League in closer harmony, and (3) alliances made within the provisions of the Covenant.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>10</sup>Churchill, "The Morrow of Munich," Nov. 17, 1938, Step By Step, p. 263.

<sup>11</sup>Churchill, "The Munich Agreement," Oct. 5, 1938, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 62-63.

He added that every position had been "successively undermined and abandoned on specious and plausible excuses."<sup>12</sup>

He digressed for a moment to a subject that he had been discussing during much of 1934 and 1935, which was that a good air force and defense may eventually be the only remaining means of survival.<sup>13</sup> In his fortnightly letters, he added that

acceptance of Herr Hitler's terms involves the prostration of Europe before the Nazi power, of which the fullest advantage will certainly be taken. The menace, therefore, is not to Czechoslovakia, but the cause of freedom and democracy in every country.<sup>14</sup>

As Taylor says, the official British reaction to this was, briefly, "Poo, poo."<sup>15</sup> Typical was the reply of Brigadier General Henry Croft who, after Churchill finished speaking in Commons on October 5th, commented that the press of many continents was hailing Britain as the world's "saviour from a world calamity." Croft added that Britain "in that act of friendship saved Czechoslovakia from annihilation."<sup>16</sup>

By mid-October Churchill was addressing the American people, and calling for America to rearm to help Britain.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p. 64.

<sup>13</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 339 (1938), 372-373.

<sup>14</sup>Churchill, "France After Munich," Oct. 4, 1938, Step By Step, pp. 250-253.

<sup>15</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 342.

<sup>16</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 339 (1938), 374.

<sup>17</sup>Churchill, "The Defense of Freedom and Speech," Oct. 16, 1938, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 72-74.



In November in Commons his policy was to plead again for a strong navy and a good air force. He did praise these two services for at least progressing to some extent, but still saw that they were too weak for a probable conflict against Germany. He went on to say that the British system of production was not as yet effective and worthy of adequate mass productive methods. He added that air attacks on London and Southern England were still easily possible.<sup>18</sup>

In his fortnightly newsletter the same day, he called for air parity with Germany as soon as possible. Subsequently, he made the statement that by November of 1939 the world would know whether the policy of appeasement had succeeded.<sup>19</sup>

Churchill's first doubts of the French began to show about this time, especially concerning some of the upper middle class and a number of well-to-do persons who had political influence in the government.<sup>20</sup> These persons were content to follow a policy of appeasement, and such a situation frightened Churchill. This was especially true since France had evaded its proposed responsibilities toward the Czech nation.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 341 (1938), 1128-1143. In this speech he also warned of the danger to the Low Countries which might congeal at any time.

<sup>19</sup>Churchill, "The Morrow of Munich," Nov. 17, 1938, Step By Step, pp. 263-264.

<sup>20</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>21</sup>Namier, Europe in Decay, p. 162.

On the first day of December Churchill warned that the virtual destruction of Czechoslovakia had changed the entire French military position. In reference to France he commented that

all her system of alliances in eastern Europe has collapsed and can never be reconstituted, except, perhaps, after a lapse of years and in an entirely different form. Hitherto France and Great Britain have had the feeling that they were stronger than Germany. Henceforward a different order prevails.<sup>22</sup>

But, though he was beginning to become discouraged about France's stature in European affairs, Churchill emphasized that she was the only ally of great importance at the moment, and his memoir of December 1st expressed the solidarity that existed between France and her cross-channel neighbor.<sup>23</sup>

Even after Munich the personal battle between Churchill and his few supporters, such as Eden and Duff Cooper, and Hitler continued. Hitler stated in a speech October 9th, that,

it only needs that in England instead of Chamberlain, Mr. Duff Cooper or Mr. Eden or Mr. Churchill should come to power, and then we know quite well that it would be the aim of these men immediately to begin a new World War. They make no secret of the fact: they admit it openly.<sup>24</sup>

If only one of these men, such as Churchill or Eden, could have been placed in an important position, then Hitler

<sup>22</sup> Churchill, "France and England," Dec. 1, 1938, Step By Step, p. 266.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 269.

<sup>24</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 328-329.

might have made a change in plans. One source stated, which was supported by experts, that at any one of a dozen points, "Hitler could have been stopped without bloodshed. Churchill had pleaded for action in every case."<sup>25</sup> But nothing had been done when Hitler remilitarized the Rhineland, when Austria was annexed, or when pressure was exerted upon Czechoslovakia. Thus in 1938, without a military struggle, Hitler brought within the German border 6,750,000 Austrians and 3,500,000 Sudetens, Churchill gloomily summarized.<sup>26</sup>

Yet, more than ever, he failed to lose his faith that his warnings would ultimately benefit Britain, and defenseless countries near Germany, in preparing them for the probability of war. As a result, he was determined to keep up his prophecies and warnings.

In mid-December he warned Poland that her taking of the spot of territory known as Teschen from the Czechs at the time of the Munich settlement would not benefit her. This annexation of Teschen would be balanced, the Nazis soon revealed, by the annexation of Danzig, and also possibly the Polish Corridor. Whether Russian aid could be given to Poland was not known, Churchill commented, but France and Britain have always had what he termed a "very keen sentiment for Polish national

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<sup>25</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 344.

<sup>26</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 339.

Independence,"<sup>27</sup>

He so distanced Nazi tactics that on one of the last days of December he even began, after a long period of neutral opinion, to favor a leftist victory in Spain.<sup>28</sup> In addition, he called for Spain to push out all foreign elements within it.<sup>29</sup>

The Failure of Agreement, 1939

Finally, the fateful climax of the Polish situation approached. The year 1939 began with annexation of what remained of Czechoslovakia; the inclusion of Soviet within Germany; Hitler's denunciation of the 1935 Anglo-German naval agreement and the German-Polish agreement of 1934 which respected Poland's sovereignty; and the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact, in late summer, which paved the way for the invasion of Poland.

Into the stage of fact occurring European events was slowly appearing the giant power to the east of Germany, Russia, which eventually, against Churchill's hopes, concluded an agreement with Germany. However, the Russians did wait until August, 1939, before agreeing to a Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact. With the path open to him to avoid a large-scale two-front war, Hitler's invasion of Poland soon followed.

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<sup>27</sup> Churchill, "New Lights in Eastern Europe," Dec. 15, 1938, Step By Step, p. 270.

<sup>28</sup> Quedalle, op. cit., p. 273.

<sup>29</sup> Churchill, "The Spanish Door," Dec. 30, 1938, Step By Step, pp. 274-275.

When Hitler had first taken control of Austria by marching his troops into Vienna without a military struggle, the Russians were wam to the proposal to attend a conference to discuss the matter. But nothing took place, since no other larger power exhibited a paramount interest in this proposal. From 1938 to the last week of August, 1939, Churchill urged an alliance with this latent power. For example, on August 31, 1939, in a letter to Lord Halifax, Churchill pressed for joint action with the Soviet Union.<sup>30</sup>

Professor Haniel states that Churchill thought an alliance of the Western Powers with Russia offered the only chance of averting the Second World War.<sup>31</sup> Haniel added that some agreement should have been made to include Russia, because the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939 marked the "culminating failure of British and French foreign policy and diplomacy over several years."<sup>32</sup> Arrangements could have been made later to determine what compensation the Russians would receive for their demand that the Baltic states would have to submit to a protective guarantee against German aggression.<sup>33</sup>

Italy was even more involved with Germany than any European power in regard to an interwoven foreign policy. In January

<sup>30</sup>Haniel, Europe in Decay, p. 163.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 164. Note from the same page: The slogan of the Conservatives grouped around Mr. Churchill was, "We must get in Russia."

Churchill emphasized that Mussolini was now so committed to Hitler through pacts concluded between them, through the use of troops in Spain, and their two dictatorships, that his need "to have some prize that can be exhibited to the Italian nation, to have some share in the immense gains gathered by Germany, has become imperious." He added that Hitler "is the rich uncle who alone can help the loyal but improvident nephew through his difficulties."<sup>34</sup>

And when there seemed to be a lull during the winter of 1938-39 in aggressive action by the Fascist nations, people began to think that perhaps this time the Nazis would make no further demands. This period of relative quiet was at its full height in February before the Hitler move on Prague, the Czech capital. And Churchill warned that there was definitely no justification for optimism, for, he said, there were tales of movements of German munitions shipments in Central Europe. A new trial of strength was not far off, he concluded.<sup>35</sup>

One month later he wrote of German armament spending, and at the same time warned that, if war began, Italy would be a far greater burden on the shoulders of the Nazi state than the Austro-Hungarian Empire was in World War I.<sup>36</sup> He

<sup>34</sup> Churchill, "Mussolini's Games," Jan. 30, 1939, Star Star, p. 285.

<sup>35</sup> Churchill, "The Lull in Europe," Feb. 9, 1939, Ibid., pp. 289-291.

<sup>36</sup> Churchill, "Is It Peace?" Mar. 9, 1939, Ibid., pp. 290-299.

warned Germany, in addition, that every country was aware of its trickery by now, including Hungary, Poland, Turkey, and the United States, and beyond all these nations was the might of Soviet Russia.<sup>37</sup>

March 15, 1939, was an infamous date, for Hitler's military forces defied the Munich agreement by seizing Prague. This was the event that tipped the scales very much in Churchill's favor. Consequently, Britain realized that many of his warnings had been right. His unheeded prophesies were now being recalled.

After Hitler's entry into Prague, Professor Hanier commented that a demand arose in Britain for a National Government, which would include Churchill and others who, in the past, had opposed appeasement. The political correspondent of the Daily Telegraph reported on July 5th that a group of Chamberlain supporters had spoken to the Prime Minister in an effort to persuade him to include Churchill in the Cabinet.<sup>38</sup> Lord Selborne wrote in the Daily Telegraph of July 8th that he had never been a follower of Churchill, "but I agree with those who think that the inclusion of Mr. Churchill or of Mr. Eden in the Government at this particular moment would be a gesture even Dr. Goebbels could not fail to understand."<sup>39</sup> Churchill was no longer up against a stone wall of opposition.

In the spring of 1939 his attitude was that a climax of

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 300.

<sup>38</sup> L. B. Hanier, Diplomatic Prelude, 1938-1939, (London: MacMillan and Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 360.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

events was inevitable. He had now become "an emblem of the public will to resist further aggression, of the national anxiety about rearmament."<sup>40</sup> Yet the policy of appeasement by Chamberlain still had enough support at this time so that Churchill was unable to move into an influential Cabinet position. Chamberlain no longer intended to be fooled by Hitler. He was not again made the scapegoat of the German leader's intentions.

About ten days later Churchill attacked the thoughtless complacency of British officialdom, and added that some new act of force by Hitler was sure to come in the future.<sup>41</sup> He emphasized that there had been now a brutal violation of the Munich agreement. The time for action was near, and no one else in Britain was to be fooled any longer. Angrily, Churchill wrote that Hitler seemed not to know that once British opinion and forces were mobilized, as shown by past history, British power would triumph in the end.<sup>42</sup>

After the Prague seizure Churchill said that the government turned around over the next several days, but a motion of March 28, 1938, tabled in Commons by 34 members (31 of them Conservatives, including Churchill, Amery, Duff Cooper, Brendan Bracken, Eden, Law, Macmillan, and Wolmer) and calling for a

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<sup>40</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 275.

<sup>41</sup>Churchill, "The Crunch," March 24, 1939, Step By Step, p. 302.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., pp. 303-305.



"National Government on the widest possible basis," passed unheeded.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, he wrote in a tone of optimism to the British people that the forces opposed to Nazism were,

in spite of what has happened, still by far the stronger. A period of suffering resulting from the air-slaughter of non-combatants may lie before us; but this, if borne with fortitude, will only seal the comradeship of many nations to save themselves and the future of mankind from a tyrant's grip.<sup>44</sup>

In a speech at Waltham Abbey, which took place only the day before the Prague seizure, Churchill said that the Nazi control of Czechoslovakia would eventually affect external British interests. Nothing can be done about the situation, he commented, so that was the end of it.<sup>45</sup>

On March 16th he again pinpointed a geographic area of German interest for conquest. In a discussion on Navy estimates, he spoke of the need for the German navy to maintain command of the Baltic. The reasons included the supplies that could be obtained from Scandinavia, and the political influence that could be exerted in that area. "Also the loss of naval command in the Baltic would lay the whole of the Baltic shores of Germany open to attack or possible invasions from other Baltic powers, of which the largest and most

<sup>43</sup>Maxier, Diplomatic Prelude, p. 79, and pp. 106-107.

<sup>44</sup>Churchill, Step By Step, p. 305.

<sup>45</sup>Churchill, "The Fruits of Munich," Waltham Abbey, March 16, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, p. 96.

important is, of course, the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup>

And as the danger of war became ever more apparent near the Baltic area in the summer of 1939, Churchill hoped that a solid alliance could be concluded in the near future with Russia.<sup>47</sup>

From the Baltic state of Lithuania on March 21st Germany annexed the city of Memel, which was a predominantly German city in speech and custom. This deprived that little country of Lithuania of most of its coastline, and showed that Hitler was now interested in the northern border of an eastern front, including the city of Danzig.

Following the Memel acquisition the outlook became darker over Europe as the Spanish Civil War ended on March 28th with a Fascist victory. On the seventh day of April the totalitarian states further endangered the peace of Europe when Italy seized Albania, and Spain joined the Anti-Comintern Pact.

Churchill became more dismayed than previously at that point. He thought that the means to organize any type of resistance to Nazi aggression in the Eastern European area were now almost exhausted. Even Hungary had fallen under the spell of Nazi influence.<sup>48</sup> As a result of the fascist leanings

<sup>46</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 345 (1939), 678-682.

<sup>47</sup>Guadalupe, op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>48</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 349.

of its controlling leaders, Hungary dropped out of the League on April 11th.

Two days afterward Churchill concerned himself with Italy for still another time in both his newsletter and in the House of Commons. Because of his attitude toward Germany, he became worried that Italy would now certainly support her in any nefarious or unorthodox undertaking which might be instituted in Central Europe.

In Commons he commented that Germany wanted to make certain that Italy was on her side. Diplomatic relations were good between Germany and Italy. The Italians were interested in increasing their seapower in the Mediterranean, which they called Mare Nostrum. This increase of Italian ships in the Mediterranean would endanger Britain's Suez lifeline.

At the same time Churchill had thought that peace could be preserved if Russia were included in a defensive peace bloc. He kept returning to this subject every few weeks. Also, he desired a promotion of unity in the Balkans. If the four Balkan states and Turkey stood together, the element of danger would be reduced.<sup>49</sup>

On the same date, April 13th, outside of Commons, Churchill was asking in a memoir if Mussolini would carry Italy into a war on the German side. Here he erred again as he surmised

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<sup>49</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 346 (1939), 30-38.

that,

although it is dangerous to prophesy in a positive sense, we may at least feel at the time of writing that the Berlin-Rome Axis stands upon a no more sacred foundation than does the Anglo-Italian Pact.<sup>50</sup>

The danger of Germany now being realized in Britain, however, peacetime conscription was introduced for the first time in British history toward the last of April, 1939. In the meantime Hitler was denouncing the German-Polish Agreement of 1934, and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement, as Churchill had hinted he would do. Then on May 22nd the Italian-German political and military alliance, The Pact of Steel, came into existence.

These occurrences showed that the danger of war was not being reduced. As a result of the continued threat to peace, Churchill was discussing the help that the King's Dominions would give in case of war in a talk at the Canada Club the latter part of April,<sup>51</sup> while also optimistically citing the strength of the British Navy.

Eight days later in another talk at the Corn Exchange in Cambridge, Churchill said that the most serious aspect in Hitler's latest speech was the denunciation of the Polish agreement, which was not to have expired until 1944. Hitler's additional denunciation of the Anglo-German Naval Pact should

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<sup>50</sup>Churchill, "Mussolini's Choice," April 13, 1939, Step By Step, pp. 307-310.

<sup>51</sup>Churchill, "The King's Dominions," April 20, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 123-125.

not be taken too seriously, since the Germans were not strong, except in the matter of submarine production. The Pact had enabled Germany, however, to build enough ships to control the Baltic area. Consequently, this treaty was of more benefit to Germany than Britain, Churchill commented. Thus, on April 28th he finished by stating that Britain had not thought of attacking Germany. "There was still hope that the latter would return to the family of Europe as an equal member, and that "this is what is going to happen in the end."<sup>52</sup>

After the introduction of conscription Churchill justified it by commenting that no blood would be shed except in self-defense or common defense. In fact, Britain based its position absolutely on the moral aspects of the Covenant of the League of Nations.<sup>53</sup>

In the same speech he said that the disintegration of Czechoslovakia had opened the eyes of many persons, that guarantees had been given to Poland, Greece, and Rumania, and that Britain would fight if Switzerland, Holland, or Denmark were touched by the Nazis. He spoke of the need of French and British unity. He still placed his first hope for the safety of democracy in Europe upon Britain and France. The French Army and the British Navy were probable effective deterrents

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<sup>52</sup>Churchill, "Hitler Speaks," April 28, 1939, ibid., pp. 130-131.

<sup>53</sup>Churchill, "The New Army," May 19, 1939, ibid., p. 136.

to Nazi attempts to control the entire continent.

Finally, he concluded that the conscription of 200,000 men was not worrying the dictators, but it bolstered the sagging faith of other European nations and League members. This was because previously Britain had never had peacetime conscription. Now steps were being taken to prepare for the eventuality of war. He added that Britain would not "at this juncture do anything which encourages these Dictators to suppose that we are not ready with other like-minded countries to go to all lengths in doing our share of the common duty."<sup>54</sup>

By May 4th Churchill already was on record for his stand concerning Poland, and by the end of June he was deeply engrossed in a consideration of what effect the invasion of Poland would have on European peace chances. Consequently then the question at issue,<sup>55</sup> he said, between Nazi Germany and the League of Nations members, was moral rather than territorial and geographical. A peace block should be formed, which would deter the thought of future conquests.

Russia was still a member of the League. Thus again Churchill said in the spring that without the aid of that massive land expanse there would be no way of maintaining an Eastern front in the event of war. With Russian leadership,

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<sup>54</sup>Ibid., pp. 137-141.

<sup>55</sup>Churchill, "The Russian Counterpoise," May 4, 1939, Step By Step, p. 317. The Anglo-French guarantee to Poland to prevent German hegemony in Europe was concluded during the period March 31-April 6.

he said, the states along the Baltic, and in Eastern Europe, might join together to halt an outbreak of hostilities.<sup>56</sup>

In his final newsletter in Step By Step Churchill wrote after the Anglo-Turkish alliance was concluded that the addition of Turkey might stabilize the situation in the Mediterranean. Consequently, a Nazi newspaper had this to say upon this event: England had "gained in peace what she could not win for all her efforts in the Great War."<sup>57</sup>

Speaking at the City Carlton Club in June, 1939, in London, Churchill said that without a doubt Poland would soon be attacked from the west and south if she did not yield to Nazi demands concerning the Corridor and Danzig. Then he stated that July, August, and September were the critical months ahead when the stretching tension might cause a conflict.<sup>58</sup>

Hitler was to be shown that this time the British would take the necessary steps if he attempted another trick of annexation without consent, Churchill, emphasized. Concomitantly, he added further that:

My warnings and censures for the last six years are on record, and today no one is asking me to take one word back. If I support the Government today, it is not because

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 319.

<sup>57</sup>Churchill, "The Anglo-Turkish Alliance," May 15, 1939, Step By Step, p. 321.

<sup>58</sup>Churchill, "Three Months of Tension," June 28, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 145-146.

I have changed my views. It is because the Government have in principle, and even in detail adopted the policy I have urged. I only hope they have not adopted it too late to prevent war.<sup>59</sup>

After commenting on the strength of the Navy, the potential of the Army, and the quality of the Air Force he simply asked what Adolf Hitler intended to do next. If he was going to attack Poland, and the world became involved in war, then civilization would not be ultimately damaged, but would come back stronger than before. Danzig would be a symbol, Churchill emphasized, not a city, and force would be met by force. Nazism should not be bought off any longer, and a crisis was just around the corner, he finished.<sup>60</sup>

Furthermore, as the days passed, many of the English newspapers, led by the Daily Telegraph and the Manchester Guardian, called for someone with fortitude and perseverance to return to political office. Churchill, claiming that he had nothing to do with it, noted that thousands of huge posters were on display for weeks featuring such phrases as "Churchill Must Come Back."<sup>61</sup> Sandwich-board placards even were paraded back and forth in front of Commons.

When the House of Commons was preparing to adjourn for the summer on August 2nd, Churchill said that Germany might try something while Parliament's back was turned, as was done in the case of Czechoslovakia, and as Italy had done in invading

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., pp. 149-150.

<sup>61</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 358.



Albania on Good Friday. When the agricultural harvest was completed, then the forces of evil appear to be the strongest, he added,<sup>62</sup>

In a speech directed at the United States on August 8th, he satirized the Nazi need for maneuvers, as protection against such "powers" as the Danes, the Dutch, the Swiss, and the Jews, who might at any moment leap out and attack Germany as "Belgium did" in the first war. The Nazi claim that Germany is being encircled has become a very tiring game indeed, Churchill finished, for at the top of a mountain there sits a single man in Germany who "can release the world from the fear which now oppresses it; or in a single day can plunge all that we have and are into a volcano of smoke and flame." If "Herr Hitler does not make war, there will be no war."<sup>63</sup>

Another black day for the forces of peace occurred on August 23rd when the Russian-German Non-Aggression Pact suddenly was concluded. Subsequently, as Churchill said after the war, the superior power slipped from the side of the allies, and a two-front situation involving France and Russia, which might have meant the overthrow of Hitler or cost the German

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<sup>62</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 350 (1939), 2439.

<sup>63</sup>Churchill, "Europe in Suspense," Aug. 8, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 163-166.

leader his life, never came into existence when Poland was invaded.<sup>64</sup>

Regarding the pact itself, Churchill made the two following significant remarks. The first was: "The fact that such an agreement could be made marks the culminating failure of British and French foreign policy and diplomacy over several years."<sup>65</sup> The second was that

the Soviet Government were convinced by Munich and much else that neither Britain nor France would fight till they were attacked, and would not be much good then. The gathering storm was about to break. Russia must look after herself.<sup>66</sup>

As war loomed ever closer the Anglo-Polish treaty of mutual assistance was signed in London August 25th,<sup>67</sup> and three days later France closed the German frontier. Clouds of war pessimism hung lower than at any time since World War I.

On the first day of September Hitler sent his troops across the border into Poland. By September 3rd Britain had presented a two-hour ultimatum to Germany to stop her offensive. This ultimatum expired at 11 A.M. At 15 minutes past the hour Britain launched herself, for the second time in the 20th century, into a war with Germany. By nightfall France had also issued a declaration of war.

In the confusion that followed in Britain, one of the

<sup>64</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 363.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 393.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 366.

<sup>67</sup> This treaty had been debated since April 3rd, 1939. Harrier, Diplomatic Prelude, p. 109.

factors that stood out was that "Winnie" was back! A War Cabinet was appointed, with Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty, which was a position he had held in World War I, and Eden as the Secretary of State for the Dominions.<sup>68</sup>

In summary, it appeared that all the months of warning were in vain, and now Britain, with Churchill at the age of sixty-four heading the Admiralty, was engaged in another conflict. In the next few months it was to be the Admiralty where most of the war's action was centered.

#### The Twilight War

In his first speech on the day actual war began, Churchill gave his viewpoint concerning the conflict, when he declared in the House of Commons that it was "not a question of fighting for Danzig or fighting for Poland. We are fighting to save the whole world from the pestilence of Nazi tyranny and in defense of all that is most sacred to man."<sup>69</sup>

Within a month the British were accustomed to listening to Churchill's forceful denunciations of Hitler and his

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<sup>68</sup>The day before the Polish invasion, Churchill commented that he had enough information to convince him that Hitler saw him as a symbol of the British will to resist. Therefore, he told his former Scotland Yard detective, Inspector Thompson, to come and bring his pistol along with him. He said that if war came a major burden would fall upon him. Whether Churchill was exaggerating the fact that a fifth columnist might attempt to take his life is debatable. (Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 401.)

<sup>69</sup>Churchill, "War," The House of Commons, Sept. 3, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 169-170.

cronies. In fact, how much the Nazis disliked Churchill may be ascertained by references to the Athenia incident.

When hostilities began a German U-boat torpedoed the Athenia, which was returning a number of Americans to their homes. This was the first step in a propaganda barrage, for soon a number of residents in New Jersey, whose names were on Goebbels' mailing list, were receiving letters from Berlin "accusing Churchill of having deliberately sunk the Athenia in order to create a new Lusitania incident."<sup>70</sup> Churchill was singled out as an arch-enemy of humanity, with Hitler the pursuer of this dragon.

Finally, in reference to the Nazi dislike of Churchill, many Americans on November 30 found in their mail a pamphlet "News from Germany." This was essentially an obscene attack upon Churchill. The pamphlets were authored by a Herr H. R. Hoffmann, Starnberg, Bavaria, and ironically, did not even mention Britain's ally, France, once.<sup>71</sup>

Beginning with the first months of war Churchill continued at irregular intervals to unleash blasts of withering criticism at Hitler and Nazism. In fact, with an upper strata ancestral tradition, Churchill was inclined to look down upon the German leader, and as for the latter,

chief among the utterances that drove him periodically crazier was Churchill's use of "Corporal Hitler." There

<sup>70</sup>Kraus, op. cit., pp. 358-359.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid., p. 366.

is reasonable belief that Shicklgruber . . . smarted under the stigma of having spent four years fighting a war without advancing to a niche more complimentary than corporal. For an ambitious man, it was an odd failure, and Churchill chose to harp on it. "Corporal Hitler says" and "according to Corporal Hitler" became staples of his wartime reports on losses, progress, and the like. While Churchill could move Hitler to inarticulate frenzy, Hitler inspired Churchill to eloquence.<sup>72</sup>

By October first the war had been going a month, and Churchill optimistically cited the U-boat menace as being diminished as a result of the watchfulness of the British Navy. He added that Poland had been overrun, but that Russia would warn Hitler off from his dreams of eastward expansion.<sup>73</sup>

Ironically, from that time on, Churchill seemed to be enjoying the fight, and he pitched wholeheartedly into the direction of the Admiralty as he had done in his warning speeches of the years just passed.

Consequently, this led Victor Gollancz, the English publisher and non-Conservative who worked with Churchill during the war, to comment that the then present head of the War Admiralty dreaded the coming of war more than any other public figure of the times. He had seen its effects on both nations and individuals. But once war was declared, Gollancz finished, he had about as much fun as it is possible to have.<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, he seemed to be discouraged as he

<sup>72</sup>Taylor, op. cit., pp. 349-350.

<sup>73</sup>Churchill, "The First Month of War," Oct. 1, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 174-175.

<sup>74</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 354.

wrote in late 1939 after the outbreak of war:

Poland in its agony; France but a reflection of her former warlike ardour; the Russian Colossus no longer an ally, not even neutral, possibly to become a foe. Italy no friend. Japan no ally. Would America ever come in again? The British Empire remained intact and gloriously united, but ill-prepared, unready. We still had command of the sea. We were woefully outmatched in numbers in this new mortal weapon of the air. Somehow the light faded out of the landscape.<sup>75</sup>

From September until spring Europe was unbelievably quiet. The French Armies made no attack upon Germany. No nation bombed another one. The dropping of pamphlets and propaganda broadcasts was all that occurred in the West. This became known later as the Twilight War or Sitzkrieg.

The only exception was up in the northeast corner of Europe where Russia attacked the little country of Finland the last day of November. The Finns put up a heroic resistance throughout the winter which amazed the world, and revealed the weakness of the Russian army. On December 14 Russia was expelled from the League of Nations for this action. Thus Russia, Germany, Japan, Italy, and the United States, all large powers, were not at that time League members.

But on the sea, however, there was a virtual battle raging, matching Churchill's naval forces and Nazi Germany, and the Admiralty during the winter and early spring was the active center of events. On the Navy, which Churchill stated was more than adequately prepared, fell the brunt of the war activity,

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<sup>75</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 433.

and, to quote one author: "It appeared to a slightly impatient audience that there was not much war and that what there was of it concerned the Navy and Mr. Churchill."<sup>76</sup>

With his time taken up by Admiralty business, and comments in Commons, one would have thought Churchill would not have much time to do anything else. But in addition, he eventually wrote to the Prime Minister, Chamberlain, a number of notes on various subjects ranging from topics such as bomb shelter construction to supply plans for larger factories. Another note warned of the need to make more stringent efforts to awaken Belgium to her danger, and to fortify to a better degree the French-Belgian border.<sup>77</sup>

Even though the H. M. S. Royal Oak was sunk at Scapa Flow in October, Churchill, in commenting upon this fact on November 8th in Commons stated that the Admiralty was now, after nine weeks of war, in a position of good standing.<sup>78</sup> Again making reference to the German propaganda program, Churchill recalled that "the absurd claims which they are accustomed to shout around the world" are exaggerated to the utmost for "I cannot resist saying we should be quite content to engage the entire German Navy, using only the vessels which

<sup>76</sup>Guedalla, op. cit., p. 281.

<sup>77</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 453-457 (Notes were sent to the Prime Minister, September 10 and 15, 1939).

<sup>78</sup>Churchill, "The Loss of the Royal Oak and the War at Sea," Nov. 8, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, p. 186.

at one time or another they have declared they have destroyed."<sup>79</sup>

On Armistice Day ten weeks of war had passed. Churchill took that occasion to broadcast his beliefs on the progress of the war. He remarked that the Air Force, Army, and Navy were growing stronger, and he added that, if the winter passed without any important event occurring, Britain would be in a well-organized state of preparedness. This was a highly optimistic statement to make, since the British war production effort had just begun to make headway toward a level approximating that of the German military machine.

Churchill also warned that same November day of the movement of Nazi troops toward Holland and Belgium. Finally, he concluded his radio broadcast with one of his typical, extreme castigations of Hitler and Hitlerism.<sup>80</sup>

It is obvious from the time that war broke out that Churchill's attitude toward Germany would be that of an implacable foe. But as for the German people he comments that there are probably millions who "stand aloof from the seething mass of criminality and corruption constituted by the Nazi Party Machine."<sup>81</sup>

Ironically, during the early months, if one checks

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

<sup>80</sup>Churchill, "Ten Weeks of War," Nov. 12, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 189-192.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 193.



historical accounts of this period, it will be noted that the next day German raiders dropped bombs upon the Shetland Islands, the first to fall on British soil. However, the Shetlands are located many miles offshore north of Scotland. Also, naval operations were of paramount interest during the early months of the war. Up until the spring of 1940 Churchill was basically in favor of two naval operations that would have had an effect on the war. He attempted to press both upon the Cabinet and upon the French, but he failed to carry either until it was too late.

At the end of the month of November the Gulf of Bohus in the north of Europe normally freezes, but the Germans were able to maintain their essential imports of Swedish iron ore through Norwegian territorial waters. The latter Churchill wanted to mine in what was known as "Operation Wilfred." The other operation, which was known as "Royal Marine," was a plan for launching or dropping fluvial mines in the Rhine river. The French, however, raised an objection to such an aggressive act, because it might draw reprisals against them. They maintained that attitude until the German blitz opened upon the Low Countries in May, 1940. Both operations were too late because the western powers maintained the attitude: "Don't be unkind to the enemy, you will only make him angry."<sup>82</sup>

Churchill detested the support given such an outlook.

It appeared that the French, at all costs, and hidden behind the Maginot Line, had no intention of irritating the enemy. This led Churchill furthermore to remark acidly that, "good, decent, civilized people, it appeared, must never strike themselves till after they have been struck dead."<sup>83</sup>

As the year closed, Churchill, in two December speeches, reported on the progress of the war on the sea, and concentrated on little else.<sup>84</sup> In summary, one could say concerning Churchill and his one-man war against Nazism that the year came to an unspectacular and indecisive completion.

#### Prelude to Disaster

Churchill began 1940 by stating that the British were still following the principles of the Covenant of the League concerning aggression, and he called for the neutral nations to join the war in accordance with this document<sup>85</sup> which had been recorded, and ~~was~~ by so many of those who hoped for a continuous peace after World War I.

In The Gathering Storm Churchill commented that on January 19th a German major was captured with the plans for the

<sup>83</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 574.

<sup>84</sup> Churchill, "Traffic at Sea," Dec. 6, 1939, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 196-198, and, "The Battle of the Plate," Dec. 18, 1939, pp. 206-210.

<sup>85</sup> Quedalla, op. cit., p. 281.

complete subjugation of Belgium, Holland, and France. These plans revealed that Hitler was only waiting for the appropriate time to undertake this further project of conquest. But none of these countries did anything about it. The Belgian King, in fact, went on hoping that all would turn out well in the end like the proverbial fairy story.<sup>86</sup> A later hypothesis was that the Germans, ironically, intentionally sent that German major into Belgium to throw other nations into a state of confusion, but opinions differ on this analysis.

In a radio broadcast of January 20th, 1940, Churchill warned the neutrals that they had better side in now, before it was too late, with the democratic western powers.<sup>87</sup> Erna considers this one of Churchill's most striking utterances of the early part of the war. The latter commented that these neutrals would not only be helping the French-British cause, and the cause of world democracy, but would be saving their own skins.<sup>88</sup>

This broadcast led to repercussions all over Europe among the smaller, neutral states. Belgium, Holland, Norway, and Denmark all branded him as an aggressor, of all names to call Churchill. It was only a few months until they all would

<sup>86</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 556-557.

<sup>87</sup>Churchill, "A House of Many Mansions," Jan. 20, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 214-216.

<sup>88</sup>Erna, 92, 94, p. 369.

be overrun. The Rotterdamsche Courant wrote that "Churchill's broadcast was a sharp attack on the neutrals," and the "Dutch government remains sure that Germany will not attack the Netherlands."<sup>89</sup>

These short talks, that Churchill had been resorting to ever since the opening of the Twilight War, became known as "pep talks." Of these speeches one source commented that the mixture was always identical:

excitement and warning, enthusiasm and skepticism, sober horse-sense and unbreakable trust in the cause. There is a touch of vision in these speeches, but hard-boiled realism, too, and above all, confidence that right will prevail.<sup>90</sup>

A week after that broadcast of January 20th, which caused such a stir in the neutral countries, Churchill was scheduled to speak at the Free Trade Hall in Manchester. The Hall was infiltrated by Fifth Columnists, who were ready and waiting to disturb the meeting.

But the disturbance did not have the desired result. Their noises only pushed Churchill to greater oratorical heights.<sup>91</sup> He began by emphasizing that five months of war against the world's greatest military power had done no damage to the British cause. Each person in Britain was being driven forward by the conviction that winning the war was the most important part of his existence. He added that the Nazi

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., pp. 370-371.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., pp. 357-358.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 371.

dictatorship would eventually fall because the men "at the top may be very fierce and powerful, but their ears are deaf, their fingers are numb; they cannot feel their feet as they move forward in the fog and darkness of the immeasurable and the unknown."<sup>92</sup>

"Resistance is not enough for victory," he declared. Not "national defense but only annihilation of Hitler's system will save England. The Germans are responsible for the Nazi cause. Economic warfare alone cannot accomplish Hitler's defeat . . ." <sup>93</sup>

Neither the Nazi tactics nor their nature fooled Churchill. Consequently, the Nazis used desperate means to discredit him. For example, Berlin recorded Churchill's Manchester speech. Then boos, catcalls, and whistling were inserted. "England is on the brink of revolution!" the German radio speaker announced. "Listen what sort of a reception the warmonger Churchill gets from his own people . . ." <sup>94</sup> The reception to the speech, however, was actually enthusiastic.

These tactics by the Germans to discredit Churchill had no effect, however, on his remaining First Lord of the Admiralty. German propaganda was even more harsh toward both

<sup>92</sup>Churchill, "A Time to Dare and Endure," Jan. 27, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 219-224.

<sup>93</sup>Kraus, op. cit., pp. 371-372.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., p. 372.

Churchill and the British Navy alone the Germans did not control the High Seas. The destruction of the Grand Speer in December had somewhat curtailed German naval wanderings and strategic efforts.

During February Churchill wrote that six German ships had left Spain in an adventurous attempt to reach Germany. However, three were captured, one scuttled herself, one was wrecked near Norway, and only one managed to succeed.<sup>95</sup> Also, German submarine warfare was being adequately controlled.

With the warfare at sea not progressing in a way that was satisfying the Nazis, Hitler conferred with Mussolini in a meeting at the Brenner Pass in March. At that time he told the Italian leader that he would soon launch a land offensive in the West. Action seemed in the East on March 12th when Russia, although now ousted from the League of Nations, signed an Armistice with Finland. Later, Finland and Germany fought on the same side against Russia.

Churchill felt that sooner or later Hitler would make a breakthrough to the West since the British had had the better of it in several actions, and no country had begun any major land offensive. Accordingly on March 30th in another broadcast, Churchill warned that an intensification of the struggle would soon take place, as many smaller countries, tormented by Nazi violence, were supplying Germany with war materials. He also

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<sup>95</sup>Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 566.

remained that German soldiers were drawn up tightly against the Dutch, Belgian, and Luxembourg borders. Churchill commented in his usual colorful way that

at any moment these neutral countries may be subjected to an avalanche of steel and fire; and the decision rests in the hands of a haunted, morbid being, who, to their eternal shame, the German peoples in their bewilderment have worshipped as a god. That is the situation of Europe

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#### The Invasion of Norway

On April 9, 1940, the Germans invaded Norway and Denmark, and Churchill was to hold his naval office only one more month. He made two speeches between that time and the invasion of the Low Countries.

Significantly near the beginning of the first one, he said: that the Germans had stated that the invasion of Norway and Denmark was a result of the Norwegian corridor being closed by the British, but that their preparations for their Scandinavian invasion had been made prior to a month ago. He added that the actual movements of troops and ships began even before the British and French mine fields were laid.<sup>97</sup>

Nevertheless, this invasion caught Churchill's navy asleep, even though one step had been taken in the first week of April when the Allies had announced that mines had finally been deposited in Norwegian territorial waters.

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<sup>96</sup>Churchill, "A Stormy War," March 30, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 243-246.

<sup>97</sup>Great Britain, 5 Debates (Commons), Vol. 359 (1940), 733-749.

The Norwegian episode should be a warning to the other neutrals, Churchill emphasized. He said, "I consider that Hitler's action in invading Scandinavia is as great a strategic and political error as that which was committed by Napoleon in 1807, when he invaded Spain."<sup>98</sup> In conclusion, he summed correctly that the recklessness of the German naval action would be only a prelude to land operations of a significant nature. Thus the Twilight War came to an end with the invasion of Norway.<sup>99</sup>

Soon the Norwegian cause became hopeless, because the air strength of Britain was too weak to interrupt the flow of German troops across the sea to Norway or to reinforce British troops.<sup>100</sup> Also, the peninsula of Norway was nearly a thousand miles long, roads and railways were few, and the Germans quickly controlled most of the important seaports by their quick landing of troops. Although skirmishes near Narvik, Trondheim, and the remainder of Norway failed, the esteem in which Churchill was held remained. As the Navy had been partly at fault, Churchill later credited his un- diminished prestige to his policy of ceaseless warnings, "unheeded but now remembered."<sup>101</sup>

On May 8th, unknown to him, Churchill made his last rhetorical remarks before a series of events began which

<sup>98</sup> Churchill, "Norway," April 11, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 259-260.

<sup>99</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, pp. 500-581.

<sup>100</sup> Cuedalle, op. cit., p. 205.

<sup>101</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 607, pp. 649-650.



affected the course of his life and the war. The talk concerned the withdrawal from Norway, and he attempted to look upon the optimistic side of the retreat from the north. In doing this he cited the Norwegian and Danish ships which had come over to the allied side, and would strengthen the French and British Mercantile Marine, the exaggerated and incomplete claims of the German wireless, and finally remarked that he saw "no reason why our control over the commerce of the seas should not become even more effective now that the Norwegian corridor exists no longer."<sup>102</sup>

Regarding the withdrawal from Norway, Churchill commented that Britain always seemed to be waiting for an opposing power to take the initiative, and then, when attacked in some vital area, to begin taking action. The biggest reason for the British failure in Norway, Churchill asserted, was the failure during the past five years to maintain or regain air parity with Germany.<sup>103</sup>

When Hitler's legions marched into Norway, the German Nazis, who hated Churchill with what amounted to a burning fanaticism, had Goering's pilots dropping pamphlets all over that country and Denmark. They read: "Churchill wanted to police the Norwegian and Danish waters against the will of

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<sup>102</sup> Churchill, "The Withdrawal From Norway," May 8, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, pp. 270-272.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

the two countries. He is responsible for your lot. He is the century's greatest warmonger."<sup>104</sup> But the people of England were staunchly behind Churchill, and the popular feeling was that they should have begun to follow him years previously.

On May 9th British troops occupied Iceland. The next day the historic invasion of Holland and Belgium, two countries which had disregarded Churchill's warnings most of the time, was undertaken by the German military juggernaut. While the British Army was answering the appeal of King Leopold of Belgium, and moving north into that country, Neville Chamberlain was resigning the office of Prime Minister.

It is interesting to note that a final trace of the appeasement policy appeared at this point. At a meeting at 10 Downing Street, which was attended by such important personages as Lloyd George, Churchill, and Clement Attlee, Chamberlain backed Lord Halifax, who had gone along with his appeasement policy, for the office of Prime Minister. However, since neither the Labour nor the Liberal Party would have supported Halifax, he was not seriously considered. There is not a doubt that Halifax's leadership would definitely not have been as beneficial as the inspired leadership of Churchill, who felt that no handicap was too great to overcome.

There is also good reason to believe that Hitler himself did not wish to become involved in a war with Britain, but that Churchill's constant and biting criticism of Hitlerism

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<sup>104</sup>Kraus, op. cit., p. 375.

and all its faults contributed greatly to tipping the balance so that Britain was in the war right from the beginning. The fact that Hitler had said that German expansion would be in the direction of Eastern Europe, his dislike for communism, the Anglo-German naval agreement, and the fact that the German leader at one time had even advocated an alliance with Britain, all support the belief that the Nazi chief wanted to keep on good terms with the British and the Dominions.

Equally important regarding Britain is that it was known, and accepted there by some persons, that Germany after 1936 would demand or obtain Austria, the Sudetenland, Danzig, and the Polish Corridor. These were all German-speaking areas, or had large numbers of Germans included. But the seizure of Prague in early 1939 had been a step away from this policy, and frightened Europe.

The influence exerted by the Cliveden set on British leaders, and the agreeable conduct of von Ribbentrop, when he was Ambassador to Britain, accomplished its part by holding back the final complete break between the two countries. And, also during the whole 1930-1940 period, the British distrusted Communism, of which Russia was the prime source. Finally, pressing domestic issues brought about by the world depression, and the failure of the League of Nations after 1935, made the British ignore what the Germans were doing.

But now the war was on in earnest. Chamberlain was no longer Prime Minister. At six o'clock on the evening of May 10th,

Churchill was summoned by the King. As he wrote later:

I was taken immediately to the King. His Majesty received me most graciously and bade me sit down. He looked at me searchingly and quizzically for some moments, and then said: "I suppose you don't know why I have sent for you?" Adopting his mood, I replied: "Sir, I simply couldn't imagine why." He laughed and said: "I want to ask you to form a Government." I said I would certainly do so.<sup>105</sup>

One author went so far as to state that there was little doubt that "his appointment, had it come a few years earlier, would have prevented the war by breaking the aggressor in time." Furthermore, "there is no doubt that his appointment, belated as it was, changed the course of the war."<sup>106</sup> There is little doubt that this was true.

Immediately a war cabinet was formed of five persons.<sup>107</sup> For all purposes this cabinet was an interwoven group of men with different political beliefs, but all for the uniting of Britain in her task.

On May 13, 1940, Churchill made his first speech in Commons as Prime Minister of Great Britain. Several parts of this speech have become famous, because it exhibited oratorical eloquence and dogged determination. He said in one part that

<sup>105</sup> Churchill, The Gathering Storm, p. 665.

<sup>106</sup> Kraus, op. cit., p. 386.

<sup>107</sup> In The Gathering Storm, page 667, Churchill said "that eleven years in the political wilderness had freed me from ordinary party antagonisms." He commented that his warnings over the last six years had been numerous, detailed, and vindictive.

it must be remembered that we are in the preliminary stage of one of the greatest battles in history, that we are in action at many points in Norway and in Holland, that we have to be prepared in the Mediterranean, the air battle is continuous, and that many preparations have to be made here at home . . . I would say to the House, as I have said to those who have joined this Government: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat."<sup>108</sup>

In conclusion, he commented that a very grave ordeal lay ahead, and he added,

we have before us many, many long months of struggle and of suffering. You ask, What is our policy? I will say: "It is to wage war, by sea, land, and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us: to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalogue of human crime. That is our policy." You ask, What is our aim? I can answer in one word: Victory --- victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terror, victory however long and hard the road may be; for without victory there is no survival.<sup>109</sup>

The above comments show the relentless drive and spirit of Churchill from the time he took office. An example of his unquenchable spirit can be noted after France had fallen in 1940. Churchill said that Europe was gone, Russia had seemingly joined the Fascists, and America was proclaiming her "unshakable neutrality." He should have been in the throes of pessimistic thoughts. Instead, at a Cabinet meeting the members heard, in place of dread predictions, a fitting comment: "Well, gentlemen, we are alone," he told them. "For myself," he finished, "I find it extremely exhilarating."<sup>110</sup>

<sup>108</sup>Churchill, "Prime Minister," May 13, 1940, Blood, Sweat, and Tears, p. 276.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid.

<sup>110</sup>Taylor, op. cit., p. 365.

And so, in the ninth month of a war, for which he had not been permitted to prepare the nation thoroughly, Churchill now wielded the power of the far-flung British Empire against the forces of Nazism. His series of warnings from 1932 to the outbreak of war contributed almost wholly to his rapid rise after Munich to the highest office in the land. Perhaps his warnings on air power, although exaggerated, stimulated just enough early and extra production to form the aerial defense of the Royal Air Force which day by day strengthened itself, and, virtually with the power of the British Navy, saved Britain from invasion or defeat.<sup>111</sup>

#### Events After Munich: A Review

Munich, to Churchill, meant dishonor for Britain. And after the Munich Pact was concluded, Churchill still cried, more than ever, for the strengthening of the bonds of collective security. In mid-October, 1938, he was hoping that America would rearm to help Britain.

At that time he returned to his earlier fears of the lack of British air power strength in comparison to that of Nazi Germany. The Royal Air Force should strive for air

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<sup>111</sup>g. E. Black, E. C. Halmsreich, Twentieth Century Events, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Co., 1954), on page 685 stated that "Professor Lindeman supervised the various research activities in Great Britain which were co-ordinated under the Ministry of Defense . . . World War II illustrated the fact that the use made of scientific research by the belligerents might be a crucial factor in the outcome of the war." Lindeman was a friend of Churchill, and they saw each other often during the war.

parity with Germany, he maintained.

The discouraging factor, Churchill commented, was that after Munich the alliance system of France was ruined. In addition, without Britain's support the French had not the courage to act by themselves. He saw that the French were worried, as well as weakened, but he was still forced to rely upon them as a cornerstone of his policy to prevent war with Germany.

As 1930 closed Churchill was concerned again with the subject of air defense. Too, as the year ended, Churchill was right when he said that the existence of the Polish Corridor, and Poland's annexation of Teschen, would cause new tension in a short while in Europe.

In January, 1939, three months before denunciation of the 1935 British-German Naval Treaty, Churchill commented that this agreement had cost Hitler nothing. There had been no limit placed upon the construction of submarines, while Germany was freely enabled to build up to a point that would permit her to control the Baltic Sea.

After Hitler seized Prague, Churchill was more or less the man of the hour. His prophecies were now being heeded. Conservatives, Labourites, and Liberals all backed his admission into the Government. Yet enough vestige of the appeasement policy remained so that Churchill was still not asked to head one of the important governmental positions.

Churchill kept up a veneer of optimism by commenting late in March that there were strong forces that could be gathered together to oppose Nazism. And before that time he warned of the Baltic area as a future danger zone. The Germans would need iron ore from Sweden, and Denmark held a strategic position in northern waters.

In 1938 he continued his plea for an alliance with Russia, and was still hoping for such a friendship past into August of 1939. He stated that the Balkan states and Russia should join together with Turkey for safety's sake. And if war came in the Central European area, Britain would be involved, he added. Subsequently, Britain declared war upon Germany in September two days after the invasion of Poland.

Churchill, as well as others, saw that Hitler's denunciation of the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact was a harbinger of what was to come. The first use of conscription in British peacetime history buoyed up Churchill's hopes to some extent. Finally, he clutched at the straw of the Anglo-Turkish Alliance of spring, 1939, as a final deterrent to war. But this was the last time Churchill could feel a bit optimistic, as the Russo-German Non-Aggression Pact dashed his hopes, and war broke out a week later.

At this point Churchill jumped into the war effort wholeheartedly, and as First Lord of the Admiralty led the British Navy through a trying winter, in which there was little



action upon land. As the war settled into a waiting contest during that time, Churchill emphasized that if Britain made peace and left off fighting, people in England, who did not know, would soon find out what this war was all about.

In summary, there were a number of reasons for Churchill's being named Prime Minister in May of 1940. These included his warning speeches before war broke out, his work with the Admiralty, his previous decisiveness in action, and his rousing speeches after the war began.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSION

Why during the period from 1932 into 1940 did so few persons heed the warnings of Churchill? Just as there were a number of factors involved in causing the outbreak of the First World War, so there were numerous factors which have to be considered in answering this question.

First, since the Munich Pact was one of the most important diplomatic events since 1918, it is worth primary comment as related to Churchill's warnings. Although Munich caused a senseless in Britain and France, people cheered when Chamberlain returned supposedly triumphant. Prague, too, contributed greatly to turning the tide in favor of Churchill's realistic outlook upon Nazi expansionism. But between October, 1930, and March, 1939, British politicians, for the most part, went on hoping everything would turn out for the best. The British Navy was still strong, and France had a large army. Then, too, Russian Communism was ideologically opposed to Fascism. However, the German-Russian Non-Aggression Pact destroyed much of the lingering hope that war would not break out in the very near future. Churchill continued to awaken the

sleeping lion that was England from 1932 to 1938.

Second, events had a way, more often than not, of occurring in the manner that Churchill had predicted they would occur. But this success of prognostication seemed to be only attained in respect to Nazi Germany. Churchill several times erred on what position Russia, Italy, and even France would take in certain situations. And events, such as the reoccupation of the Rhineland, could always be rationalized, as they were in Britain by the comment that the Germans were only going into their own backyard.

Third, through the 1930's Churchill trod a lone path for the most part. This was because he no longer held any important political office, but more than that, he had changed parties several times. During this period of Hitler's consolidation of power and expansionist policies Churchill was what was termed an Independent Conservative. This contributed to his being left free to make more outspoken statements than might ordinarily have been the case. Yet these statements conflicted with the appeasement policy of Baldwin and Chamberlain.

As has been said:

His natural liberalism was as much affronted by tyranny and cruelty in Nazi Germany as by similar acts in Communist Russia, but he does not allow the interior politics of foreign countries to cloud his judgment upon the practical question whether these countries are likely to

prove themselves serviceable or dangerous to the high interests he sets himself to guard.<sup>1</sup>

These interests were the safety of Europe and the safety of Britain. And as the European continent and the world plunged ever closer to the brink of war in 1938 and 1939, Churchill's main concern, in the final analysis, was the safety of Britain. Consequently, his support of collective security and France must be thought of in this connection to truly understand the significance of the warnings that he gave.

Churchill was not concerned with any abstract thoughts in regard to collective security. As he saw it, collective security, as exemplified in the League of Nations, was basically for the protection of Britain. Only in that aspect was he truly a collectivist. He wanted Britain to back the League more wholeheartedly, and to put teeth in sanctions against aggressors. The reason for supporting the League was that Britain's national interests coincided with the interests of the world.

The fact that he had few supporters because of his political position, gave him no chance to push through necessary reforms in the national defense system of Britain.

Fourth, Britain was inclined to follow a position of pacifism and then appeasement, because the European domestic

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<sup>1</sup>Randolph S. Churchill, While England Slept, p. ix of Preface.

situation was still a bad one as a result of the depressions which had struck many countries. Therefore, the British populace relied on the strength of the French Army to maintain control of any trouble that might be caused by Germany on the continent. Military experts considered the French Army much stronger than proved to be the case in World War II. But France's alliance system went to pieces after the fiasco at Munich in 1938. France and Russia each were reluctant to take the first step to defend Czechoslovakia. And, too, many persons followed the concept that Sudetenland was German, just as Austria was, so Hitler was only obtaining what rightfully belonged within the Nazi orbit, although in 1919 the Sudetenland had been assigned to Czechoslovakia.

Fifth, Churchill had taken the wrong side regarding the abdication question, just as he was in the minority that favored a more blunt foreign policy and development of Britain's defenses. The abdication of Edward the VIII occurred in the last days of 1936, just as a number of people were beginning to concede that something should be done about strengthening defenses. In addition, the League of Nations was slowly drifting toward final failure after the half-hearted sanctions that were imposed on Italy for her invasion of Ethiopia.

Sixth, besides exaggerating German air strength, Churchill in 1935, for example, had claimed that Hitler was

around to the north. That was certainly not the case. For the German leader went only a token force into the Rhineland when reestablishment had failed. Harry Jaggerges considered it Germany's right to rearm, and that there was some need for rearmament after World War I. One of Churchill's closest friends, Vassilbert, however, had reasons to figure that proved the Germans were building up their air strength at a faster pace than was known by leading governmental figures in Britain.

They, too, after the experience of the British White Paper in 1935, Britain slowly did rearm, and no one thought that there was much to worry about in Europe. Churchill, if he had been handed and been placed in an important governmental position, might have indicated Hitler and caused trouble, Churchill's attitude toward Hitler frightened the followers of appeasement. Even after Munich, Churchill was left outside the inner circle of foreign policy--unless in order to prevent any further trouble with Germany. No one wanted to face the possibility of another war. But, Churchill, realistically, was an individual who felt that he had to face up to the facts. He had to warn the British nation about Nazi Germany before it was too late.

Seventh, the nations from Britain of Central Europe was a factor that did not help Churchill. With the many other problems occurring, people were not about to go to war

over a name they could hardly pronounce or spell.  
Gzedhiofowaida was just a jodge-jodge of nationalities  
to the leaders of British foreign policy. The influence  
of the Divadan got and von Ribbentrop's smooth diplomatic  
methods fooled some of the British leaders, such as Lord  
Balfour and Chamberlain.

A final comment is necessary regarding Churchill's  
opinion over the development of air power. He was more  
concerned with air power and its possible uses than other  
politicians of the time. As a result of this feeling,  
if one can call it that, he was inclined to slightly exaggerate  
the potentialities of air strength in a future conflict.  
This is not to say that air power is not important. How-  
ever, he may have talked of its importance to such a degree  
that a lack of interest was created. Yet there is no  
doubt that Churchill was one of those persons who looks  
more than just a few months into the future. He saw ahead,  
as did few others, to the possible demoralizing effect the  
bombing of civilian centers of population could have on  
morale in an all-out war. Consequently, his attempt to  
keep up England's air parity with the other top world powers  
became an obsession with Churchill.

In the final analysis the writer believes that if the

Nazis had not seized Prague, but had taken just the Polish Corridor, war with Britain might have been avoided for a few years or more. Hitler's arch-enemy was Russia. He attempted to maintain correct relations with Britain, but Churchill, of all the people on the island near France, saw through the Nazis the best.

Whatever else might be said, the fact that Churchill was right on a number of his predictions, and his war leadership have made him famous. In this case, events had a way of projecting the man into the limelight. As a thorn in the side of Nazism, Churchill certainly had a great hand in promoting the final downfall of the Nazi Empire.



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