

Neville chamberlain on appeasement (1939) and the munich agreement

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Chamberlain refusal put Adolf Hitler in a difficult situation but he exploited both Britain and France by their will against war and on the suggestion of Italian Duce Benito Mussolini, he planned to hold a four-power conference of Germany, Britain, France, and Italy excluding both Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The meeting took place in Munich on 29th September 1938 and Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier signed the Munich Agreement. The agreement gave the right of the accession of Sudetenland to Germany without Czechoslovakia's will. In return, Hitler promised not to make any further territorial demands in Europe (Gado, para. 1-3).

The Munich Agreement effectively allowed Adolf Hitler to annex the country's defensive frontiers, leaving its industrial and economic core within a day's reach of the Wehrmacht. The pursuance of the appeasement strategy by Chamberlain and other European leaders in 1938, one year before World War II, had a number of reasons. The most important was to prevent any type of confrontation at all costs. It also expressed the widespread British desire to heal the wounds of World War I and to correct what many British officials regarded as the injustices of the Versailles Treaty. Some officials regarded a powerful Germany as a bulwark against the Soviet Union. Another reason was the hatred of western democracies towards Soviet Union totalitarian system.

In 1938, Neville Chamberlain, in his and Parliamentary Debate address to the House of Commons, gave following arguments about his pursuance of Munich Agreement appeasement diplomatic strategy. According to him, it was not in the favor British Empire to involve in a far-away country dispute whom the British people know nothing. Also in his point of view, the

accession of Sudetenland to Germany was a fair treatment to the German minority population concerns. He argued that the Munich Agreement, save [Czechoslovakia] from annihilation and give her a chance of new life as a new State, which involves the loss of territory and fortifications, but may perhaps enable her to enjoy in the future and develop a national existence under a neutrality and security comparable to that which we see in Switzerland today. He reiterated that Munich Agreement was necessary to save Czechoslovakia from destruction and Europe from Armageddon and being a part of Europe, it was essential for Britain to participate in the agreement (Chamberlain, pp. 361-373).

Nevertheless, the appeasement strategy, which sought to prevent confrontation at all costs, led Europe to ignore the growing military and political might of dictators, who placed the future of the continent in peril. What started as an attempt to prevent war ended as the greatest war the human race has ever known. Although the Munich Agreement was popular with most people in Britain as it was supposed to prevent a war with Germany yet some politicians, including Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, attacked the agreement. These critics pointed out that not only had the British government behaved dishonorably, but it had lost the support of the Czech Army, one of the best in Europe. Winston Churchill turned the agreement " a total and unmitigated defeat." He warned that the agreement was not the end of the war but the beginning of the reckoning. " This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless, by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigor, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as in olden time."

Churchill also opposed the Munich Agreement as he considers it as a beginning greater political and economic instability. He reiterated that the road to resources of corn and oil, the road which leads as far as Turkey, has been opened. In fact, if not in form, it seems to me that all those countries of Middle Europe, all those Danubian countries, will, one after another, be drawn into this vast system of power politics not only power military politics but power economic politics -- radiating from Berlin (Churchill, para. 1-12).