

I will not take up the time of the house to go into the question of the relations between Great Britain and Germany with respect to the invasion of Poland. All that is to be said on that point is contained in the documents relating to the outbreak of war which were tabled yesterday and copies of which hon. members have. Those documents reveal clearly the tactics of Germany with reference to her invasion of Poland; they reveal equally clearly the patient and persistent efforts made both by Great Britain and by France to avoid war if at all possible; they make very clear what was done with a view to having the dispute settled by pacific means, by conference and discussion; and they show how completely of no avail that effort was in the end. They give a full explanation of the reasons why England felt it essential to give the pledges which she did to Poland at a time when this persistent aggression was so evident, at a time when England and France saw so clearly where that aggression was likely to lead if it were not summarily stopped.

However, the house will be interested in following the steps that were taken by the government of Canada in facing the situation that might arise out of the invasion of Poland and the pledges given to her by Britain and France, and I will give in rapid sequence, mainly for the purpose of helping hon. members who may wish to go into the matter in detail themselves, the chief events that have taken place between March 15 of this year and the present time.

As I have indicated, in March there came the seizure of Bohemia and Moravia and the establishment of a protectorate over Slovakia by Germany. It will be recalled that at that time all hon. members in this house were fearing the consequences of that invasion. We did not know whether it might not quickly lead to Britain and France becoming involved in war, and we had to consider then what our attitude would be should Britain become involved in war against Germany. I believe I made it quite clear in a statement I gave the house at that time, that if for example London were bombed from the air by an air force of an enemy such as Germany, we would regard such an act as threatening not merely the freedom of Britain but the freedom of the entire British commonwealth of nations. Will anyone at this moment say that the torpedoing a day or two ago of a vessel carrying Canadian and United States citizens to this continent to one of our own ports was not an act of unwarranted warfare of a character very similar to the bombing of London?

When the seizure of Memel came I again stressed in this parliament the gravity of the situation.

On April 28 Germany denounced the non-aggression pact with Poland, and at that time we greatly increased our defence estimates. On May 10 there came much in the way of a propaganda attack on Poland and a strong appeal for the return of Danzig to Germany. On May 11 Mr. Chamberlain warned Germany that the United Kingdom would go to war for the independence of Poland. On June 29 Lord Halifax issued warnings against aggression. On July 10 Mr. Chamberlain reiterated the agreement which had been given by Britain and France to Poland. On August 16 Herr Hitler began campaigning for the immediate return of Danzig and the solution of all Corridor problems. On August 18 Germany took over Slovakia. On August 20 the German-Russian trade agreement was announced. On August 21 the first announcement of the German-Russian non-aggression pact was made. On August 22 the British parliament was summoned.

The moment the British parliament was summoned the Minister of National Defence in this country announced additional recruits had been added to the naval service of Canada, and on the following day—that is, August 23—as prime minister, I announced, that the provisions of the War Measures Act would be used because of a state of apprehended war and that parliament would be summoned if efforts for peace were likely to fail. On August 23, the same day, the Minister of National Defence (Mr. Mackenzie) stated that all preparations were being made to deal with any possible emergency.

On August 24 Herr Foerster, the German leader in Danzig, became the head of the Danzig government, and Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax again repeated their pledge to Poland. At that time I made the further statement that our own government was prepared for any emergency that might arise in so far as that emergency might immediately affect us. On August 25 the Anglo-Polish pact was signed. On that date I appealed to the German, the Polish and the Italian governments in the name of the government of this country to do all that could possibly be done in the way of the settlement of the existing dispute by pacific means instead of by resort to force. Appeals of this character were being made by countries all over the world, as the house well knows; strong appeals, appeals from the United States, the Vatican and from other sources of high authority. At that time we cancelled the leave of the permanent force and called for volunteers. I published on August 26 the various messages I had issued to the governments of Germany, Poland and Italy.