

the press and over the radio, international appeals, army and fleet mobilizations, the issuing of gas masks and digging of anti-air-raid trenches.

A few hours before the time set for the threatened action against Czechoslovakia came Herr Hitler's agreement to join in a four-power conference at Munich, the last effort at mediation. At Munich, surrender of the Sudeten areas was arranged on orderly and agreed terms. The terms were improvements over Godesberg as regards the time table of occupation, the areas conceded and the arrangement of plebiscites in disputed areas under international control. In the actual working out, these concessions disappeared. Czechoslovakia, not heard or consulted, perforce accepted the terms, and war was averted.

In that final week of supreme tension, the issue was not whether the Sudeten area should be taken by Germany, but how it should be taken, a question of time-table and procedure, or at most, a distinction between the open threat of force and the actual use of force. Once it had been agreed to concede the substance, it might have been thought unlikely that war would arise over the form. Yet forms are not without significance. In times of tension, the last straws count. But even when feeling ran highest, bridges were never burned. No unconditional pledges or warnings were given. Action by the United Kingdom, for example, would follow only if Czechoslovakia did not give in, if Germany thereupon attacked Czechoslovakia, and if France thereupon attacked Germany. The commitments were conditional and efforts were made to prevent these cumulative conditions arising.

This much achieved, the whole world, for the moment, breathed freely. Mr. Chamberlain's service to peace was widely acclaimed. Soon, however, criticism began, particularly in the United Kingdom, itself. It was urged that, in the actual outcome, Munich, and the machinery there set up, proved worse for Czechoslovakia, as regards territorial concessions than Godesberg. It was contended that the way had been opened for German penetration east and south, that the military power and moral prestige of the western powers had been greatly weakened, and, above all, that war had only been briefly postponed, and postponed to a day when the democratic states would fight on immensely less favourable terms.

I have no desire to intervene in the controversies which have been carried on in the United Kingdom as to which parties or persons or policies contributed most in recent years to the present outcome. That clearly would be an unwarranted interference in the

domestic policies of the United Kingdom for which Canada is in no way responsible. The apportionment of praise or blame with respect to United Kingdom policies is something for the people of the United Kingdom to decide. Clearly many things were done and left undone in past years, and in all countries, which would be treated differently if we could turn back. I shall merely express my own belief that, given the circumstances as they actually existed last summer, Mr. Chamberlain made the emphatically right choice in striving to prevent the outbreak of war. It required unusual courage, disregard of risks to his personal prestige, prompt decision and dogged persistence to carry through those last fortnight efforts for peace. Mr. Chamberlain never lost his patience, his temper or his head.

The choice was not an easy one. Peace was bought at a heavy price; it could not have been otherwise after the events of recent years. The substantial issue facing the governments of Britain and France was whether they would have recourse to force to prevent the absorption of the Sudeten areas by Germany. That would have meant what, with some measure of justice could have been represented as interfering with the freedom of a people to choose their own destiny. If war had broken out, whatever its eventual outcome, it was the view of the responsible authorities that Czechoslovakia could not be saved from being overrun and occupied. It was equally certain that eventual victory would not restore her boundaries, would not bring back hundreds of thousands of men, women and children from death, and would not prevent demoralization and revolution throughout Europe with consequences to civilization itself which no one could foresee.

It may be that the German authorities did not mean to carry out their threats, and that if Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union had definitely announced they would fight if any Czech territory was taken over by Germany, the claims to the Sudeten area would have been abandoned, but it may also be that such would not have been the outcome. Mr. Chamberlain rightly concluded he could not engage in a game of bluff where millions of lives might depend on his guess.

There are some people, both in Canada and abroad, who are continually asserting that war between the democratic and the totalitarian powers is only postponed, and that, when it comes, the forces of democracy will be weaker than they were in 1938. It must have taken a good deal of confidence in one's powers of guessing the future, to be sufficiently certain of what might happen in