

a struggle in Europe, as to whether the government had offered to send troops to Czechoslovakia, or to place the resources of Australia at the disposal of the British government, Mr. Menzies replied very definitely:

Take the present case. This Czechoslovak business called, in my respectful submission, not for any rigidity of mind on the part of either the British government or the Commonwealth government, or for passion or prejudice, but for a very sensitive intelligence. It called for a real desire, on the part of the intervening British Prime Minister, for peace and a willingness to re-examine any position in order to secure it, and secure it honourably. I have an unqualified regard for the whole method of approach of the British Prime Minister in this case. Consequently, this was not one of those occasions on which any British prime minister was disposed to say to the Australian government—nor, in fact did he say—"Do you agree to A, B, C, D, and E? . . ."

The leader of the opposition appreciated that we cannot begin to contradict or qualify everything that is said in the newspapers. We all know the kind of kite flying the newspapers indulge in, but we were far too busily employed to be unduly concerned about it. The simple fact is that at no time from the beginning to the end of these discussions did the British government ever ask us to say whether we would send troops out of Australia. At no time did it ever ask any question at all about troops. At no time during the discussions, from the beginning to end of them, was any commitment made in relation to these matters by the Australian government.

Questions of a hypothetical character have been raised as to what would have happened in the event of war. I urge upon honourable members that they should not put or propose to answer hypothetical questions. That is very sound advice on matters which concern the relations of this country with other countries and also on matters which concern the conduct of this country in the international field. It is, in my opinion, the rankest folly either to put hypothetical questions or to make hypothetical statements in this connection. . . . I repeat, that no single commitment of the slightest kind has been made during the last ten days in respect to the European crisis.

Mr. MANION: What date is that?

Mr. MACKENZIE KING: It was immediately after the crisis. The text will show it, I think.

That is a very clear and authoritative statement. It illustrates the necessity in times of tension of distinguishing between news and propaganda, of the danger of confusing a cabled report of some newspaper's editorial statement with a statement of governmental or parliamentary policy.

None of the governments of the commonwealth, it will be seen, was issuing ultimatums or seeking or giving undertakings as to the course to be followed in the event of war. In the light of the information available, they realized it was a question of seeking peace rather than of making war.

[Mr. Mackenzie King.]

Lest it may be assumed that the quotations I have given do not fully represent the position of the governments of the other dominions with respect to the pledges of support which at the time it was so emphatically asserted by many individuals and a section of the press were being given by some of the dominions, but not by Canada, I should like to quote from a source and an authority which admit of no question.

I have in my hand a copy of the British *Hansard*, House of Commons debates of November the 21st, 1938. At page 1337 will be found a specific question addressed to Mr. Chamberlain, the Prime Minister, and answered by him. The question and answer appear under the heading, "Defence, Dominions and Colonies." The question was evidently No. 49 on the Order Paper of the day. The record is as follows:

49. Mr. Lee asked the Prime Minister whether any pledge or guarantee, written or implied, has been given by the dominions and colonies, either severally or collectively, that, in case of an attack upon the United Kingdom by any country, they would come to the assistance of Great Britain?

The Prime Minister: No, Sir.

That reply should silence once and for all those who seem to delight in having it appear that, while other nations of the British commonwealth had been giving pledges of military assistance to Great Britain during the September crisis, Canada had failed to take a similar course.

Unfortunately the easing of European tension after Munich proved only temporary. Germany continued to be the main centre of uncertainty. The repression of Catholic and Protestant liberties and the ruthless reprisals directed against the whole Jewish population because of the murder of a German diplomat by an irresponsible youth, alienated world opinion and threw barriers in the road of those who were working for reconciliation and cooperation. Germany's production of armaments continued at a feverish pace. It was clear no country in the world had any thought or design of attacking Germany, and clear also that her armament had already reached the point of adequate defence against attack by any outside power or group of powers, if such a mad design had existed.

Rumours spread of drives against the smaller western powers, but the chief apprehension arose in the east, in the block of buffer states lying between Germany and Russia, and the Balkan states stretching southward. Here between the Baltic and the Mediterranean lie some ten states, large and small, which together can marshal a hundred million of people, but which are divided by race and creed, old feuds and new ambitions, all watching ceaselessly