

1940 to have been ready to plunge the world into war in 1938. Most inevitable wars have never happened, and of those that happened, the ultimate consequences were usually most unexpected. There is timely counsel in the declaration of a former British Foreign Secretary:

Let us reject both the doctrine of the inevitability of war and the theory of the effectiveness of bluff.

There seemed to be good reasons for hoping that war had not merely been postponed, but had been averted. The crisis itself helped; it revealed how near Europe again had come to the brink of the precipice. More significant, it revealed how deep and how widespread is the desire for peace, and how deep the fear and hatred of war. That desire for peace was not confined to any one country. There was as great relief in Italy as in France. The genuine and moving welcome given Mr. Chamberlain in Germany was given him because the people believed he was striving for peace. And not only had the peoples felt a common interest: the rulers of great states had met in personal contact. If one had not persuaded the other, they at least, it was hoped, understood better one another's point of view, understood more clearly the limits of pressure. Whatever, to the contrary, appearance might have been, it was increasingly recognized that countries with wholly different social systems could live together in the same world:

How far these hopes were justified in the light of later events is a point I shall take up presently, but before doing so I wish to examine some other phases of the September situation.

Thus far I have been dealing with the European phases of the September crisis. I now refer to their repercussions upon Canada. Both for the people and for the government of Canada it was a time of deep anxiety. With the situation as it changed from day to day, the government kept throughout in continuous and close touch, mainly through the information received from the British government, but from other sources as well. A complete review was made of economic and military safeguards, and all other measures, which would have to be considered, if open conflict developed and was not confined to central Europe. We were not in a position to take a direct part in the mediation efforts. We could, as we did, support the mediation efforts Mr. Chamberlain was making.

The government's position was clearly set forth in a public statement I made on September 17:

The Canadian government have been giving unremitting consideration to the European

*Mr. Mackenzie King.]*

situation, in the light of the confidential information which they are receiving. The position is changing from day to day. The present and essential task is to avert recourse to force by finding a peaceful and agreed solution of the present clash of interests in central Europe. The government of the United Kingdom have undertaken this task with a courage and vision which I have stated the people of Canada unanimously appreciate.

If unfortunately that effort and other efforts to preserve the peace of central Europe fail, it will become necessary for the governments and parliaments of all countries which may be directly or indirectly concerned to determine the course to be followed. The Canadian government are examining all possible contingencies and will be prepared in accordance with the undertakings repeatedly given in parliament, if occasion arises, to summon parliament forthwith and submit their recommendations to it. In the meantime we do not consider in the light of all the circumstances known to us that public controversy as to action in hypothetical contingencies would serve the interest of peace or of Canadian or commonwealth unity. It will have been noted that the government of the United Kingdom, striving for peace, and knowing the situation, have considered it desirable to exercise restraint in any public statements at this stage regarding the course to be taken if peace fails.

I am sure that all Canadians will join with me in the fervent hope that the fine endeavours of the British government to preserve peace will be crowned with complete success.

On September 27, the day before the re-assembling of the British parliament, Mr. Chamberlain spoke over the radio. His address was heard and press reports received in full in this city in the early afternoon. In the course of his address, the Prime Minister said:

However much one may sympathize with a small nation confronted by a big and powerful nation, we cannot in all circumstances undertake to involve the whole British empire in a war simply on that account.

If we have to fight it must be on larger issues than that.

I am myself a man of peace to the depths of my soul. Armed conflict between nations is a nightmare to me.

But if I were convinced that any nation had made up its mind to dominate the world by fear of its force, I should feel that it must be resisted.

I believe that life without liberty would not be worth living, but war is a fearful thing and we must be very clear, before we embark on it, that it is really very great issues that are at stake and that we should risk everything in their defence.

After a meeting of our cabinet, held that afternoon, which had before it the words of Mr. Chamberlain, I handed the following statement to the press:

The Canadian government is continuing to keep in the closest touch with the grave developments in the European situation.

The government is making preparations for any contingency, and for the immediate sum-