

moning of parliament if the efforts which are still being made to preserve the peace of Europe should fail.

For our country to keep united is all-important. To this end, in whatever we say or do, we must seek to avoid creating controversies and divisions that might seriously impair effective and concerted action when parliament meets.

The government is in complete accord with the statement Mr. Chamberlain has made to the world to-day.

Those statements, I am perfectly certain, met with the approval of the great majority of the people of Canada at the time. They were clearly justified by the facts, later made known to the public, as to the policy and attitude of the countries mainly concerned. There were, however, from some quarters in Canada vociferous demands for red-blooded ultimatums, for statements that Canada was prepared to fight for democracy and Czechoslovakia, for statements that Canada would support Britain without limit in war on this issue, for pledges of support such as other dominions were alleged to be giving. A little later on I shall show, with respect to the governments of each of the other dominions, how far in fact pledges of support were actually given by any one of them.

The criticisms, it must now be clear, were very wide of the mark. They wholly misconceived the actual situation. Some of the loudest of the demands for lining up with Britain and France in defence of Czechoslovakia were made on the very day the French and British governments, in order to avert bloodshed, were applying what Lord Halifax termed "strong pressure" to induce the Czech government to hand over the Sudeten areas to Germany.

It is essential to analyse objectively the character of the negotiations and operations in which the British government were engaged, and in the light of which we as a government in Ottawa had to decide from time to time whether we could usefully intervene by means of public declarations or otherwise. Mr. Chamberlain explained very clearly the character of the action of the British government in the speech he made in the House of Commons on the afternoon of September the 28th, his last speech before flying to Munich on the following morning. After recalling that in July a deadlock had arisen in the negotiations then going on between the Czechoslovakian government and the Sudeten Germans, and that fears were already entertained that if it were not speedily broken the German government might presently intervene in the dispute, he pointed out that there were three alternative courses of action open to his government. What these alternatives were

can best be explained by using his own words. His words were as follows:

For his majesty's government there were three alternative courses that we might have adopted. Either we could have threatened to go to war with Germany if she attacked Czechoslovakia, or we could have stood aside and allowed matters to take their course, or, finally, we could attempt to find a peaceful settlement by way of mediation. The first of those courses we rejected. We had no treaty liabilities to Czechoslovakia. We always refused to accept any such obligation. Indeed, this country, which does not readily resort to war, would not have followed us if we had tried to lead it into war to prevent a minority from obtaining autonomy, or even from choosing to pass under some other government.

The second alternative was also repugnant to us. However remote this territory may be, we knew, of course, that a spark once lighted there, might give rise to a general conflagration, and we felt it our duty to do anything in our power to help the contending parties to find agreement. We addressed ourselves to the third course, the task of mediation. We knew that the task would be difficult, perhaps even perilous, but we felt that the object was good enough to justify the risk. . . .

In this connection it is pertinent to quote from the speech of the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, on October the 3rd, in the course of the first House of Commons debate following the Munich agreement. Describing the action of Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Samuel said:

He undertook the duty of a mediator. We had no treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia other than our general obligations under the covenant of the League. My right hon. friend the member for Warwick and Leamington (Mr. Eden) has made this position quite clear in the well-known speech that he made some time ago in his own constituency. We have no treaty obligations. None the less, I hold that it was right and proper for the Prime Minister of this country, the one country that was in a position to hold the scales between the two sides, to undertake this heavy responsibility; and I claim that, having undertaken the responsibility of mediation, it would have been courting certain failure if at one and the same time when he was attempting to mediate he engaged himself upon a policy of threats and ultimata. . . . I go further, and I say that, if we had made an ultimatum in the days immediately before the Nuremberg speech Europe would to-day have been plunged into a world war.

In the light of this analysis, the house will be able to understand clearly the position confronting the Canadian government during the crisis, and the considerations which necessarily governed anything we might say or do. Hon. members will please note the full significance of Mr. Chamberlain's words:

Indeed, this country, which does not readily resort to war, would not have followed us if we had tried to lead it into war to prevent a minority from obtaining autonomy, or even from choosing to pass under some other government.