

The Lasting Legacy of Munich:  
British Public Perceptions of Neville Chamberlain During the Phoney War

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iv
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED .....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	vi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1 AS HIS REPUTATION STANDS .....	4
1.2 APPEASEMENT AND BIOGRAPHY: A HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW .....	6
1.3 CONTEMPORARY REPUTATION AND THE PHONEY WAR: A LACK OF LITERATURE .....	13
1.4 SOURCES OF CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC OPINION: MASS OBSERVATION AND BIPO POLLS .....	17
1.5 MASS OBSERVATION DIARISTS AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN .....	21
CHAPTER 2 FROM THE HIGHS OF MUNICH TO THE LOWS OF PRAGUE: APPEASEMENT, SEPTEMBER 1938 TO AUGUST 1939 .....	24
2.1 LIFE BEFORE THE FATEFUL SEPTEMBER: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY.....	24
2.2 MUNICH: “IF AT FIRST YOU DON’T CONCEDE, FLY, FLY AGAIN” ....	28
2.3 PRAGUE: THE END OF APPEASEMENT? .....	41
CHAPTER 3 LEADING THE ‘STRANGEST OF WARS’: SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1939 .....	48
3.1 3 SEPTEMBER 1939: DECLARATION OF WAR .....	48
3.2 CHAMBERLAIN’S DECLARATION OF WAR AND ADMISSION OF FAILURE .....	55
3.3 PHONEY WAR REALITIES: ANTI-CLIMACTIC INACTIVITY DURING THE FIRST FOUR MONTHS OF WAR .....	61
3.4 CHAMBERLAIN AND SURPRISING VIGOUR: WARTIME SPEECHES IN 1939 .....	64
3.5 THE MUNICH FACTOR: CONDEMNATION FROM SEPTEMBER TO DECEMBER 1939 .....	74
CHAPTER 4 THE BUS DID NOT HAVE WINTER TIRES: JANUARY TO MAY 1940 .....	88

4.1	THE GREAT FREEZE OF 1940: NO ACTION, LOTS OF SNOW, AND THE INTRODUCTION OF RATIONING .....	88
4.2	FAILED ATTEMPTS TO CONNECT: THE PRIME MINISTER’S TWO SPEECHES IN THE WINTER OF 1940 .....	92
4.3	LITTLE ACTION, LITTLE INTEREST: DIARISTS’ REFLECTIONS ON CHAMBERLAIN FROM THE NEW YEAR TO NORWAY .....	100
4.4	“HITLER OFTEN TAKES A TAXI”: THE SIMULTANEOUS END OF THE PHONEY WAR AND NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN, APRIL – MAY 1940 .....	109
CHAPTER 5 ESTABLISHING A LEGACY: AN ANALYSIS .....		124
5.1	WIRELESS BROADCAST SPEECHES .....	124
5.2	GENERAL REFLECTIONS ON THE PRIME MINISTER .....	128
5.3	ANALYTICAL CONCLUSION .....	130
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSION .....		132
APPENDIX A Diarist Summaries .....		137
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....		146

## ABSTRACT

History remembers Neville Chamberlain as the personification of Britain's shame over the 1938 Munich Agreement. Literature that discusses contemporary attitudes towards Chamberlain relies on the misleading satisfaction ratings gathered by BIPO and, therefore, concludes that his popularity did not begin to wane until the evacuation of British forces from Norway and the German invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940. Yet my analysis of Mass Observation diaries shows that much of Chamberlain's legacy is rooted in contemporary public opinions. During the Phoney War, many Britons thought Chamberlain was untrustworthy, ineffectual, and weak, and a majority of their condemnations were rooted in his actions at Munich. While displaying a spectrum of opinions, diarists show that perceptions of Chamberlain had been worsening since September 1938. The spring of 1940 was not the sudden end of Chamberlain's popularity but the public recognition of long-held private thoughts that gained strength with Allied defeats.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS USED

ARP	Air Raid Precautions
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BIPO	British Institute of Public Opinion
CO(s)	Conscientious Objector(s)
RAF	Royal Air Force

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## Chapter 1 Introduction

Poor Neville, he will come badly out of history... I know, because  
I will write the history.  
- Winston Churchill<sup>1</sup>

When Neville Chamberlain arrived in London following his meeting with Adolf Hitler at Munich, he waved the iconic piece of paper and spoke the fateful words: “I believe it is peace for our time.”<sup>2</sup> This image of Chamberlain has always been the most significant image of the former Prime Minister but for a variety of reasons. In September 1938, it symbolised his success in preventing a second world war. But even before the end of his premiership, and increasingly ever since, the image represents Chamberlain’s failure and his willingness to appease a ruthless dictator. While his successor, Winston Churchill, is remembered with the utmost respect and admiration for his resolute leadership and unwavering determination during the Second World War, Chamberlain has largely been perceived as a weak-kneed, umbrella carrying, old man who played into Hitler’s hands and mismanaged Britain’s war effort. Although Chamberlain’s reputation suffered from comparisons with Churchill, contemporary Britons held many of the same views that later became characteristic of Chamberlain’s legacy. They viewed him as weak, ineffectual, untrustworthy, and too old. For many, Chamberlain’s actions at Munich had a detrimental impact on their perceptions of him and on their belief in his ability to wage war. Britons began to call for a new leader within months of the outbreak of war. Neville Chamberlain’s legacy was not constructed in hindsight but rooted in the perceptions of the Munich Agreement and the consequences of the invasion of Prague.

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Robert J. Caputi, *Neville Chamberlain and Appeasement* (Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Keith Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1946), 381.

The “myth” of the Blitz experience dominates popular memory and historiographical debate of British involvement in the Second World War. The image of a cheery, steadfast, and united Britain – the defining characteristics of the “myth” – represents national honour, especially in contrast with pre-war appeasement and the inactivity and boredom of the Phoney War. This tension is personified in the perceptions of Chamberlain and Churchill. The characteristics of these two men are juxtaposed to benefit the Churchill legend: Chamberlain was weak and Churchill possessed a “bulldog spirit”; Chamberlain’s words put people to sleep while Churchill’s rallied a nation; Chamberlain caused the defeats in May and June 1940 whereas Churchill saved the nation and led it to victory; and, finally, Chamberlain personifies national shame and Churchill is the epitome of national pride.<sup>3</sup> Overall, Churchill’s legacy has benefitted from hindsight – and his own propaganda, Chamberlain’s has not. The neat division between the Phoney War and “real” war, and the two men’s premierships, has exacerbated this contrast. Most existing literature focuses on the critical point of May 1940 and the evacuation of British forces from Norway and the German invasion of France and the Low Countries as the turning point for Chamberlain’s popularity. Relying solely on British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) statistics, May 1940 was *the* critical point. Chamberlain’s satisfaction ratings had remained steady during the first eight months of war, ranging from fifty-six to sixty-six percent, before plummeting to thirty-three percent in May.<sup>4</sup> Public opinion, however, was far more multifarious than the

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<sup>3</sup> Thorpe used the term “bulldog spirit” to describe Churchill. Andrew Thorpe, “Britain,” in *The Civilian in War: The Home Front in Europe, Japan and the USA, in World War II*, ed., Jeremy Noakes (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1992), 26; and Angus Calder, *The People’s War: Britain 1939-45* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1969), 62.

<sup>4</sup> Chamberlain’s satisfaction ratings: September 1939: not available; October 1939: 63%; November 1939: 66%; December 1939: 64%; January 1940: 56%; February 1940: 60%; March 1940: 58%; April 1940: not available; May 1940: 33%. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J.

statistics reveal. Most social historians, including E.S. Turner, E.R. Chamberlain, Robert Mackay, and Juliet Gardiner, do not address public perceptions of Chamberlain prior to May 1940 – at least not beyond citing BIPO statistics or in contrast with perceptions of Churchill.<sup>5</sup> Angus Calder and Arthur Marwick, however, very briefly address a disunity of public opinion during the Phoney War while discussing the evacuation scheme and how it emphasized class disunities.<sup>67</sup> Calder argues that evacuation emphasized how out of touch Chamberlain’s government was with the majority of the country.<sup>8</sup> Marwick argues that although Chamberlain was popular among the upper classes, there was “bitter hostility to him” amongst the working classes. Neither Calder nor Marwick venture further than this, however. On the surface, this is a fulfilling explanation as Britain, as often noted, was a society with distinct class tensions and divisions in the 1930s.<sup>9</sup> But this explanation is no longer satisfactory, especially with the wealth of contemporary opinions available through the Mass Observation archive. The predominantly middle-class National Panel of Mass Observation diarists – as this thesis will discuss – illustrates that varied opinions existed not only between social classes but within them. Richard Toye’s *The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill’s World War II Speeches* (2013), analyses Mass Observation diaries to explore contemporary reactions to Churchill’s speeches and concludes there was a diverse spectrum of opinions connected to the war

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Hinton to <http://discover.ukd.ataservice.ac.uk/catalogue/?sn=3331&type=Data%20catalogue>. (accessed 25 January 2014).

<sup>5</sup> E.S. Turner, *The Phoney War on the Home Front* (London: M. Joseph, 1961); E.R. Chamberlain, *Life In Wartime Britain* (London: B.T. Bastford, 1972); Robert MacKay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Juliet Gardiner, *Wartime Britain, 1939-1945* (London: Headline Book Publishing, 2004); and Juliet Gardiner, *The Blitz* (London: Harper Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Calder, *The People’s War*, 34; and Arthur Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1976), 14-5.

<sup>7</sup> Calder, *The People’s War*, 34

<sup>8</sup> Marwick, *The Home Front*, 14-5.

<sup>9</sup> For an in-depth discussion on class divisions in Britain see David Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

situation in Britain.<sup>10</sup> No works, however, explore such a spectrum of attitudes towards Chamberlain.

### 1.1 As His Reputation Stands...

Popular memory remembers Neville Chamberlain as weak and ineffectual – a bump in the road before Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. There are no shortages of monuments, exhibitions, and other dedications to Churchill. There are exhibitions, programs, books, and websites solely dedicated to his speeches.<sup>11</sup> His speeches of the summer of 1940 are endlessly quoted, and even used in sound clips in songs by Iron Maiden, Supertramp, Budgie, and many others.<sup>12</sup> At the turn of the twenty-first century, twenty prominent historians, politicians, and commentators for BBC Radio 4 ranked Winston Churchill the greatest British Prime Minister of the twentieth century. Chamberlain, on the other hand, came in eighteenth place only one spot above the worst ranked Prime Minister, Anthony Eden.<sup>13</sup> In 2002, over one million Britons voted Churchill the greatest Briton in history. He received nearly half of the votes, and beat out Oliver Cromwell, Charles Darwin, Lady Diana, Elizabeth I, and William Shakespeare.

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<sup>10</sup> Richard Toye, *The Roar of the Lion: The Untold Story of Churchill's World War II Speeches* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>11</sup> Including, but by no means limited to: Churchill Archive, "Exhibitions: Winston Churchill and Public Speaking – 'He mobilized English language and sent it into battle'." Churchill Archive. <http://www.churchillarchive.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/exhibitions.html>. (accessed 11 December 2013); and Churchill Archive, "Churchill: The Power of Words." Churchill Archive. <http://www.churchillarchive.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/exhibitions/Churchill-The-Power-of-Words.html>. (accessed 11 December 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Churchill's first speech to the House of Commons as Prime Minister on 13 May 1940, "Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat" is used in the original release of Budgie's song "Breadfan". His first broadcast to the nation as Prime Minister on 19 May 1940, "Be Ye Men of Valour" is featured in Within Temptation's song "Our Solemn Hour" and in Jay Electronica's (featuring Mobb Deep) song "Call of Duty". Churchill's speech to the House of Commons on 4 June 1940, "We Shall Fight on the Beaches" is featured in Iron Maiden's song "Aces High" and Supertramp's song "Fools Overture". I would like to thank my Dad, Stuart, for bringing the Iron Maiden and Budgie songs to my attention, and Thomas Walsh for bringing Supertramp's song to my attention.

<sup>13</sup> BBC, "Churchill 'greatest PM of 20<sup>th</sup> Century,'" *BBC News World Edition*, 4 January 2000. © BBC 2003. [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/politics/575219.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/575219.stm) (accessed 2 July 2014).

Neville Chamberlain was not on the list.<sup>14</sup> In 2008, a St. George's Day poll found Churchill to be the greatest Englishman ever. He received thirty percent of votes and even beat out St. George himself, who came in second with twenty-one percent. Neville Chamberlain, once again, was not on the list.<sup>15</sup> He has no monuments, no exhibitions, and no other substantial dedications.

In his hometown, the Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery hosted a Chamberlain family exhibit in 1998. The majority of the exhibit was devoted to Neville's father, Joseph, one of the founding fathers of modern Birmingham. Neville only received a small caption: "Neville became Prime Minister in 1937 and played an important role in the events which led to the Second World War."<sup>16</sup> This can be read as shame over his role in appeasing Hitler. The museum is in Chamberlain Square near the Chamberlain Memorial Fountain – both, of course, dedicated to Joseph. Birmingham also boasts the Chamberlain Awards – specifically dedicated to one of Birmingham's most respected civic leaders, Joseph – to recognize City Council workers that go the extra mile; the leading political blog of the West Midlands – The Chamberlain Files – uses Joseph as their symbol and features "Old Joe's Almanac"; and Joseph Chamberlain Sixth Form College.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, in July 2014, Newman University in Birmingham hosted a conference – "Joseph Chamberlain: Imperial Standard Bearer, National Leader, Local Icon" –

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<sup>14</sup> The vote was conducted by BBC2 over a month-long period with people voting by email or telephone. Of the approximately 1 million votes, Churchill received 447,423. BBC, "Churchill voted greatest Briton," *BBC News World Edition*, 24 November 2002. © BBC 2003. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/2509465.stm> (accessed 2 July 2014).

<sup>15</sup> Jane Wharton, "Sir Winston is greatest Englishman ever," *Express*, 23 April 2008. Copyright 2014 Northern and Shell Media Productions. <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/42175/Sir-Winston-is-greatest-Englishman-ever> (accessed 2 July 2014).

<sup>16</sup> David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain* (London: Arnold, 2001), xi.

<sup>17</sup> Chamberlain Awards, "Welcome to the Chamberlain Awards 2013," Chamberlain Awards. © Birmingham City Council 2014. <http://www.chamberlainawards.co.uk> (accessed 1 June 2014); and "The Chamberlain Files," The Chamberlain Files. © Piccione 2014. <http://www.thechamberlainfiles.com> (accessed 1 June 2014).

commemorating the centenary of Joseph Chamberlain's death.<sup>18</sup> Neville, on the other hand, has a tiny blue plaque in Edgbaston, where he was born, that reads: "Birmingham Civic Society / Neville Chamberlain M.P. / Lived near here 1911-1940 / Prime Minister 1937-1940".<sup>19</sup> The shame associated with appeasement has not only written Neville out of popular memory but has even diminished his achievements in his hometown.

## 1.2 Appeasement and Biography: A Historiographical Review

The majority of literature on Neville Chamberlain is either centred on the policy of appeasement or biography. Studies of appeasement, including those focused on Chamberlain's role, are extensive and conform to three dominant strands: orthodox, revisionist, and post-revisionist. The main debate between the schools "is whether policy was the product of individual agency or determined by objective structural constraints."<sup>20</sup> The orthodox school emerged during the Second World War, in June 1940, with the publication of *Guilty Men* written by Michael Foot, Peter Howard, and Frank Owen, under the pseudonym 'Cato'. Despite being written over a weekend by the three journalists, it was an instant success with the British public. It blamed Chamberlain – and his predecessors, Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin – for completely misjudging Hitler and conceding to his escalating demands. Cato further criticised the British government – specifically Chamberlain – for recent catastrophes, including the failure at

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<sup>18</sup> The conference took place on 4-5 July 2014. Newman University, "Conference: Joseph Chamberlain: Imperial Standard Bearer, National Leader, Local Icon," Newman University 2014. <http://www.newman.ac.uk/media-centre/3596/conference-joseph-chamberlain-imperial-standard-bearer-national-leader-lo> (accessed 1 June 2014).

<sup>19</sup> Neville also has a blue plaque from the London County Council on his old home in Westminster, London that reads: "Neville Chamberlain 1869-1940 / Prime Minister / Lived here 1923-1935." The plaque was dedicated in 1963. Open Plaques, "Rt Hon Neville Chamberlain MO (1869-1940)," Open Plaques. <http://openplaques.org/people/399> (accessed 3 July 2014).

<sup>20</sup> Patrick Finney, "The Romance of Decline: The Historiography of Appeasement and British National Identity." *Electronic Journal of International History* (2000): 1. [http://sasspace.sas.ac.uk/3385/1/Journal\\_of\\_International\\_History\\_2000-06\\_Finney.pdf](http://sasspace.sas.ac.uk/3385/1/Journal_of_International_History_2000-06_Finney.pdf) (accessed 22 January 2014).

Dunkirk, and, thus, provided the public with a target to blame. Furthermore, *Guilty Men* was intended to remove the remaining appeasers, including Chamberlain and Halifax, from Churchill's coalition government. The work established a defining feature of the orthodox school by stressing the personal failure of Chamberlain rather than broader factors. This approach continues to impact historiography.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, *Guilty Men* is often considered the breaking point for Chamberlain's reputation amongst contemporary Britons.

The other major orthodox work – if not the most enduring and influential – is Winston Churchill's *The Gathering Storm*, part one of his six volume *The Second World War*, published in 1948. *The Gathering Storm* examines “[h]ow the English-speaking peoples through their unwisdom [*sic*], carelessness, and good nature allowed the wicked to rearm.”<sup>22</sup> Churchill analyses the missed opportunities of the British governments from the Disarmament Conference (1932-1934) to Anglo-Soviet negotiations in the summer of 1939 that plunged Britain into an avoidable, not inevitable, war. Moreover, and especially significant for his own and Chamberlain's reputation, all of this happened in spite of Churchill's persistent warnings about the Nazi menace and calls for rearmament. He did not directly attack Chamberlain, however. Churchill's attacks centred on Chamberlain's predecessor, Stanley Baldwin.<sup>23</sup> The impact of Churchill's view of the war, and its origins, cannot be overstated. His unique position during the war and his unparalleled access to documents in the immediate post-war period established authenticity of *The*

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<sup>21</sup> By the end of 1940, *Guilty Men* had sold over 200,000 copies and had been reprinted 27 times. Finney, “The Romance of Decline,” 1-2; Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 71-4; and Michael Foot, Peter Howard and Frank Owen, *Guilty Men* (London: V. Gollancz Ltd., 1940).

<sup>22</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, Book I, *From War to War, 1919-1939* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), ix.

<sup>23</sup> Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*; and Finney, “The Romance of Decline,” 2-3.

*Second World War* (1948-1953), and, as a result, his views were not contested for nearly two decades.<sup>24</sup> While biographies, including of Chamberlain, and memoirs of government officials did emerge in defence of the policy of appeasement, little appeared that did not confirm the orthodox view.<sup>25</sup>

In the sixties the dominant narrative started to change to a more sympathetic appraisal of the appeasers. Historians began to focus more on structural constraints – including the gap between British commitments and resources in the 1930s – than on individual fault. Although the 1967 Public Records Act released official documentation for a majority of the interwar period by reducing the closed time of the British Archives from fifty to thirty years, the most significant revisionist work was released in 1965. Donald Cameron Watt’s article, “Appeasement. The Rise of a Revisionist School?” predicted the emergence of more sympathetic accounts of appeasement, characterising it as “neither stupid nor wicked; it was merely inevitable.”<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, historians – as a result of the opening of the archives – used appeasers’ own perceptions and justifications to create a much more detailed and sympathetic account of British foreign policy in the 1930s. Revisionist historians, as aptly stated by Patrick Finney, redefined appeasement “as a rational and logical response to imperial over-stretch formulated by policy-makers who correctly perceived that the British Empire had inadequate resources to defend sprawling global commitments from the tripartite revisionist challenge of Germany, Italy and Japan.”<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, they were limited in their actions for several reasons. First,

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<sup>24</sup> John Ramsden, *Man of the Century: Winston Churchill and His Legend Since 1945* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 193 and 205-6.

<sup>25</sup> Finney, “The Romance of Decline,” 3.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 4; and D.C. Watt, “Appeasement. The Rise of a Revisionist School?” *The Political Quarterly* 36:2 (April 1965).

<sup>27</sup> Finney, “The Romance of Decline,” 5.

they felt Britain had no dependable allies and had too many commitments in the Dominions. British governments, like many members of the British public, felt that the grievances over the Treaty of Versailles were legitimate. At home, they worried about economic weakness and the dominance of pacifism. Moreover, there was a genuine fear over modern warfare as well as the lingering memories (nightmares) of World War One. Based on these factors, revisionists concluded that – in light of British decline – no other policy than appeasement would have avoided war and saved the Empire. By the end of the 1960s, revisionism was the dominant strand of literature on appeasement, and some authors – including Martin Gilbert – completely changed their arguments to reflect this.<sup>28</sup>

Revisionism dominated until the late 1980s and early 1990s when post-revisionism emerged. The new school conformed, generally, to the orthodox stance but in a more nuanced way. It criticised revisionists for their lack of analysis of the documentary evidence; merely reproducing appeasers' self-justifications. Post-revisionist historians focused on the individual – on personality, ideology, and motives.<sup>29</sup> R.A.C. Parker's *Chamberlain and Appeasement* (1993) is the pivotal post-revisionist work. Parker argues "that Chamberlain and his colleagues made choices amongst alternative possibilities and that so far as Chamberlain decided them, and he had great power within the government, they were choices for conciliation rather than resistance."<sup>30</sup> Parker further contends that until the meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler at Godesberg, Chamberlain's foreign policy position was well supported but after the Munich Agreement, his views quickly lost support. Even after the German occupation of Prague

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<sup>28</sup> Martin Gilbert's (with Richard Gott) *The Appeasers* (1963) was an orthodox critique. *The Roots of Appeasement* (1966), however, took a revisionist approach. Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>30</sup> R.A.C. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement: British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1993), 343.

in March 1939, Chamberlain believed he could still work with German moderates, and Mussolini, to avoid war. Moreover, Parker argues that Chamberlain prevented alliances, including a stronger military alliance with France and one with the Soviet Union, that would have dealt more firmly with the Nazis – and Mussolini – and given the smaller threatened states an alliance to assemble around to resist German aggression. Anything Chamberlain pursued, including the Soviet alliance, after March 1939 was “either half-hearted or too late.”<sup>31</sup> Parker ultimately concludes that Chamberlain’s personality, debating skill, and control of the government seriously stifled the chances of avoiding a second world war.<sup>32</sup> As with all post-revisionist works, Chamberlain is not painted as a fool but as someone who misunderstood Hitler’s intentions.

John Ruggiero’s *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament* (1999) expands upon Parker’s analysis, particularly “why Chamberlain chose to restrain the growth of the rearmament program [after Godesberg.]”<sup>33</sup> Ruggiero contends that this was because of three considerations. First, Chamberlain viewed “Munich as a vindication of his policy of appeasement[.]”<sup>34</sup> He believed it could be repeated, if necessary, to allow time for leisurely British rearmament. Second, if his policy succeeded war would be avoided, rearmament could stop, and he could return to improving the world. Finally, Chamberlain did not believe, based on earlier intelligence reports, that Germany would be ready for a full war until at least 1942.<sup>35</sup> Overall, Ruggiero concludes that without Chamberlain there would have been no Munich Agreement, as well as more armaments and support from

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 343-7.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>33</sup> John Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament: Pride, Prejudice, and Politics* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 159-60.

potential allies. Even if this did not deter Hitler, “the outcome could not have been worse than Chamberlain’s ill-fated double policy of gradual rearmament and appeasement.”<sup>36</sup> As with Parker, Ruggiero believes that without Chamberlain, World War Two could have been avoided.<sup>37</sup>

Post-revisionism also calls into question the broader factors that, according to revisionists, made appeasement the only viable policy.<sup>38</sup> Literature on the British press from 1937 to 1940 argues against the idea that Chamberlain’s government was constrained in their foreign policy by public opinion because of their control of the press and, thus, public thought. Richard Cockett’s *Twilight of Truth* (1989) argues that Chamberlain’s control of the press prevented the education of the public on viable alternatives to appeasement that not only led to distrust of the press but also subverted democracy and “[successfully obscured] the divisions over his policy that existed not only in Whitehall and Westminster but throughout the country.”<sup>39</sup> As pointed out at the time by Mass Observation, and echoed by Anthony Adamthwaite (1983), the government’s control of the press restricted public debate and misled the public with false optimism towards the international situation.<sup>40</sup> Chamberlain’s manipulation of the press had a negative impact on his reputation and appraisals of his appeasement policy.

The other major field of literature on Chamberlain is biography. Chamberlain biographies, as pointedly noted by Nick Smart, are largely compensatory – a trend that

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 228-9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 229.

<sup>38</sup> Finney, “The Romance of Decline,” 6.

<sup>39</sup> Richard Cockett, *Twilight of Truth: Chamberlain, Appeasement and the Manipulation of the Press* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1989), 189.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Harnett Harrison and Charles Madge, *Britain by Mass Observation* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1939), 104-7; and Anthony Adamthwaite, “The British Government and the Media 1937-1938,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 18:2 (April 1983).

was started by Chamberlain's official biographer, Keith Feiling.<sup>41</sup> *The Life of Neville Chamberlain* (1946) was written at the request of the Chamberlain family to present a "more authentic record".<sup>42</sup> Feiling was given full access to all of Neville's diaries, papers, and letters – including letters to his sisters, Ida and Hilda – as well as more limited access to the papers and memoirs of contemporary members of government.<sup>43</sup> The biography traces Neville's life from birth to death and his rise in business – including his failure in the Bahamas – to his entry and rise in politics. While Feiling does acknowledge Neville's stubbornness, he also displays a compensatory and sympathetic bias. For example, in describing the policy of appeasement at Munich and Chamberlain's desire to avoid the death and destruction of another war, Feiling states, "To win that respite, he told his friends both before and after, and much more to win lasting peace, he would pay a price, in the prestige of his country and his own good fame."<sup>44</sup> Subsequent biographers follow Feiling's lead, using Chamberlain's letters to his sisters as their primary source and attempting to justify his actions. C.B. Pyper's 1962 biography acknowledges this intention in the title: *Chamberlain and His Critics: A Statesman Vindicated*. Moreover, it opens with a list of quotations from Chamberlain's contemporaries praising both Neville and his actions at Munich.<sup>45</sup> Despite the redemptive nature of the biographies, most still focus on the events surrounding the Munich Conference.

Nick Smart's *Neville Chamberlain* (2010), breaks away from this compensatory trend, however, and presents a more nuanced view of the former Prime Minister. While

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<sup>41</sup> Nick Smart, *Neville Chamberlain* (New York: Routledge, 2010), xi.

<sup>42</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, v.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 364.

<sup>45</sup> C.B. Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics: A Statesman Vindicated* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1962), vii.

he also uses the letters Neville wrote to his sisters, Smart argues that previous biographers have used the letters selectively to present the image of a “good man” desired by the Chamberlain family. Smart conversely concludes that the letters show Neville as “unobservant, bumptious and utterly self-absorbed.”<sup>46</sup> He further argues that although Chamberlain was a busy legislator, he left no legacy or mark on Conservative doctrine. Chamberlain’s labour for the betterment of the working class was overshadowed by how little he knew about them. Smart contends that the juxtaposing of Chamberlain’s public and private life to create a more sympathetic image should cease because a thorough and unbiased analysis of the letters illustrates that Neville was just as self-absorbed and hostile in his private life as he was in public.<sup>47</sup>

### **1.3 Contemporary Reputation and the Phoney War: A Lack of Literature**

Despite the attention of biographers and historians, little has been written on public perceptions of Chamberlain during his time as Prime Minister. While literature on press manipulation addresses the gulf between press representation and public opinion, very few other works are available on contemporary feelings towards the Prime Minister. Daniel Hucker (2011) explores the impact of public opinion in Britain and France on the policy of appeasement in 1938-1939. He traces the evolution of public opinion from the Munich Conference to the outbreak of war and concludes that opinion in Britain was transformed from “pacifist-tinged support for appeasement to reluctant but determined will to resist.”<sup>48</sup> As for Chamberlain, Hucker argues that the Prime Minister was “guilty”

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<sup>46</sup> Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, xi-xiii.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii-xiv and 293.

<sup>48</sup> Daniel Hucker, *Public Opinion and the End of Public Appeasement in Britain and France* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2011), 18.

in the sense that he failed to detect the evolution of public opinion earlier.<sup>49</sup> David Dutton's *Neville Chamberlain* (2010) traces the evolution of Chamberlain's historical reputation from the time he became a well-known politician in the early 1930s to the impact of the orthodox, revisionist, and post-revisionist strands of historiography. Using the memoirs of contemporaries – as well as BIPO polls, Mass Observation findings, and newspapers – Dutton concludes that Chamberlain's reputation is what it ought to be. Chamberlain never received unanimous approval. Even in the immediate aftermath of Munich, attitudes towards the Prime Minister covered a wide spectrum.<sup>50</sup> According to Dutton, it was the release of *Guilty Men* – a month after Chamberlain's resignation – that had the most detrimental impact on his reputation and has endured despite the swings of historiographical views. Dutton, however, does not delve past the surface of contemporary opinions. His focus is primarily on Chamberlain's reputation amongst his contemporaries in government and does not venture further than the occasional statistic on public opinion. According to Dutton, this is too difficult to gauge, as he considers the surviving evidence “to be fragmentary, random and potentially unrepresentative.”<sup>51</sup> He clearly does not see the value in studying the attitudes and thoughts presented in Mass Observation diaries and Directive Responses. His book took a different focus. There are no works that deal directly with Chamberlain's contemporary reputation specifically during the Phoney War or from a primarily public perspective. This thesis aims to fill this gap by exploring Chamberlain's reputation amongst British civilians during the first eight months of war.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>50</sup> Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 2.

The literature dedicated specifically to the first eight months of war – known as the Phoney War, the Bore War, *Sitzkrieg*, the Twilight War, and the strangest of wars – is limited. A majority of the literature on the British home front during the Second World War focuses on the 1940-1941 Blitz. The “myth” of the Blitz experience is central to the historiographical debate with three dominant strands debating its validity. The image of a united, cheery, and steadfast home front was fostered during the war by British propagandists – particularly in newspapers and films – and aimed at Allied and Neutral countries to win their support and prove Britain was far from defeat.<sup>52</sup> The traditionalist view emerged in the immediate post-war period and its unchallenged existence until the late 1960s served to solidify the “myth”.<sup>53</sup> Although a revisionist stance – explicitly focusing on areas of civilian life that did not support the ‘myth’ – emerged in the 1980s, it never dominated the historiographical debate.<sup>54</sup> The most prevalent stance, a synthesis between traditionalist and revisionist, began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It addresses the previously ignored aspects of everyday life including continued class rivalry, panic, defeatism, and Conscientious Objectors (COs). Synthesis works, including Angus Calder’s *The People’s War: Britain, 1939-45* (1969) and Juliet Gardiner’s *The Blitz* (2011), acknowledge all of the negative aspects of the home front experience while still confirming the overall fortitude of Britons.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Juliet Gardiner argues that the American media took up this propaganda and presented an uncritical portrait of the British Blitz experience. A contemporary American media report declared that: “Britain is suffering greatly ... but her people [are] proving brave and resilient, and [will] win through.” Gardiner, *The Blitz*, 174-6.

<sup>53</sup> MacKay *Half the Battle*, 6-7. For one of the most prominent traditionalist works see: Richard M. Titmuss, *Problems of Social Policy* (London: HMSO, 1950)

<sup>54</sup> Robert MacKay argues that the revisionist approach began, in earnest, in the 1980s. MacKay *Half the Battle*, 6-7. Clive Ponting, *1940: Myth and Reality* (Hammish Hamilton, 1990) is considered one of the most polarizing revisionist works.

<sup>55</sup> Calder, *The People’s War*; and Gardiner, *The Blitz*.

The period of the Phoney War garners substantially less interest. It is often treated as a prelude to the ‘real’ war and premiership of Churchill. It is arguably because of this status as a ‘prelude’ that there is little literature on the period. If the Phoney War receives its own chapter, and is not merely included in the introduction, it is generally presented as a ‘set-up’ period with authors explaining the evacuation scheme and Air Raid Precautions (ARP) including blackouts, shelters, and gas masks. There are, however, four main works that deal specifically with the Phoney War. E.S. Turner’s *The Phoney War on the Home Front* (1961) deals solely with life on the home front including attitudes, controversies, inconveniences, and coping-mechanisms through the eyes of the people. Turner occasionally mentions Chamberlain, including the division between Chamberlainites and those calling for a new Prime Minister, and the distrust fostered by the dismissal of Leslie Hore-Belisha in January 1940 and the German invasion of Norway in April.<sup>56</sup> Nick Smart’s *British Strategy and Politics During the Phoney War* (2003) aims to make the Phoney War its own rightful period and not a “mere prelude to catastrophe”.<sup>57</sup> Smart argues that the first eight months of war had its own unique conditions, causes, and course that had little impact on the rest of the war.<sup>58</sup> Although he states that the book is not an attempt to demolish the myths of Churchill or Chamberlain, he does argue that Churchill’s reputation requires that the men of Munich be complacent, neglect defences, and be half-hearted in the persecution of war. Chamberlain’s removal thus became “a matter of national necessity” to allow for Churchill’s “rescue mission.”<sup>59</sup> Although Smart attempts to view the Phoney War without hindsight of the events of the summer of 1940

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<sup>56</sup> Turner, *The Phoney War on the Home Front*.

<sup>57</sup> Nick Smart, *British Strategy and Politics During the Phony War* (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2003), 5.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

and the remainder of the war, he does not believe that Chamberlain's premiership looks any more successful – although perhaps less damning.<sup>60</sup> Terry Charman's *Outbreak 1939* (2009) examines the economic and political aspects of 1939 – in Britain, France, Germany, Poland, Italy, Denmark, and America – including the outbreak of war, and the military actions that took place in the first four months of war. Charman, however, pays little attention to the people's home front experience in Britain.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, Stephen Flower's *No Phoney War: Britain's Part in the Second World War* (2011) examines the often ignored, or quickly summarized, activities of the British armed forces, specifically the Air Force and Navy, which were, indeed, very active during the first eight months of the Second World War.<sup>62</sup>

#### **1.4 Sources of Contemporary Public Opinion: Mass Observation and BIPO Polls**

Mass Observation is an invaluable source for historians of the British home front experience during the Second World War. It is usually Mass Observation or BIPO polls that are cited to quantify public opinion. Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge, and Humphrey Jennings created Mass Observation in 1937 with the intention “to start an ‘anthropology of ourselves’ to explore the role of myth and superstition in national life and the gulf between public opinion and what was often described as public opinion by the government and in the press.”<sup>63</sup> In its founding year, Mass Observation established a base in Worktown (Bolton) and recruited 500 volunteers from across the country to form a

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Terry Charman, *Outbreak 1939: The World Goes to War* (London: Virgin Books, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Stephen Flower, *No Phoney War: Britain's Part in the Second World War, 3 September 1939 – 9 April 1940* (Gloucestershire, UK: Amberley, 2011).

<sup>63</sup> Mass Observation, “Brief History,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk/introduction/history.aspx> (accessed 5 October 2012). For a comprehensive history of Mass Observation see James Hinton, *The Mass Observers: A History, 1937-1949* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

“national panel” to record daily concerns and opinions in diaries that were submitted monthly, as well as respond to occasional questionnaires.<sup>64</sup> By the outbreak of war, Mass Observation had part-time observers across Britain, bases in Metrop (London) and Worktown to conduct interviews, and a National Panel of subjects. In September 1939, the National Panel started to receive monthly War-time Directive Questionnaires that inquired about various aspects of the war, including home front inconveniences (air raids, blackouts, rationing), the effects of war, feelings towards other nations, and the impact of government posters, leaflets, and speeches.<sup>65</sup>

As early as 1939 the organization was aware of the significance of its work, stating:

We have a complete record of the outbreak of war in London and the Provinces, of the early black-out and air-raid alarms. We want to continue with this work to the bitter end. Then for the first time, historians and social scientists will have a detailed, authentic record of the effects of war on the civilian population.<sup>66</sup>

There are, however, certain issues that need to be addressed when using Mass Observation as a source. First and foremost, the National Panel does not represent a

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<sup>64</sup> Diaries are available on Mass Observation Online Archive beginning in August 1939. A total of 204 diaries are available for the period of the Phoney War (August/September 1939 to May 1940). Mass Observation, August 1939 – May 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive; and Fiona Courage, “The National Panel responds: Mass Observation Directives 1939-1945.” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk/essays/content/TheNationalPanelResponds.aspx>. (accessed 5 October 2012).

<sup>65</sup> The Metrop base was established in 1938. In 1940, Harrison and Madge contended that the Directive responses, the largest and most significant component of the organization during the war, provided “an invaluable insight into the WHY of what Britain is thinking, and that insight cannot be obtained by any method of interviewing or cross-sectioning which only give you the WHAT.” Despite the significance accorded the Directive Responses, they were, and continue to be, the least used material of the Mass Observation Archive. Mass Observation, “Brief History”; Thomas Harnett Harrison and Charles Madge, *War Begins at Home* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1940), 16-20; Courage, “The National Panel responds,” and Ben Lander and Stephen Brooke, “Mass Observation: An Historical Introduction,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk/essays/content/historicalintroduction.aspx>. (accessed 5 October 2012).

<sup>66</sup> Mass Observation, “File Report A25: War-time Directive No.1: Notes for the duration of the war (September 1939),” Mass Observation Archive.

cross-section of the population.<sup>67</sup> As aptly stated by Fiona Courage, “[t]he nature of Mass Observation as a written project required a level of literacy and education that would have placed strands of the populace out of reach. It also required a significant input of time meaning that those with little free time would find it hard to participate.”<sup>68</sup> The preponderance of responses from within one social class, however, demonstrates the multiplicity of reactions possible within a class, not simply between them. Although it could be argued that the educated middle-class were more likely to possess diversified opinions on politics, the data still shows that a multiplicity of opinions were present within British society during wartime and not simply between the classes as is often portrayed. Moreover, it should be noted that Britain’s middle-class was a far more diverse group than their name suggests. Possessing a range of occupations, socio-economic standings, education levels, political interest and leanings, and other factors not simply definable by the grouping “middle-class”. Although it is beyond the scope of Mass Observation to know many of these details, the diversity of the middle-class grouping should be acknowledged.<sup>69</sup> In addition, there is a notable number of male diarists that identify themselves as either pacifists, COs, and sometimes both. As will be shown, however, their perceptions of Chamberlain and his policies were diverse and not restricted by pacifist ideals. For example, Mr. Denis Argent of Essex was pleased about the succession of Churchill in May, reflecting, “Now we’ll see something!”<sup>70</sup> While the

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<sup>67</sup> Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 20.

<sup>68</sup> Courage, “The National Panel responds.”

<sup>69</sup> For an in-depth discussion on class divisions and diversity in Britain see Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class in Britain*.

<sup>70</sup> Denis Argent diary, May 1940 (5010), Mass Observation Archive. In addition, it should be noted that Mass Observation became part of the Ministry of Information – and thus, a government organization – in April 1940. This caused Madge to leave Mass Observation as he believed the contract would compromise their independence and ability to criticize the government. Nearly the entire period under study, however, is

diarists and Directive Respondents are predominantly middle-class, the interviews conducted and statistics gathered by Mass Observation investigators include responses from across the class spectrum.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, while there are responses from across Britain, including from Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, the vast majority are from England. As a result, this thesis will be concerned with civilian attitudes within England towards Neville Chamberlain during the Phoney War.<sup>72</sup> Derivatives of Britain, however, will be used interchangeably with England as a large majority of existing literature examines Britain as a whole.

Gallup Polls, also known as the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), are another important contemporary source for home front opinion. Independently created in 1937 by George Gallup, the polls were conducted monthly at approximately a hundred different locations across the country with a minimum of 1,000 random interviewees.<sup>73</sup> Unlike Mass Observation diaries and Directive Responses, the statistics gathered by BIPO were subject to the outward and misleading expression public opinion. Mass Observation noted that polling statistics were often more favourable to the Prime Minister

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free from diarists' concern over government involvement. . Courage, "The National Panel responds"; and Lander and Brooke, "Mass Observation: An Historical Introduction."

<sup>71</sup> Interviews conducted by Mass Observation investigators are available in the Day Survey Files (1937-1938), File Reports, and published books.

<sup>72</sup> Out of the total of 204 diaries available for the duration of the Phoney War, 186 are from within England. The remainder (8 from Scotland, 6 from Wales, 2 from Northern Ireland, 1 from Switzerland, and 1 from Canada) will not be used in my analysis. Furthermore, the diary of Nella Last (5353) will not be included in this analysis. The diary consists of 541 PDF pages (each page consisting of 2 handwritten pages) from August 1939 to May 1940. Last's extensive diary entries have been published in *Nella Last's War: The Second World War Diaries of Housewife, 49*, eds. Richard Broad and Suzie Flemming (London: Profile Books, 2006, first published in 1981); *Nella Last's Peace: The Post-war Diaries of Housewife, 49*, eds. Patricia E. Malcolmson and Robert W. Malcolmson (London: Profile Books, 2008); and *Nella Last in the 1950s: The Further Diaries of Housewife, 49*, eds. Patricia E. Malcolmson and Robert W. Malcolmson (London: Profile Books, 2010). Parts of Last's diary have been reproduced in James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). In addition, the television-movie drama "Housewife, 49" – based on the diaries – was released in 2006. Overall, my analysis will be based on a total of 185 diaries. Mass Observation, August 1939 – May 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>73</sup> George H. Gallup (ed), *The Gallup International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975* (New York: Random House, 1976), vi-vii.

and government than reality because “Loyalty to the Prime Minister is the done thing in Britain in war-time.”<sup>74</sup> They found that specific phrasing and qualifications in answers revealed a more diverse spectrum of responses, less favourable to the Prime Minister.<sup>75</sup> This is an important bias to keep in mind when reading statistics, especially those given to support the Prime Minister and government policy during wartime.

### **1.5 Mass Observation Diarists and Public Perceptions of Neville Chamberlain**

This thesis will explore how the English public felt about Chamberlain during the first eight months of war based primarily on Mass Observation diaries (*Appendix A*). The anti-climactic inactivity of the Phoney War resulted in a growing disinterest and apathy towards the war and home front politics, especially during the harsh winter of 1940, and, as a result, entries about politicians decreased. Chamberlain’s wireless broadcast speeches, however, increased – although not substantially – the number of entries about the Prime Minister and diarists’ opinions toward him, his actions, and reputation. This thesis will show that the predominantly middle-class National Panel held a broad spectrum of opinions towards Chamberlain that were both fluid and rooted in his actions at Munich. Many of the defining characteristics of his legacy – weak, ineffectual, untrustworthy, and too dedicated to peace to vigorously prosecute a war – and, of course, the desire for a new leader, were all present in the National Panel’s entries during the Phoney War. This contradicts the dominant view that military set backs in May 1940 and release of *Guilty Men* in June 1940 were the critical turning points for Chamberlain’s reputation. Indeed, Chamberlain’s reputation had been suffering since before he met Hitler at Godesberg and most significantly after the occupation of Prague proved his

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<sup>74</sup> Mass Observation, “War-Time Directive No.4: December 1940,” Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

policy a failure. Public opinion towards Chamberlain during the Phoney War undermines the united “myth” of the Blitz experience that is often uncritically applied to the first eight months of war. While this is not to say that Britons were not united in their determination to win the war, they were, however, far from unanimous in their private attitudes towards their Prime Minister.

The second chapter will provide a background to Chamberlain’s three meetings with Adolf Hitler that culminated in the Munich Agreement in September 1938. It will explore the critical moment for Chamberlain’s policy and reputation with the German occupation of Prague in March 1939, and, thus, the failure of appeasement. It will then briefly explore the partnerships pursued in the summer of 1939, particularly with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, it will analyse public opinion – based on Mass Observation and BIPO findings – and how Chamberlain’s reputation was affected by his meetings with Hitler at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich, as well as in the aftermath of the Munich Agreement, the occupation of Prague and guarantee to Poland, to the outbreak of war.

The third and fourth chapter examine diarists’ reactions to Chamberlain’s broadcast speeches and the Prime Minister’s reputation in general. The third chapter will examine attitudes towards the declaration of war on 3 September, the rejection of Hitler’s peace proposals on 12 October, and the 26 November wireless speech and the impact on Chamberlain’s reputation. It will also discuss the mainly negative perception of Chamberlain aside from his speeches. The fourth chapter will similarly start with an exploration of the minimal reaction to Chamberlain’s speeches on 9 January and 24 February before turning to general opinions towards the Prime Minister. Furthermore, it

will discuss the impact of Chamberlain's downfall from the German invasion of Norway in April, the invasion of the Low Countries a month later, to his resignation on 10 May 1940. The fifth chapter will analyse the detailed information of the third and fourth chapters. Summarizing dominant themes of criticisms and the types of reactions to the speeches.

## **Chapter 2 From the Highs of Munich to the Lows of Prague: Appeasement, September 1938 to August 1939**

Many volumes have been written, and will be written, upon the crisis that was ended at Munich by the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia.  
- Winston Churchill<sup>76</sup>

Neville Chamberlain became Prime Minister on 28 May 1937 but the defining moment of his premiership did not take place until over a year later, at Munich. As previously discussed, the literature on Chamberlain is dominated by his appeasement policy. It is not the intention of this thesis, however, to take a stance – whether traditionalist, revisionist, or post-revisionist – on Chamberlain’s pre-war foreign policy. This chapter seeks to outline the events surrounding the Munich Conference and the German invasion of Bohemia and Moravia, as well as highlight contemporary reactions, due to their subsequent importance on the formation of British opinions towards Chamberlain during the first eight months of war.

### **2.1 Life Before the Fateful September: A Brief Biography**

Arthur Neville Chamberlain was born on 18 March 1869 in Birmingham into an industrialist and emerging political family. His father, Joseph (1836-1914) was active in Birmingham, serving as Mayor from 1873-1876 and the first Chancellor of Birmingham University in 1900. On the national stage as a Member of Parliament and Colonial Secretary (1895-1903), he actively sought reforms in education and welfare, and opposed Irish Home Rule. Joseph has been described as “the first industrialist to reach the highest tier of leadership in British politics.” Moreover, “[t]hough he never became [P]rime [M]inister, he was generally considered by the beginning of the twentieth century to be

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<sup>76</sup> Churchill, *The Gathering Storm*, 280.

the finest minister of the British Empire.”<sup>77</sup> Neville’s older half-brother, Austen, was groomed from the beginning to follow his father into politics, holding the offices of Civil Lord of the Admiralty (1895-1900), Financial Secretary to the Treasury (1900-1902), Postmaster-General (1902-1903), Chancellor of the Exchequer (1903-1905 and 1919-1921), Secretary of State for India (1915-1917), Lord Privy Seal (1921-1922), and Foreign Secretary (1924-1929).<sup>78</sup>

Neville, who would later hold the highest office of any Chamberlain, was trained to follow his family’s industrial interests: studying engineering and metallurgy at Mason College (1886-1888), working as an accountant (1889-1891), running the family sisal plantation on Andros Island, Bahamas (1891-1896), and working as Director of Elliott’s Metal Company in Birmingham (1897) before purchasing – with his father’s money – his own business, Hoskins and Sons (1897). He was actively involved in the city of Birmingham following his return from the Bahamas including volunteering to teach Darwinism at a Unitary Sunday school, serving as secretary of the Birmingham Liberal Unionist Association and governor of the botanical gardens, and serving on the board – and later becoming chair – of the General Hospital. Moreover, he was actively involved in Birmingham University, including raising funds and serving on the Council and, later, the Board of Governors.<sup>79</sup> In the 1900s, Neville became involved in town planning as he believed that getting rid of the slums and enlarging the suburbs would increase health

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<sup>77</sup> Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 13-4; William R. Rock, *Neville Chamberlain* (New York: Twayne Publishers Inc., 1969), 11 and 33; and (quote from) Peter T. Marsh, “Chamberlain, Joseph [Joe] (1836–1914),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online edition), Dalhousie University. 1 May 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/32350>

<sup>78</sup> Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 22; and D. J. Dutton, “Chamberlain, Sir (Joseph) Austen (1863–1937),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online edition), Dalhousie University. 1 May 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com.ezpro.xy.library.dal.ca/view/article/32351>

<sup>79</sup> Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 11 and 22-34; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 15; Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 17-31; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 5-39.

and, thus, work productivity. It was his involvement in town planning that increased his interest in politics.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, and what is often cited as one of his greatest accomplishments, Neville established the Birmingham Municipal Savings Bank in 1916, as well as the civic orchestra in 1919.<sup>81</sup>

Neville officially entered politics in 1911 as a member of the Birmingham City Council. He was soon elected alderman in 1914 and served as Lord Mayor from 1915-1917 before beginning his career on the national level. Apart from a brief position in David Lloyd George's wartime government as Director-General of National Service in 1916, Neville's national political career began in 1918 when he was elected to Parliament. He served in many positions previously held by his father and brother, including Postmaster-General (1922-23), Minister of Health (1923 and 1924-1929), Colonial Secretary (1929-1930), and Chancellor of the Exchequer (1924, 1931, and 1932-1937). During his time as Minister of Health, Chamberlain continued his interest in bettering the lives and living conditions of the working classes including through the Rent Restrictions Act (1923), the Chamberlain Housing Act of 1923, the Widows, Orphans, and Old Age Pensions Act of 1925, the Rating and Valuation Act of 1925, and the Local Government Act of 1929. While serving as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the National Government under Ramsay MacDonald and Stanley Baldwin – and during a time of increasing European turmoil with Hitler's rearmament of Germany (1935), Italy's invasion of Abyssinia (1935), and the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), as well as the

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<sup>80</sup> Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 15; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 45-46.

<sup>81</sup> Rock describes the Birmingham Municipal Savings Bank as “[u]ndoubtedly among the most outstanding of Neville's accomplishments[.]” Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 42; Pyper, *Chamberlain and his Critics*, 15; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 63.

height of British pacifism – Chamberlain insisted, although on a limited level, on defence and rearmament.<sup>82</sup>

On 28 May 1937, Neville Chamberlain succeeded Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister of Great Britain. According to William Rock, the accession was “a bureaucratic formality, an internal affair of the Conservative Party long in the process of development.”<sup>83</sup> As Prime Minister, Chamberlain continued to pursue the established British foreign policy of appeasement. Although appeasement, or perhaps more aptly the failure of it, has become synonymous with Neville Chamberlain, he was neither the mastermind behind the concept nor its only advocate in the 1930s. Despite his continued support for limited defensive rearmament, appeasement became his principal foreign policy.<sup>84</sup> Chamberlain believed that in addition to rearmament, improved relations – in other words, appeasement – with Germany and Italy, Britain and Europe could evade war. According to Keith Feiling, Chamberlain’s official biographer, “Appeasement stood high in those days. One after another came the Irish settlement, the Italian treaty, trade negotiations with America, guarantee of large credits in Turkey.”<sup>85</sup> It is unsurprising, therefore, that in the spring of 1938, the Cabinet decided “that it would not be worth a

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<sup>82</sup> Neville was initially the MP for Ladywood before becoming the MP for Edgbaston. Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 11-2, 67-72, 86, and 98; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 15-7, 22, and 33-4; Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 52 and 244; Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 68-86; and Andrew J. Crozier, “Chamberlain, (Arthur) Neville (1869–1940),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (online edition), Dalhousie University. 1 May 2014. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/ezproxy.library.dal.ca/view/article/32347>

<sup>83</sup> Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 111.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-5. Paul M. Kennedy (1976) examines the long history of appeasement in British foreign policy. Appeasement, used by the British government since 1864, was rooted in moral, economic, strategic, and domestic (public opinion) considerations and apart from rare exceptions it was “pragmatic, conciliatory and reasonable.” It changed little until 1939. Kennedy argues that there were always dissidents toward the policy but it was not until 1938-39 that “idealists” and “realists” began to assert pressure in the same direction. Overall, he concludes that appeasement was a “natural policy” for a small island nation with declining world power. Paul M. Kennedy, “The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1864-1939,” *British Journal of International Studies* 2:3 (October 1976).

<sup>85</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 319.

war to try to keep more than three million Germans inside the Czech state against their will.”<sup>86</sup> This was the policy that Chamberlain followed at his meetings with Hitler in September 1938 at Berchtesgaden, Godesberg, and Munich. Following the failure of appeasement, Chamberlain served as Prime Minister for the first eight months of the Second World War until his resignation on 10 May 1940. He remained the leader of the Conservative Party and a member of the War Cabinet until his resignation, due to ill health, in September 1940. He died on 7 November 1940 and was buried in Westminster Abbey.<sup>87</sup>

## **2.2 Munich: “If at first you don’t concede, fly, fly again”<sup>88</sup>**

Chamberlain entered Britain’s highest office during a period of immense European turmoil and world affairs remained anything but peaceful following his accession with the on-going civil war in Spain, Japanese advances in China, the German annexation of Austria in March 1938, and the Czech crisis – that would culminate in the Munich Conference – began in May 1938. The Czechoslovakian state was created in the aftermath of the First World War and consisted of 7.5 million Czechs in control of 3.25 million Germans, 2.25 million Slovaks, 500,000 Hungarians, 500,000 Ruthenians, and 80,000 Poles.<sup>89</sup> In May 1938, German troops surrounded the borders to, in Hitler’s words, “protect” oppressed Sudeten Germans. British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, sent “a mildly worded warning” to Hitler stating that in the event France became involved in the situation, as Czechoslovakia’s ally, Britain’s neutrality could not be guaranteed. Nothing

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<sup>86</sup> Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 21.

<sup>87</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 443-57; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 276-8.

<sup>88</sup> Lord Lloyd to Loraine on 20 October 1938. Lord Lloyd Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge cited in Erik Goldstein, “Neville Chamberlain, the British Official Mind and the Munich Crisis,” *Diplomacy and Statecraft* 10 (1999), 289.

<sup>89</sup> Statistics according to Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 343.

happened. Hitler, however, had no plans to invade Czechoslovakia until early October.<sup>90</sup> According to the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), in March 1938 only twenty-five percent of those surveyed favoured Chamberlain's foreign policy compared to fifty-seven percent who did not and eighteen percent holding no opinion. On the other hand, however, only thirty-three percent thought Britain should "promise assistan[ce] to Czechoslovakia if Germany also acts toward her as she did toward Austria[.]" An additional forty-three percent did not believe Britain should be involved in the situation and twenty-four percent did not offer an opinion.<sup>91</sup>

After continued upheaval throughout the summer, Chamberlain sent Lord Runciman to negotiate a settlement between Germany and Czechoslovakia on the Sudetenland matter in August 1938. It is generally agreed that this mission was doomed to failure, and Chamberlain was ready to fly to Germany to meet with Hitler to personally reach a settlement. At the beginning of September, Chamberlain told Halifax his idea, known as Plan Z, and records that it was "so unconventional and daring that it rather took Halifax's breath away."<sup>92</sup> The rest of the Cabinet only found out a week later. Plan Z was an ideal way to capture popular imagination – at a time when meetings between political leaders, especially through air travel, was rare – and further manipulate public opinion in the government's favour. As the situation grew worse in early September and war seemed imminent, the British Cabinet ordered precautionary naval measures on 9 September, continued to send warnings to Germany between 9 and 12 September, and on 11 September Chamberlain stated British and French cooperation on the Czechoslovakian

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<sup>90</sup> Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 236; and C.B. Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 58-9.

<sup>91</sup> Gallup, ed, *The International Public Opinion Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975*, 8.

<sup>92</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 357 and 363; Goldstein, "Neville Chamberlain," 286; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 59; Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 239; and Nick Smart, *The National Government, 1931-1940* (Hampshire and London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), 177.

matter to the press.<sup>93</sup> On 12 September Hitler declared that Germany “would no longer tolerate oppression of the Sudetenland Germans, and would support their demand for self-determination.”<sup>94</sup> According to C.B. Pyper, “His speech was followed by disturbances in which 21 people were killed and 75 wounded, whereupon the Czech government proclaimed martial law, and Konrad Henlein, the Sudeten leader, broke off negotiations and fled to Germany.”<sup>95</sup> The following day Runciman flew back to London and Chamberlain sent word to Hitler asking to meet, without informing the French or the Czechs. On 14 September the British Cabinet discussed approaches to the situation. War anxiety combined with the general belief that they could not deny self-determination to Sudeten Germans resulted in the support for the gradual dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. That evening Hitler agreed to meet Chamberlain in Germany the next day.<sup>96</sup>

According to Mass Observation, Britons were happy and relieved that Chamberlain was going to see Hitler and on 15 September – the day Chamberlain flew to Germany – recording “a sensational swing of opinion in favour of Chamberlain.”<sup>97</sup> Observers in Metrop asked 100 people on 15 and 16 September, “Do you think Chamberlain flying to see Hitler will help peace?” They found that seventy percent thought it would help, twenty percent were unsure or unwilling to say, and ten percent thought it would not help or was a bad thing. Moreover, in a “working-class pro-Labour” neighbourhood, Mass Observation found that every second person expressed “a

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<sup>93</sup> Goldstein, “Neville Chamberlain,” 283; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 156-9; and Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 60.

<sup>94</sup> Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 60.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid; Daniel Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 39-41; Smart, *The National Government*, 177-8; and Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 160-1.

<sup>97</sup> Harrisson and Madge, *Britain*, 63-4.

spontaneous pro-Chamberlain tribute.”<sup>98</sup> As will become apparent during the first eight months of war, publicly expressed opinions were more nuanced than they appear. For example, upon further analysis of these findings, Mass Observation noted that twenty percent of the positive answers contained a qualifying word such as “quite good” or “rather good.” Others added further qualification including, “I don’t know what to think, but it’s a good thing I think,” “It’s a good thing in a way,” and “Suppose he will do good in his own way[.]” At this point, only a minority of people with a good understanding of the foreign situation expressed anti-Chamberlain sentiments.<sup>99</sup>

On 15 September, Chamberlain and Hitler met for the first time at Berchtesgaden. Despite a positive reception from cheering German crowds, the British Prime Minister was not happy following the beginning of the meeting. Hitler immediately demanded an instant solution to the Sudetenland problem, even at the risk of large-scale war. Frustrated, Chamberlain questioned why Hitler had bothered to accept a meeting if he was unwilling to negotiate. Once Hitler calmed down, he agreed to discuss the approach to the transfer of territory if Britain accepted Sudeten right to self-determination. Chamberlain informed Hitler that Britain had no issue with the transfer of territory but would have to return to London to discuss the terms with his Cabinet. He left with the understanding that they would meet again soon.<sup>100</sup> At the Cabinet meeting on 17 September, Chamberlain expressed his belief that the Sudetenland was the end of Hitler’s territorial claims. Some sources, including John Ruggiero’s post-revisionist work, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament* (1999), argue that many members

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>100</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 46; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 163; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 61; and Smart, *The National Government*, 178.

of the Cabinet were displeased with Chamberlain's actions at Berchtesgaden. Not only had he not discussed their proposals of 14 September, but he also went against their strong advice not to discuss a plebiscite.<sup>101</sup> Ultimately, Britain and France agreed to the gradual dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. The President of Czechoslovakia, Edvard Beneš, originally rejected the terms but Britain and France contended that if he did not accept they would stand aside and not honour the previous agreement. On 21 September, Beneš conceded, and following a Cabinet meeting the same day, Chamberlain flew back to Germany.<sup>102</sup>

Even before Czechoslovakia reluctantly accepted the terms, an increasingly dissatisfied public began to unofficially hear information about the agreement. The qualified praise of Chamberlain before Berchtesgaden quickly soured and, according to Mass Observation, "men [were] once more saying that Chamberlain was weak and we should have stood up to Hitler."<sup>103</sup> They also reported that "Apart from all rights and wrongs, [Britons] want peace, and they hate having to give up the wonderful sense of relief which Chamberlain had given them[.]"<sup>104</sup> Newsreels of the meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler were originally received with cheers for Chamberlain and hisses for Hitler, but images of Chamberlain were soon greeted with only silence.<sup>105</sup> On 21 and 22 September, Mass Observation asked 350 people "What do you think about Czechoslovakia?" Pro-Chamberlain sentiment had dropped to twenty-two percent while anti-Chamberlain feeling increased to forty percent. There is a significant difference in

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<sup>101</sup> Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 142.

<sup>102</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 364-9; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 163-6; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 61; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 142-3.

<sup>103</sup> Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 67 and 70.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*

the gendered reaction with only twenty-two percent of women identifying themselves as anti-Chamberlain compared to sixty-seven percent of men. Comparably, twenty-seven percent of women remained pro-Chamberlain versus only fourteen percent of men. This gender difference is also reflected in the “No War” response that Mass Observation describes as “May be unfair, but we want peace above everything[,]” with sixteen percent of women holding this feeling compared to merely two percent of men.<sup>106</sup>

The second meeting between Chamberlain and Hitler took place at Godesberg on 22 and 23 September 1938. On the first day of the meeting, “Chamberlain suggested to Hitler an international commission to work out new frontiers for Czechoslovakia on the basis of self-determination for the German inhabitants.”<sup>107</sup> But Hitler’s demands had changed and he now called for the occupation of Czechoslovakia by 28 September. Moreover, he demanded self-determination for Polish and Hungarian minorities. This was the fear of the British Cabinet before the meeting at Berchtesgaden and the reason they did not want Chamberlain to discuss a plebiscite with Hitler. Chamberlain was angered by the change of demands following his hard fought concessions from his own Cabinet, the French, and the Czechs. The next day, Hitler relaxed his wording, calling them ‘proposals’ rather than ‘demands’, and delayed the invasion of Czechoslovakia until 1 October. Little else changed, however. Chamberlain flew back to London on 24 September and met with the Cabinet the following day where he, once again, advocated

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<sup>106</sup> Mass Observation found 36% of men and women on 21 September and 44% on 22 September answered “Indignant”/held anti-Chamberlain sentiments. Mass Observation defines this category as “Czechs treated unfairly, Chamberlain policy wrong, we should stand up to Hitler.” For both days, a total of 40% of those surveyed held anti-Chamberlain sentiments (67% males and 22% females). Pro-Chamberlain feelings were held by 25% of men and women on 21 September and 18% on 22 September for a total of 22% (14% males and 27% females). Mass Observation defines “Pro-Chamberlain” as “He is a good man, he is playing for time, he has saved peace.” A total of 10% (2% male and 16% female) did not want war, and an additional 28% (17% male and 35% female) did not know or would not answer. *Ibid.*, 74-5.

<sup>107</sup> Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 167.

the acceptance of Hitler's terms.<sup>108</sup> His position, however, was no longer representative of the public or the government. While in Godesberg, Halifax warned Chamberlain of the hardening of public opinion and the "feeling that we have gone to the limits of concession."<sup>109</sup> There was increasing opposition to the terms, and even Halifax disagreed with the new concessions because he believed that the eventual destruction of Czechoslovakia was only the first step in Hitler's domination of Central Europe. The press – until this point dominated by the Chamberlain government's desires – began to dissent. On 26 September, *The Times* published the Godesberg Memorandum and condemned the humiliating terms, as did other newspapers. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, described the Memorandum as "an abject and humiliating capitulation."<sup>110</sup> Demonstrations erupted, including by the Labour Party, urging the government to support the Czechs. Ultimately, the Cabinet refused to let Chamberlain try to pressure France and Czechoslovakia into accepting the terms.<sup>111</sup> The Prime Minister's hold over the Cabinet was already weakening. After the Czechs rejected the Godesberg terms, they mobilized on British and French advice and offers of support in the event of an invasion. In Britain, home front precautions – including digging trenches, distributing air raid shelters and gas masks, and setting up an evacuation plan – were underway.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Chamberlain and Hitler exchanged notes on the morning of 23 September before meeting in the afternoon. Back in London, Chamberlain first met with his 'inner' Cabinet before meeting with the complete Cabinet later that day. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 369-70; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 167-8; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 142-4.

<sup>109</sup> Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 50; Goldstein, "Neville Chamberlain," 288; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 168-70; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 145.

<sup>110</sup> Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 170; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 145-6; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, 243-4.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 370; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 62; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 145-7.

On 27 September Chamberlain broadcast to the British people and Empire on the foreign situation. He described the first meeting at Berchtesgaden and the Czechs' acceptance of Hitler's initial terms but went on to discuss Hitler's complete change of heart and immediate demand for the territory at Godesberg. Chamberlain told his listeners that he understood why Czechoslovakia could not accept these new terms and was willing to go to Germany for a third time in order to reach a settlement and preserve peace. He added that Britons should not be alarmed by the precautionary measures being taken, and concluded, "For present I ask you to wait as calmly as you can for the events of the next few days. As long as war has not begun there is always hope that it may be prevented. And you know that I am going to work for peace to the last moment."<sup>113</sup> Mass Observation records that the speech changed public opinion and refocused anger towards Hitler.<sup>114</sup> The following day in the House of Commons, Chamberlain was recapping the second meeting when he received word that Hitler would meet him the next day. The House erupted in cheers and, once again, the Prime Minister's popularity began to soar. On the morning of 29 September, newspaper headlines praised Chamberlain and his determination. The same day Mass Observers in Metrop found that anti-Chamberlain sentiment had dropped down to the pre-Godesberg levels of ten percent and pro-Chamberlain feelings reached fifty-four percent. As with the previous Mass Observation findings, men still held more negative feelings towards Chamberlain and his policy

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<sup>113</sup> Henning Krabe, ed, *Voices From Britain: Broadcast History 1939-45* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1947), 11-3.

<sup>114</sup> Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 98-9.

whereas women were more concerned with maintaining peace and were, therefore, more supportive of the Prime Minister.<sup>115</sup>

On 29 September Neville Chamberlain and Adolf Hitler met again – along with French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier and Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini – at Munich. The Conference lasted thirteen hours and resulted in the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Czechs in the Sudetenland would have to leave by 1 October and the German occupation, beginning the same day, would be complete by 10 October. The final territorial boundaries were to be decided by an International Control Commission. The four powers signed the agreement on 30 September and the Czechs, without a representative at the conference, reluctantly signed later that day.<sup>116</sup> Before flying back to London, Chamberlain met privately with Hitler and signed another document that stated:

We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement [of 1935] as symbolic of the desire for our two peoples never to go to war again. We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus contribute to assure the peace of Europe.<sup>117</sup>

It was this piece of paper that Chamberlain waved as he stepped out of the plane in London. Cheering crowds greeted him at the airport, along his route to Buckingham Place and outside its balcony, and all the way to 10 Downing Street. That evening, from

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<sup>115</sup> An additional 10% held mixed or sceptical reactions and 26% did not know or would not say how they felt. *Ibid.*, 100.

<sup>116</sup> Beneš resigned as President of Czechoslovakia on 5 October 1938 and was replaced by Emil Hacha. Maurice Baumont, *The Origins of the Second World War*, trans. Simone de Couvereur Ferguson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1978), 265; Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 377; Krabe, ed, *Voices From Britain*, 14; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 179-80; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 67; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 148.

<sup>117</sup> The document was prepared in advance by Chamberlain and Horace Wilson. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 180.

the window of Number 10, Chamberlain said the instantly iconic and fateful words: “I believe it is peace for our time.”<sup>118</sup>

An outpouring of loyalty and support followed in the immediate aftermath of the Munich Agreement. It was not without qualifications, however. While a large majority of the press was full of praise for the Prime Minister, a few newspapers presented more conditional relief. The *News Chronicle*, for example, “drew attention to the sacrifices made by the Czechs but still rejoiced that peace had been preserved.”<sup>119</sup> Only one newspaper, the *Daily Telegraph*, was outwardly hostile, stating, “It was Mr. Disraeli who said that England’s two great assets in the world were her fleet and her good name. Today we must console ourselves that we still have our fleet.”<sup>120</sup> Mass Observation argued that the largely positive press coverage temporarily created a positive public opinion, as papers were “looked to for social and talk sanction.”<sup>121</sup> Further touching on the importance of the Chamberlain government’s control of the press, Mass Observation continued,

People’s sense of shame about Britain has to be backed up collectively, in order to be positive and recognized [...] By representing pro-Chamberlain as the universally felt sentiment, (when in fact even at its top point he never scored more than 54%), individuals in their homes were temporarily made to feel that being anti-Chamberlain was old, anti-social, or Socialist – until, at work and in the streets, by the third day each

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<sup>118</sup> Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 52-3; Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 381-382; and Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 180. Mass Observation, however, notes that the crowds were not that big with less than 5,000 people gathering at Downing Street and Whitehall. Moreover, they argue, “Thus at this climax in our national history, and although the time of the Premier’s arrival had been announced over the wireless, there turned out under half the number of people that can be counted on for a routine Communist rally in Trafalgar Square (and there are 16,000 members of the Communist Party). Nevertheless next morning the Press arranged photos and headlines which gave the impression of enormous crowds[.]” Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 102-3.

<sup>119</sup> Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 54.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 105. Similar sentiments are echoed by W.W. Hadley, noting, “the free press in this country has never been so nearer to complete unity than the chorus of praise and thanksgiving that followed ... Munich.” According to Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, 83.

had gradually found hundreds of others agreeing in this secret shame. And evidence so far to hand suggests that for the first few days many people *were* secretive about their sentiment, which was often of acute personal discomfort with the whole Czech scheme. Gradually they found that a large number of other individuals shared this point of view, and then felt relief. In its simple form, as expressed by most working-class people, this attitude amounted to the assertion that we had let down the whole tradition of England's pledges for honesty, fair play and resistance to threats.<sup>122</sup>

The press, especially the BBC, was quick to announce the sheer amount – 40,000 to be precise – of letters received at 10 Downing Street. The expressions of gratitude were not limited to letters, and included gifts, scholarships, and even hospital beds in Chamberlain's name from across the world.<sup>123</sup> While the letters were presented as solely positive reinforcement for the Munich Agreement, the public quickly realized they were not. For example, Mass Observation notes a town meeting where “800 letters of protest to the Premier were actually written, paid for and posted by members of the audience.”<sup>124</sup> Moreover, as aptly stated by Daniel Hucker, “Public thankfulness for having avoided war must not be confused with blind faith in appeasement.”<sup>125</sup> The gradual emergence of

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<sup>122</sup> Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 105-6. The initial negative reactions to those who spoke out against Chamberlain in the immediate aftermath of Munich is discussed in diary entries during the Phoney War, particularly in April and May 1940, and will be further detailed in Chapter 4.

<sup>123</sup> The first hospital bed was donated on 3 October 1938. Bernard Docker, Chairman of Westminster Hospital, donated £1,000 “in perpetual remembrance of this victory of peace.” With the Prime Minister's permission, the bed was known as “The Neville Chamberlain Bed” and located in the men's ward of the Westminster Hospital. On 5 October 1938, Sir Edgar Horne donated £1,000 to the Westminster Hospital to create “The Mrs. Neville Chamberlain Bed” and, upon her request, would be located in the women's ward. On 28 October 1938, Mrs Meyer Sassoon donated £1,000 to create the “Neville Chamberlain Bed” in the new St. George's hospital. Finally, on 8 April 1939, the “Chamberlain Bed” was inaugurated in the Lisbon maternity hospital in the presence of the British Ambassador. According to *The Times*, “It was endowed from subscriptions raised by the *Diario de Noticias* in recognition of Mr. Chamberlain's work for peace in 1938.” “Thank Offering To Hospitals,” *The Times* 3 October 1938, 9; “Westminster Hospital,” *The Times* 3 October 1938, 18; “News In Brief,” *The Times* 4 October 1938, 16; “News In Brief,” *The Times* 5 October 1938, 17; “A Mrs Chamberlain Bed,” *The Times* 8 October 1938, 9; “News In Brief,” *The Times* 28 October 1938, 14; and “Various,” *The Times* 8 April 1939, 7. The Times Digital Archive; and Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain*, 54-5; Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, xiii; Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 105-106; and Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 182.

<sup>124</sup> Mass Observation, *Britain*, 105-6.

<sup>125</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 62.

varied opinions in the aftermath of Munich suggests not only the decreasing influence of the Chamberlain government over the press, but that the nation was not fully behind appeasement, and neither was the House of Commons.<sup>126</sup>

On 4 October the House of Commons opened a four-day debate on the Munich Agreement. It was not an enjoyable event for the Prime Minister, who had fallen far from the initial euphoric praise of a few days earlier. The debate opened with the resignation and explanatory speech of Duff Cooper, First Lord of the Admiralty. Although thirty Conservatives joined the attack of the Opposition, Duff Cooper was the only minister to resign his Cabinet post. Many MP's, including Churchill, denounced the Agreement expressing little confidence in peace, as well as worry over Britain's reputation and strategic interests.<sup>127</sup> At the conclusion of the debate, Chamberlain summarized the past four days and offered his defence:

I am told that the policy which I have tried to describe 'of personal contact with the dictators' is inconsistent with the continuance, and much more inconsistent with the acceleration of our present programme of arms. I am asked how I can reconcile an appeal to this country to support the continuance of this programme with the words which I used when I came back from Munich the other day and spoke of my belief that we might have peace for our time. I hope hon. [*sic*] Members will not be disposed to read into words used in a moment of some emotion, after a long and exhausting day, after I had driven through miles of excited, enthusiastic, cheering people – I hope they will not read into those words more than they were intended to convey. I do indeed believe that we may yet secure peace for our time, but I never meant to suggest that we do that by disarmament, until we can induce

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<sup>126</sup> Mass Observation, *Britain*, 107.

<sup>127</sup> Although Duff Cooper was the only MP to resign his Cabinet post in the immediate aftermath of Munich, several other MPs – including Anthony Eden, Lord Swinton, and Thomas Inskip – as well as three Permanent Undersecretaries – Sir Warren Fisher, Sir Maurice Hankey, and Sir Robert Vansittart – resigned in protest over Chamberlain's foreign policy throughout his premiership. Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 383; Krabe, ed, *Voices From Britain*, 14; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 183-4; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 71 and 77; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 5 and 149.

others to disarm, too.<sup>128</sup>

Although it was too late to take back the fateful words that instantly became intricately linked with Chamberlain and the failure of appeasement, he did retain the confidence of the House with a majority of 222. Twenty-two Conservatives, including Churchill, Eden, and Duff Cooper, abstained from voting.<sup>129</sup> After the debate, Mass Observation found, again, a rise in anti-Chamberlain sentiment with thirty-four percent holding negative feelings. Forty percent, however, remained pro-Chamberlain and nine percent were still unsure. These statistics continue to reflect the gendered pattern of predominately male criticism and female sympathy. In mid-October 1938, a few days before their publication of *Britain*, Mass Observation concluded,

Every day since Munich the relief then felt has been declining, the revulsion increasing. Our evidence suggests that the consequences of the Prime Minister's relations with Herr Hitler will affect the whole future of this country, not only in terms of economics, politics and peace, but also within the minds of a great proportion of the community. Innumerable people feel in some vague way that the whole tradition of Britain has been broken.<sup>130</sup>

Less than a week after the initial euphoric reception, a clear spectrum of opinions towards Chamberlain, largely rooted in Munich, is apparent.

Hitler's action for the remainder of 1938 did nothing to help the popularity of Chamberlain's appeasement policy in Britain. On 9 and 10 November the SA (*Sturmabteilung*) attacked Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues, as well as

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<sup>128</sup> Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 184.

<sup>129</sup> The vote was 366 vs 144 in favour of the Prime Minister. Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 149.

<sup>130</sup> Pro-Chamberlain sentiment was held by 40% (13% male and 27% female) of the 83 working-class people surveyed in Metrop. An addition 34% (25% male and 9% female) held anti-Chamberlain feelings, and 9% (3% male and 6% female) were unsure. Harrison and Madge, *Britain*, 236-7 and 242.

arresting, beating, and killing Jews in Germany and Austria.<sup>131</sup> Based on BIPO, Chamberlain's lowest approval and highest dissatisfaction rating of the pre-war period was recorded in November 1938 with forty-eight percent and forty-three percent respectively.<sup>132</sup> These figures were likely influenced by *Kristallnacht* and are supported by the other BIPO findings that seventy-four percent of those surveyed believed that "the persecution of Jews in Germany [was] an obstacle to good understanding between Britain and Germany[.]"<sup>133</sup> Although the British press reacted with disgust towards the Nazi atrocities and Britons felt shock and contempt, *Kristallnacht* would likely have been far more damaging to Chamberlain's reputation had the true extent of it been made public. The full details were not released until October 1939, however, when the Foreign Office issued the White Paper on *The Treatment of German Nationals in Germany*.<sup>134</sup>

### 2.3 Prague: The End of Appeasement?

As 1939 opened, Chamberlain still believed that appeasement was a viable foreign policy and one with popular support. He failed to see the evolution of public opinion against it.<sup>135</sup> But it was only in March 1939 that Chamberlain's approach to foreign policy truly began to unravel. The Czech crisis was renewed on 10 March after the dismissal of the Slovak Prime Minister Jozef Tiso from the Czechoslovakian

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<sup>131</sup> *Kristallnacht* was a response to the death of Ernst vom Rath, secretary at the German embassy in Paris, who died of his gunshot wounds at the hands of Polish Jew on 8 November. Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 189.

<sup>132</sup> A further 9% did not give an opinion. In December, 53% were satisfied with Chamberlain as Prime Minister, 38% were not, and 9% did not give an opinion. In 1939, the following answers were recorded to the question, "Are you satisfied with Mr. Neville Chamberlain as Prime Minister?" January: 52% yes, 42% no, and 6% no opinion. February: 56% yes, 37% no, and 7% no opinion. March: 55% yes, 40% no, and 6% no opinion. April: 57% yes, 36% no, and 7% no opinion. May: 54% yes, 42% no, and 4% no opinion. June: 53% yes, 42% no, and 5% no opinion. No statistics available for July. August: 55% yes, 39% no, and 7% yes. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>133</sup> An additional 16% answered no and 11% did not hold an opinion. Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 83; and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, *Papers Concerning the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany, 1938-1939* (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1939).

<sup>135</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 98.

government following his encouragement of the Slovak independence movement. He appealed to Hitler for help. On 13 March, the Slovaks agreed upon secession from Czechoslovakia. Two days later, in early morning hours, Czech President Emil Hacha met with Hitler and placed Bohemia and Moravia under his protection. German troops occupied Prague within hours of the meeting to “protect” Germans. Although Czech troops were told, by Hacha, not to resist, German troops attacked to “disarm the terrorists gangs” reigning throughout Bohemia and Moravia. Before sunrise, Hacha and Hitler signed an agreement making Bohemia and Moravia a protectorate of the Third Reich. With Slovakia’s independence, Czechoslovakia no longer existed.<sup>136</sup> Hitler had completely disregarded the Munich Agreement and Chamberlain, simply, did nothing about it.<sup>137</sup> Britons, however, condemned the invasion. Even pro-appeasement newspapers in Britain denounced the Nazis’ action and blatant disregard for the Munich Agreement. While this hardening of opinion towards dictators and appeasement as a foreign policy had been increasing since Munich, it was only following the occupation of Prague that the government as a whole began to notice the shift of popular opinion and the need for a firmer foreign policy.<sup>138</sup> Therefore, it was Prague, not Munich, which was the most detrimental to Chamberlain’s reputation in eyes of his contemporaries.

Chamberlain’s initial reaction to the German annexation of Bohemia and Moravia in the House of Commons on 15 March, stating that Britain should not be deflected from her course of appeasement, was not well received. The press began calling for the government to stiffen its resolve and some, including the *Daily Mirror*, called “for a

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<sup>136</sup> Baumont, *The Origins of the Second World War*, 270-3.

<sup>137</sup> Feiling, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, 393-400; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 197-214; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, 85-7; and Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 149.

<sup>138</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 126-31.

thorough reconstruction of the government.”<sup>139</sup> Two days later, speaking to the Birmingham Conservative Association, he took a more resolute – but still vague – stance: “no greater mistake could ever be made than to suppose that, because [Britain] believes war to be a senseless and cruel thing, this nation has so lost its fibre that it will not take part to the utmost of its power in resisting such a challenge if it ever were made.”<sup>140</sup> Britons’ eyes had been opened, however, to the futility of appeasement with Nazi Germany. While “the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the annexation of Austria, [and] the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans” could be justified because of the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles and the right to self-determination, Hitler had now made his intentions clear: German domination.<sup>141</sup> On 31 March in the House of Commons, Chamberlain took a firm stand. He issued a guarantee of independence to Poland, and subsequently to Romania and Greece on 13 April. By the end of April, for the first time in history, conscription was introduced in peacetime Britain in response to the deficiencies exposed the previous September at Munich.<sup>142</sup> All of this was welcomed. In April 1939, BIPO found that seventy-three percent of those surveyed thought the government was right to give “military guarantees to preserve the independence of small European nations.”<sup>143</sup> At the same time, forty-seven percent believed that “compulsory national service [should] be enforced immediately,” whereas forty-five percent

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<sup>139</sup> Cockett, *Twilight of Truth*, 107.

<sup>140</sup> Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 200-3.

<sup>141</sup> Baumont, 274.

<sup>142</sup> Charman, *Outbreak 1939*, 25; Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 126-31; and Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: April 1939,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/resources/chronology/apr39.aspx>. (accessed 25 May 2014).

<sup>143</sup> An additional 15% did not agree with the military guarantees and 13% held no opinion. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

disagreed.<sup>144</sup> By May fifty-seven percent of those surveyed approved of conscription compared to thirty-eight percent who thought it should have remained voluntary.<sup>145</sup> Chamberlain's satisfaction ratings do not appear to have been affected by the German occupation of Prague and, thus, the failure of his appeasement policy. It is more likely, however, that the negative feelings over Prague were offset by the guarantee to Poland and more resolute foreign policy, including the introduction of conscription, in the following weeks.

As part of a firmer foreign policy in the aftermath of the invasion of Bohemia and Moravia, Britons – including members of the government – began to look towards a 'Grand Alliance' with the Soviet Union and France. Despite the widespread distrust of Communism in Britain, an alliance with the Soviets was viewed as a way to avoid war and increase strength against dictators.<sup>146</sup> Already in January 1939, BIPO found seventy-four percent of those surveyed would choose Communism over Fascism, if they had to.<sup>147</sup> In March, BIPO found eighty-six percent wanted Britain to be friendlier with the Soviet Union.<sup>148</sup> Similar statistics occur in April when eighty-seven percent were in favour of military alliance between Britain, France, and the Soviet Union.<sup>149</sup> In spite of Italy's invasion of Albania on 7 April and the signing of the Pact of Steel between Italy and Germany on 22 May, several factors still hampered an Anglo-Soviet pact, particularly Poland's unwillingness to work with the Soviets and Chamberlain's continued reluctance. By June, the Prime Minister caved to British press and public opinion, as well as French

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<sup>144</sup> An additional 6% did not hold an opinion. Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> An additional 4% did not hold an opinion. Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 147-51.

<sup>147</sup> The remaining 26% chose Fascism. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>148</sup> An additional 7.5% did not want "to see Great Britain and Soviet Russia being more friendly to each other[.]" and 6% did not give an opinion. Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> An additional 7% did not favour a military alliance and 6% did not give an opinion. Ibid.

pressure, only to find the Soviets inflexible in their demands.<sup>150</sup> British public opinion soon turned against an alliance and in June BIPO found those in favour of a military alliance had dropped to eighty-three percent.<sup>151</sup> By August, with British and German representatives in Russia trying to secure pacts, only fifty-one percent of those surveyed believed Britain was doing her best to secure an alliance.<sup>152</sup> On 23 August 1939 an agreement was signed, but not involving Britain. It was a non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union. A new crisis had begun.

In Britain, the crisis started with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact on 23 August and peaked with the German invasion of Poland in the early morning of 1 September.

Mass Observation found that:

In these anxious days, regular cross-sections showed that still for every one person who said there would be war, two said there would not, and this feeling was stronger in the provinces than in London. On August 31, 18% admitted that they expected war, as compared with 34% who expected it after the Eden crisis in 1938.<sup>153</sup>

In August, BIPO found seventy-six percent of those polled believed Britain should fulfil its pledge to Poland in the event of an invasion.<sup>154</sup> Mass Observation figures from 1 September reflect the change of opinions following the invasion with forty-three percent responding they “would rather get it over with” when asked if they would be pleased if war broke out. It is important to note that contrary to usual times of crisis, there was no gendered imbalance in wanting war because “patience and nerves were becoming

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<sup>150</sup> Hucker, *Public Opinion*, 163-4, 196, 202-12 and 218.

<sup>151</sup> An additional 10% did not favour a military alliance and 6% did not give an opinion. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 30 and 35.

<sup>154</sup> An additional 14% said no and 10% said they did not know. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

exhausted.”<sup>155</sup> The most frequently heard comments by observers were “Let’s get started” and “Let us strike and get right into Germany.” After all, for many Britons the nervous tension had begun nearly a year earlier. In addition, seven percent thought “we mustn’t give in to Hitler under any circumstances,” five percent believed “that it was not true under present conditions anything was better than war,” two percent were “glad,” and nine percent “didn’t know what to think[.]” Thirty-four percent, however, said “anything was better than war[.]”<sup>156</sup>

From the beginning of the Sudeten crisis in September 1938 to the outbreak of war a year later, Chamberlain’s reputation was anything but static. It peaked around Berchtesgaden but quickly plummeted before his second meeting with Hitler at Godesberg. Public opinion continued to harden during that meeting, with Halifax warning Chamberlain that the British people were reaching their limits of concession. Following the near outbreak of war, and the sheer unpreparedness of the British home front, Chamberlain’s popularity soared to an all-time high with news of his third visit to Germany. Although he was greeted with praise, admiration, and relief upon his return from Munich, these sentiments began to decline as quickly as they had appeared. The popularity of appeasement decreased steadily until the occupation of Prague in March 1939 proved it to be an ultimate failure. The public, press, and members of the government alike began to demand a firmer stance in foreign policy. This pushed Chamberlain into guaranteeing Polish, Romanian, and Greek independence and reluctantly pursuing an alliance with the Soviet Union. Perceptions of Chamberlain were more positive when he displayed strength in his foreign policy: flying to Berchtesgaden

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<sup>155</sup> Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 35.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

to negotiate with Hitler, securing peace for an unprepared Britain at Munich, and issuing a guarantee of Polish independence. The surge in Chamberlain's reputation following these shows of determination – a demonstration of continued British strength on the world stage – was never unanimously popular, however, or enduring. Overall, feelings towards Chamberlain and the Munich Agreement never remained static. There were always dissenting voices that rose and fell, but gradually gained strength. The occupation of Prague ensured that the praising voices would never be in a true majority again, regardless of outward expressions of traditional British support for their Prime Minister during crisis or wartime.

Whether it was because of unrelenting public – and Cabinet – demands to avoid a second Munich or Chamberlain's firmer foreign policy, Britain entered the Second World War to honour her pledge to Poland. Despite Chamberlain's best efforts to preserve peace, his policy of appeasement was a failure. But it is not the moment of definitive failure – the occupation of Prague – that has become synonymous with Chamberlain's ineffectual legacy but his appeasement policy epitomized by Munich. Briefly Britain's greatest hero, Chamberlain quickly and increasingly became one of her biggest embarrassments. In many ways, he personified the nation's decline: a weak figure unable to assert a once great authority on the world stage. Even before the outbreak of war, Neville Chamberlain's reputation was already haunted by his once greatest achievement.

### **Chapter 3    Leading The ‘Strangest of Wars’: September to December 1939**

On 3 September 1939 at 11:15 in the morning, Neville Chamberlain announced to his fellow Britons, “This country is at war with Germany.” These words became instantly iconic. At the time, they relieved the rising tension of the unknown within Britain, officially signalled the start of World War Two in the West, and the admission of failure and regret that followed in the broadcast would forever remain a part of Chamberlain’s legacy. A year earlier he had been a national, and even international, hero when he declared “peace for our time” following the Munich Conference. But the events that took place in between had a detrimental impact on his reputation. For many diarists, appeasement took on negative connotations that affected their opinions of Chamberlain for the duration of his premiership. While others appreciated his efforts and reflected favourably, Britain still entered the war with a multiplicity of opinions – both between and within class, gender, and regional lines – towards their Prime Minister, and everything else for that matter. The eight months of anti-climactic inactivity that followed – known as the Phoney War – culminated in the demand for a new a leader, untainted by appeasement and ready to wage a real war, and served to further damage Chamberlain’s reputation.

#### **3.1    3 September 1939: Declaration of War**

Following wireless announcements throughout the morning asking listeners to stay tuned for an important announcement from the Prime Minister, Chamberlain spoke at 11:15 a.m.<sup>157</sup> He began:

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<sup>157</sup> Diarists mention multiple wireless announcements throughout the morning asking listeners to stay tuned for an important announcement from the Prime Minister at 11 a.m. All entries from 3 September 1939: James Austen diary (5012); A.W. Dickinson diary (5058); V.M. Fromm diary (5073); Kenneth Gee diary

This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin handed the German Government a final note stating that, unless we heard from them by 11 o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has been received, and that consequently this country is at war with Germany.<sup>158</sup>

Mass Observation diaries display a spectrum of responses to the new state of war, the broadcast, and the Prime Minister. Approximately two-thirds of the diarists I analysed made entries in September but a majority – seventy percent of men and forty-seven percent of women – made no comment on their feelings towards the new state of war. The remaining diarists varied in their opinions: out of fifty-two recorded reactions (twenty-one men and thirty-one women) only seven diarists (four men and three women) had positive feelings while twenty (six men and fourteen women) held negative opinions, and twenty-five (eleven men and fourteen women) were neutral in their thoughts.<sup>159</sup>

All of the comparatively positive opinions reflected – and some directly referred to – the relief of tensions as a result of the declaration of war. For example, Mr. H.B. Vanstone of Cheshire commented, “much relieved at ending of apprehension and anxiety

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(5080); R.D. Gray diary (5086); Leonard Grugeon diary (5090); A. Hewes diary (5107); Brian S. Inglis diary (5118); R. Manser diary (5141); David Irvine Masson diary (5145); Robert J. Nichols diary (5163); H.B. Vanstone diary (5217); E. Webb diary (5224); Joseph Welbank diary (5228); S.F. Wells diary (5229); E.J. Ausden diary (5240); Muriel Friend diary (5313); Elizabeth Hill diary (5332); M. Kornitzer diary (5349); Daidie Penn diary (5396); M.A. Pratt diary (5402); Nancy Satterthwaite diary (5419); and Doreen Whiteman diary (5458), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>158</sup> Neville Chamberlain, “The Transcript of Neville Chamberlain’s Declaration of War,” in the BBC Archive, copyright 2014, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/ww2outbreak/7957.shtml?page=txt>. (accessed 1 May 2014).

<sup>159</sup> This analysis is based on 185 diaries available on the Mass Observation Archive for the period of August 1939 to May 1940. In September 69/101 (68%) men and 58/84 (69%) women made diary entries. Of the diarists for September 48/69 (70%) men and 27/58 (47%) women made no comment on their feelings about the declaration of war. Of those who recorded an opinion (21 men and 31 women; 52 total): 7/52 (13%) held a positive opinion (4/21 (19%) men and 3/31 (10%) women), 20/52 (38%) felt negatively (6/21 (29%) men and 14/31 (45%) women), and 25/52 displayed relative neutrality (11/21 (52%) men and 13/31 (42%) women). Mass Observation, August 1939 – May 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

of last weeks.”<sup>160</sup> Other diarists display relief that war had been declared because it seemed like an inevitability, as well as the right thing to do. Mr. E.A. Stebbing of Essex, for example, noted, “The declaration of war is received calmly for the most part. I feel rather glad that we are going to get it over with. It would have had to come some time. Mr. Churchill’s statement that ‘in our hearts this Sunday morning there is peace’ is true for me at any rate.”<sup>161</sup> Miss M. Bell of Cambridge on the other hand commented on her simultaneous relief and apprehension: “Felt quite calm till the 11.15 announcement of war. Thankful it’d begun if it had to, but promptly began listening for bomb. Felt sick all through church at 11.30.”<sup>162</sup> On the opposite side of the spectrum of positive reactions were two women not old enough to remember the First World War. Furthermore, they potentially reflected the reality for many Britons that invasion and a home front war was incomprehensible because Britain had not been invaded for hundreds of years and only briefly sustained aerial attack at the end of the First World War. Ms. Doreen Whiteman of Southampton observed, “At 10 we heard the news on the radio. No-one seemed to be in any doubt as to what [we] should here [*sic*] at 11.15. I had a strange feeling of relief almost elation. This continued after Chamberlain’s speech declaring war.”<sup>163</sup> Comparably, on 4 September Mrs J. McDougall of Surrey reflected, “War is not so bad. In fact, though I am horrified to admit it, just at the beginning like this, it is rather exciting.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> H.B. Vanstone diary, 3 September 1939 (5217). Similar statements in: M. Walton diary, 3 September 1939 (5220); and W.H. Sayer diary, 3 September 1939 (5190), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>161</sup> E.A. Stebbing diary, 3 September 1939 (5205), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>162</sup> M. Bell diary, 3 September 1939 (5249), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>163</sup> Doreen Whiteman diary, 3 September 1939 (5458), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>164</sup> J. McDougall diary, 4 September 1939 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

More diarists had a negative reaction to the outbreak of hostilities on an otherwise beautiful September morning.<sup>165</sup> Despite a large percentage of women feeling pessimistic about the war, there are no notable differences in the gendered qualifications of opinions. One male and one female diarist, for example, believed war could have been prevented and blamed Chamberlain for not doing enough. Mr. R.C. Amsden of Sussex thought the Prime Minister allowed war to break out for financial profit, commenting:

Chamberlain says he's done everything to prevent it, & that nothing could have stopped it. Have not yet heard of a single thing he has done to prevent it, whereas there never was the remotest reason why he shouldn't have made it impossible years ago, if it had paid him to. I should think Nettlesfold's will be turning out a pretty dividend to Chamberlain – the principle [*sic*] share holder – in a few months now. Yes, he's a business man all right, even if he's not a statesman.<sup>166</sup>

Comparably, Miss Moira Carr of Hampshire noted:

When I came up to dinner I'm told that we are at war & Chamberlain has spoken. I'm glad I missed him. I don't want to hear him say ' & God knows I have done my best.' I don't believe it. He could have secured Russian co-operation. And I don't want to hear the King tonight either. Sacrifice. Pull together. Justice. I'm willing to fight fascism if necessary (& if we've treated Russia decently it wouldn't be necessary) but I feel tricked somehow.<sup>167</sup>

Miss Marjory Davis of Kent also felt tricked: “Felt there must be many people, like myself, who have a sneaking feeling that war is unjustifiable, otherwise there would not be so much propaganda (introduce by Pomp and Circumstance and faded out by God

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<sup>165</sup> Several diarists made references to the beautiful weather, and some contrast it with the ugly reality of war. Mr. Denis Argent of Essex, for example, noted, “a beautiful Sunday morning: blue sky, white clouds, green & beautiful garden.” Denis Argent diary, 3 September 1939 (5010). Miss Audrey Neck of Surrey recalled, “I looked up at the lovely blue sky, and thought what a sin to start war on such a beautiful day.” Audrey Neck diary, 3 September 1939 (5383). Similar comments found in: A.W. Dickinson diary, 3 September 1939 (5058); K.J. Marsden diary, 3 September 1939 (5143); and E. Webb diary, 3 September 1939 (5224), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>166</sup> R.C. Amsden diary, 3 September 1939 (5007), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>167</sup> Moira Carr diary, 3 September 1939 (5269), Mass Observation Archive.

Save the King played with tremendous vigour[.]”<sup>168</sup> A majority of the female diarists simply held negative opinions about Britain’s declaration of war, including Ms. G.H. Langford of London who held no appreciation of patriotic cheers for leaders, stating, “I am disgusted with mankind. They cheer for Edward VIII or George VI, Chamberlain or Churchill, War or Peace, as instructed. The old men are the most belligerent, it is as though they wanted to sacrifice their sons.”<sup>169</sup>

Predictably, self-identified pacifists held negative opinions about the declaration of war. Their reactions were no more substantial or negative than the other diarists, however. Mr. A.E. Tomlinson of Petersborough, for example, concisely stated, “Heard ‘the worst’, at 11-15 a.m.”<sup>170</sup> Mr. John Howard of Hampshire found some comfort in the relief of the mounting tension, reflecting, “I was impressed by the gravity of the announcement and felt a great weight of oppression, but that was tempered somewhat by the dreary weeks that had preceded it.”<sup>171</sup> Mr. Denis Argent of Essex expressed a multiplicity of feelings, stating:

[F]eeling rather analytical about whole historic occasion; I’d never imagined I’d listen to news we are at war in such circumstances; it seemed rather ridiculous, comic, incongruous (not ‘fantastic, horrible’ as Chamberlain said in Wed[nesday] night speech last Sept! [*sic*]) [that] on a beautiful Sunday morning; blue sky, white clouds, green & beautiful garden, we should be having the war cloud [...] we’ve so long regarded as ‘final horror’ coming down on us.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Marjory Davis diary, 3 September 1939 (5295), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>169</sup> G.H. Langford diary, 3 September 1939 (5350), Mass Observation Archive. The other diarists who simply held negative reactions to Britain’s declaration of war (all entries from 3 September 1939): D. Briton Lee diary (5262); Barbara Hale-Hall diary (5322); Judith Hall diary (5324); Hilda Hodges diary (5336); Eleanor Humphries diary (5342); Audrey Neck diary (5383); and Joan Ridge diary (5406), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>170</sup> A.E. Tomlinson diary, 3 September 1939 (5215), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>171</sup> John Howard diary, 3 September 1939 (5111), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>172</sup> Denis Argent diary, 3 September 1939 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

Similarly, Mrs Rina Knight of Yorkshire, whose husband was a Conscientious Objector (CO) and likely influenced her views, felt that it was incomprehensible, stating, “Although we had been expecting the news we felt stupefied. None of us wanted any dinner.”<sup>173</sup> Ardent and the Knights were not alone in their bewilderment; other non-pacifist diarists expressed similar sentiments. Mr. F.R. Harris of London, for example, “[F]elt very shocked when declaration of war was made today. Could not seem to realize the worst had come. Felt a nasty inward fear when air-raid warning went just after Chamberlain’s speech, but tried to hide it because of wife. I was trembling somewhat. Just sat still waiting for something to happen.”<sup>174</sup> Comparably, Miss M.A. Pratt of London mused, “Don’t feel that I can write anything at all about the day. My mind seems to be suffering from an inability to digest this enormity which confronts it. Even if we got what we are fighting for – the status quo, apparently – could anything be worth the suffering?”<sup>175</sup>

The relief from uncertainty was also present in the otherwise negative feelings about the war. Mr. J.J. Kipling of Bradford cut succinctly to the heart of the matter, stating, “To me the announcement was in the nature of a relief. I was not glad that war had broken out (exactly the reverse) but at last there was certainty in the big things: the sickening doubt was over.”<sup>176</sup> Mrs Ursula May MacPherson of Cambridge echoed similar sentiments while describing her fears: “Well, it is War! I feel it must all be some horrible nightmare from which I shall presently awake. I suppose it had to be. We could not go on with the fear of war over our heads indefinitely, which is what giving into

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<sup>173</sup> Rina Knight diary, 3 September 1939 (5348), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>174</sup> F.R. Harris diary, 3 September 1939 (5101), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>175</sup> M.A. Pratt diary, 3 September 1939 (5402), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>176</sup> J.J. Kipling diary, 3 September 1939 (5126), Mass Observation Archive.

Hitler's demands would mean."<sup>177</sup> Although Miss N. Jung of Southampton stated, "Declaration of war does not seem to worry any one[,] they feel that there has been a war so far for several days[,] [T]his is only official news." She felt differently, continuing, "I disagree until war was declared there was always hope."<sup>178</sup>

The majority of Mass Observation diarists who comment on the outbreak of hostilities were neutral in their feelings. Most of these diarists merely mentioned that war had been declared.<sup>179</sup> Other diarists were simply glad to know either way, such as Mr. Paul Farnell of Birmingham: "Now we know. We heard the Prime Minister at 11.15. At least the suspense is over."<sup>180</sup> Similarly and consistent with the positive and negative reactions of other diarists, the neutral responses also expressed the ease of tensions. Mr. Joseph Welbank of Birmingham succinctly noted, "At eleven fifteen we knew. It was a relief to know 'officially'."<sup>181</sup> Similarly, Mr. Kenneth Gee of London reported, "It was at once worse and better than the last few days of the crisis had been: a kind of perverted relief."<sup>182</sup> Miss M. Kornizter also of London, in addition to noting her relief, extended the crisis tension back to September 1938, stating, "I could not take it in that we were actually at war. It seemed incredible. But I did not doubt that war was necessary. Most

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<sup>177</sup> Ursula May MacPherson diary, 3 September 1939 (5366), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>178</sup> N. Jung diary, 3 September 1939 (5345), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>179</sup> All entries from 3 September 1939: B. Cross diary (5291); Edith Dawson diary (5296), Marjorie Dewsbury diary (5300); and Alice M. Franklin diary (5312), Mass Observation Archive. Other straightforward notes on the declaration of war: James Austin diary (5012); J.A. Roberts diary (5185); E. Van Someren diary (5216); K. Watts diary (5223); E. Webb diary (5224); T.J. Williams diary (5231); Marial Bennett diary (5250); Muriel Friend diary (5313); M.J. Hill diary (5333); T.M. Hope diary (5340); C.H. Miller diary (5376); Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary (5382); and Jean Tayler diary (5439), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>180</sup> Paul Farnell diary, 3 September 1939 (5064). Similar sentiments in: O.E. Cockett diary, 3 September 1939 (5278), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>181</sup> Joseph Welbank diary, 3 September 1939 (5228), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>182</sup> Kenneth Gee diary, 3 September 1939 (5080), Mass Observation Archive.

people spoken to expressed similar feelings: that life had hardly been worth living for the past year, & ‘it’ had better come now. A sort of relief.”<sup>183</sup>

### 3.2 Chamberlain’s Declaration of War and Admission of Failure

Diarists also reacted diversely to Chamberlain’s broadcast. Although a majority of the entries – sixty-five percent of males and fifty-four percent of females – reference Chamberlain’s broadcast, a substantial amount only stated that they listened.<sup>184</sup> The remainder of the diarists elaborated on their thoughts about the speech, and many also revealed their opinions of Chamberlain.<sup>185</sup> While the diarists continued to display a multiplicity of reactions, there is also spectrum within both the positive and negative comments. For example, several diarists kept their sentiments short and sweet, including Mr. D.E. Marmion of Surrey stating, “Very fine speech,” and Mrs. Daidie Penn of Cornwall noting, “the prime minister [*sic*] had made his affectingly simple statement.”<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> M. Kornitzer diary, 3 September 1939 (5349), Mass Observation Archive. Other diarists that comment on the relief of tension as a result of the declaration of war: K.J. Marsden diary, 3 September 1939 (5143); and G.H. Warrack diary, 3 September 1939 (5456), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>184</sup> In September 44/68 (65%) men and 32/59 (54%) women mention Chamberlain’s speech on 3 September 1939. Simply stated they listened (all entries from 3 September 1939): A.S.E. Ackermann diary (5002); James Austin diary (5012); Fred Brown diary (5035); A.F. Coles diary (5039.9); Alan Davie diary (5054); A.W. Dickinson diary (5058); L.R. England diary (5061.1); Paul Farnell diary (5064); V.M. Fromm diary (5073); Kenneth Gee diary (5080); R.D. Gray diary (5086); M.M. Gundry diary (5092); F.R. Harris diary (5101); Jackman diary (5120); J.J. Kipling diary (5126); Harold Lowcock diary (5133); R. McIssac diary (5138); K.J. Marsden diary (5143); David Irvine Masson diary (5145); Robert J. Nichols diary (5163); P.F. Petheridge diary (5170); C.C. Rew diary (5180); A.H. Ridge diary (5182); W.H. Sayer diary (5190); G.W. Shipway diary (5199); R. South diary (5204); John Thornley diary (5212); H.B. Vanstone diary (5217); K. Watts diary (5223); M. Bell diary (5249); Marial Bennett diary (5250); O.E. Cockett diary (5278); B. Cross diary (5291); Elisabeth Crowfoot diary (5292); Muriel Friend diary (5313); Elizabeth Hill diary (5332); Hilda Hodges diary (5336); T.M. Hope diary (5340); Eleanor Humphries diary (5342); B. McAnnally diary (5362); J. McDougall diary (5363); Valentine Pearson diary (5395); Joan Ridge diary (5406); L. Evelyn Saunders diary (5420); Margaret D. Saunders diary (5422); and Doreen Whiteman diary (5458). Mass Observation Archive, September 1939 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>185</sup> 15/44 (34%) men and 15/31 (48%) women further elaborate on their opinions about Chamberlain’s broadcast. Overall, there is an equal representation of men and women who detail their feelings: 22% (15/69) of males and 26% (15/58) of females. An additional 8/69 (12%) men and 12/58 (21%) women note war was declared without referencing broadcast. *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> D.E. Marmion diary, 3 September 1939 (5142); and Daidie Penn diary, 3 September 1939 (5396), Mass Observation Archive. In addition, H.B. Vanstone stated, “at 11-15 heard the Prime Minister’s fine speech[.]” H.B. Vanstone diary, diary, 3 September 1939 (5217), Mass Observation Archive.

Mr. S.F. Wells of Cambridgeshire and Mr. C. Wooster of London listened to the broadcast with their families and likewise reflected, “All agree that is very well phrased[,]” and “All think very good.”<sup>187</sup> Mr. A. Hewes of Bradford developed his thoughts further: “all deeply moved by his speech and were convinced he tried for peace.”<sup>188</sup> Other diarists, however, qualified their praise. For example, Miss Irene Anderton Naylor of London stated, “For about the first time, I feel in agreement with the greater part of what Chamberlain says.”<sup>189</sup> Miss Adelaide R. Poole of Sussex similarly reflected, “I heard the record of Mr Chamberlain’s speech, and felt more in tune with him than at any time since he let Mr Eden go, but fully agreed later with the Labor [*sic*] leader in Parliament, who also said they had been afraid of more concessions to Hitler.”<sup>190</sup> Miss C.H. Miller also of Sussex further qualified her praises, remarking, “11.15. Prime Minister speaking, for him well & he is sincere but I cannot agree with his past policy. I knew it was war but it is a shock for all to hear it.”<sup>191</sup> The fear of a second Munich haunted Chamberlain’s reputation throughout the remainder of his premiership.

Critics of the speech show similar diversity. Mrs M.C. Towler of Yorkshire kept it simple, stating, “thought it was a poor show.”<sup>192</sup> Marjory Davis thought “Arthur Greenwood and Sinclair [were] [b]oth considerably more impressive to me than the Prime Minister or the King.”<sup>193</sup> Mr. M. Walton of County Durham expressed numerous misgivings, commenting, “This morning’s announcement of war seemed to me peculiar in its presentation. Chamberlain we thought almost casual. His perfunctory calling of the

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<sup>187</sup> S.F. Wells diary, 3 September 1939 (5229); and C. Wooster diary, 3 September 1939 (5237), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>188</sup> A. Hewes diary, 3 September 1939 (5107), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>189</sup> Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 3 September 1939 (5382), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>190</sup> Adelaide R. Poole diary, 3 September 1939 (5399), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>191</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 3 September 1939 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>192</sup> M.C. Towler diary, 3 September 1939 (5445), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>193</sup> Marjory Davis diary, 3 September 1939 (5295), Mass Observation Archive.

blessing of God seemed to ring false [...] His whole tone seemed wrong. The whole effect seemed unintended to arouse rather than allay fears.”<sup>194</sup> Similarly, and touching on a criticism that would become central to Chamberlain’s image, Mr. Leonard Grugeon of Wiltshire stated, “At 11-15 a.m. Chamberlain broadcast from Downing Street, a rather pathetic speech which did nothing to hearten one’s spirits.”<sup>195</sup>

Chamberlain’s declaration of war was not considered a morale-boosting speech primarily because of the Prime Minister’s admission of failure. He continued in the 3 September broadcast, “You can imagine what a bitter blow it is to me that all my long struggle to win peace has failed. Yet I cannot believe that there is anything more or anything different that I could have done and that would have been more successful.” In highlighting his personal failure that consequently led Britain to war, he contributed substantially to perceptions of himself as weak and ineffectual, and to the subsequent understanding of the Munich Conference. After discussing the events in Poland, in an attempt to rally his fellow countrymen, he continued,

We have a clear conscience. We have done all that any country could do to establish peace. The situation in which no word given by Germany’s ruler could be trusted and no people or country could feel themselves safe has become intolerable. And now that we have resolved to finish it, I know you will all play you part with calmness and courage.

A majority of the detailed diary entries commented on this admission of failure by expressing sympathy or criticism, and sometimes both. In doing so, they reveal contemporary public perceptions of Chamberlain at the outbreak of war.

Diarists’ reactions to the declaration of war and succinct appraisals of the Prime Minister’s broadcasts have been generally equitable across gender and regional lines.

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<sup>194</sup> M. Walton diary, 3 September 1939 (5220), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>195</sup> Leonard Grugeon diary, 3 September 1939 (5090), Mass Observation Archive.

Female diarists, however, displayed proportionately more sympathy towards Chamberlain and his efforts. Mrs Gweneth E. Dean of Portsmouth, for example, reflected, “England is at war with Germany! I felt intense sympathy for Mr. Chamberlain. I am convinced the man has genuinely worked with his whole heart for the cause of peace & no one could have a finer mission than that.”<sup>196</sup> The only male to directly express sympathy for Chamberlain, Mr. Arthur Collins of Sheffield, does so by comparing his ideals with those of the Prime Minister: “So its [*sic*] here at last. Poor old Chamberlain. What a rotten position. I am a mild mannered person myself & realize once again that the peacemaker is not popular & is not listened to.”<sup>197</sup> Other diarists expressed their compassion in a qualified manner, such as Miss Alice M. Franklin of Chester: “I dont [*sic*] agree with Mr Chamberlain or his methods, but I know he has been sincere in his efforts & I was heart-sorry for him this morning, when at 11.15 he broadcast the dreadful news – that his efforts had failed & that we were at war with Germany.”<sup>198</sup> Doreen Whiteman believed the speech highlighted his age: “I thought he showed all his age in the speech[, he] sounded almost weary & much more human than usual. Style was less prosy. I felt almost sorry for him.”<sup>199</sup> The Prime Minister’s age becomes a consistent, but not dominant, factor in negative perceptions of him throughout the Phoney War, and afterwards.

Chamberlain’s admission of failure sparked condemnation of his ability, interests, and ego, and reinforced an image of weakness that continues to haunt him. Mr. R. Manser of Kent noted that although “many people said ‘Bless Him’ or ‘I do feel sorry for

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<sup>196</sup> Gweneth E. Dean diary, 3 September 1939 (5297). Similar sentiments echoed in: Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 3 September 1939 (5419), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>197</sup> Arthur Collins diary, 3 September 1939 (5039.1), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>198</sup> Alice M. Franklin diary, 3 September 1939 (5312), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>199</sup> Doreen Whiteman diary, 3 September 1939 (5458), Mass Observation Archive.

him' or 'Poor Chap' or 'He has tried for peace'[,]" he was more sceptical.<sup>200</sup> Manser identifies himself as a pacifist and questions whether the speech was sincere and if Chamberlain had truly tried for peace.<sup>201</sup> Comparably, Mr. T.J. Williams of Bristol juxtaposed his sympathy with the Prime Minister's ability, remarking, "He claims to have done everything possible for peace, and I suppose, he has, within his limits. He's not evil, just incapable of any large imagination or foresight. He's not directing events, he's just being shoved protestingly [*sic*] about."<sup>202</sup> Diarists were also irked by the self-centred nature of the speech. Joseph Welbank, for example, remarked,

The Prime Minister's speech revealed egotism – 'that all my long struggle to win peace' – flavours of the benevolent dictator with supreme power. A true democrat would surely have used the word 'our'. After all a great number of English people have been trying to get peace apart from Mr. Chamberlain, if only through the medium of prayer.<sup>203</sup>

Similarly, Mrs D. Brinton Lee of London stated, "Mr Chamberlain's 'bitter blow to me' [...] wasn't very helpful. It was a bitter blow to us, and we were far from home and wanted something to put heart in us. However, there wasn't anything[.]"<sup>204</sup> For Mr. A. White of Leeds, the speech followed peacetime tones, stating, "I am afraid it didn't impress me. Chamberlain always seems too sanctimonious for me."<sup>205</sup> In another strand of criticism, Denis Argent believed the speech showed Chamberlain as incapable of waging war: "Chamberlain's piece ('Everything I stood for crashed in ruins', etc)

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<sup>200</sup> R. Manser diary, 3 September 1939 (5141), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> T.J. Williams diary, 3 September 1939 (5231). In addition, the previously discussed entries of R.C. Amsden and Moira Carr also condemn Chamberlain's ability, interests, and ego. R.C. Amsden diary, 3 September 1939 (5007); and Moira Carr diary, 3 September 1939 (5269), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>203</sup> Joseph Welbank diary, 3 September 1939 (5228), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>204</sup> The entry begins: "My feeling was that we were all gathering in the vague hope of getting some kind of instructions and encouragement. We had heard nothing but Hitler and dry and depressing announcements from the B.B.C.[.]" D. Brinton Lee diary, 3 September 1939 (5262), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>205</sup> A. White diary, 3 September 1939 (5230), Mass Observation Archive.

suggested him as a broken man, about to resign & hand over the conduct of war to Churchill or somebody[.]”<sup>206</sup> Moreover, while Mr. E. Webb of Bristol did not record any personal reflections towards the speech, his summary “Chamberlain - - ----- ‘a bitter blow --- cannot believe’ - - - etc. etc.[,.]” reflects the centrality of the admission of failure and guilt of a man, who, less than a year prior, was a national hero.<sup>207</sup>

On the first day of the war that gave rise to the “myth” of the Blitz, it is clear that the dominant part of the myth – the unity – is not present in the private reactions towards the outbreak of hostilities or the Prime Minister. Contrary to existing explanations, the divisions cannot simply be explained by class, gender, or regional differences. The predominantly middle class National Panel demonstrates that there was not only a multiplicity of opinion in a positive and negative sense, but also a spectrum of responses, present within class, gender, and geographic regions. While there was a tendency towards female sympathy and male criticism, there was no difference in the gendered qualifications. Overall, this suggests that contemporary perceptions of Neville Chamberlain are neither supportive of the unitary opinion of the ‘myth’ uncritically applied to the Phoney War nor of the negative perceptions of Chamberlain that have solidified since the 1940 release of *Guilty Men*.<sup>208</sup> Rather, the multifarious attitudes that existed before 3 September 1939 continued to do so at the outbreak of war. While public opinion was affected by numerous, increasing, and fluid factors, the Munich Agreement and Chamberlain’s weakness remain consistent themes.

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<sup>206</sup> Denis Argent diary, 3 September 1939 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>207</sup> E. Webb diary, 3 September 1939 (5224), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>208</sup> Foot, Howard and Owen, *Guilty Men*.

### 3.3 Phoney War Realities: Anti-Climactic Inactivity During The First Four Months of War

Within minutes of the declaration of war, the air raid warnings sounded in London and surrounding areas, and signalled what appeared to be the start of the war all of Britain had been expecting.<sup>209</sup> But their fears never materialized. Instead of immediate mass death and catastrophic destruction caused by aerial bombardment and poisonous gas, Britons settled into a long, boring, and anti-climactic eight months – characterized most aptly in 1939 by the blackout. This created a unique challenge to keep Britons safe and their morale high in the absence of any direct threat but continued wartime restrictions. Moreover, it caused increased apathy towards the government, its policies, and especially the Prime Minister, who many came to blame for the slow pace of the war.

A total of 1,413 civilians were killed and 4,820 were injured by eighteen German air raids that dropped 300 tons of bombs across Britain during the First World War. Based on these statistics, the Air Ministry calculated that in the next war there would be fifty casualties per ton dropped, with an average of seventy-five tons dropped per day in urban areas. The Air Ministry estimated that one-third of the casualties would be fatal. These estimates evolved throughout the interwar period. In the days of crisis that preceded the outbreak of the Second World War, the Air Ministry calculated there would be seventy-two casualties per ton and 3,500 tons of bombs dropped on London within the first twenty-four hours of war, with an additional 700 tons per day for the next sixty days

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<sup>209</sup> Marwick, *The Home Front*, 23. Based on my analysis of the 127 diarists who made entries in September 21 (15/68 males and 6/59 females) described the air raid siren that followed the declaration of war. All entries dated 3 September 1939: A.S.E. Ackermann diary (5002); J.D. Apsland diary (5011); James Austen diary (5012); A.F. Coles diary (5039.9); Harold D. Cowan diary (5042); Alan Davie diary (5054); A.W. Dickinson diary (5058); A.G. Errey diary (5062); V.M. Fromm diary (5073); Kenneth Gee diary (5080); R.D. Gray diary (5086); M.M. Gundry diary (5092); F.R. Harris diary (5101); Jackman diary (5120); Robert J. Nichols diary (5163); E.J. Ausden diary (5240); Marial Bennett diary (5250); O.E. Cockett diary, (5278); Marjory David diary (5295); Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary (5382); and Audrey Neck diary (5383). Mass Observation, September 1939 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

of war. Furthermore, it was anticipated that some of this tonnage would be in the form of poisonous gas. The government expected 600,000 deaths, 1,200,000 physical casualties, and at least 3,000,000 psychological casualties within the first two months of war.<sup>210</sup>

By the beginning of September 1939, forty-four million gas masks had been issued as well as numerous instructional films, leaflets, and posters including “Take Your Gas Mask Everywhere” (1939). When Britain did not immediately fall victim to attack, the visible display of precaution and fear – carrying the gas mask – quickly subsided.<sup>211</sup> Mass Observation observers noticed a drastic decline in the number of people carrying their masks. In London, at Westminster Bridge on 6 September, seventy-one percent of men and seventy-six of women were carrying their gas masks, on 30 October the numbers had dropped to fifty-eight percent of men and fifty-nine percent of women, and by 9 November only twenty-four percent of men and thirty-nine percent of women were still carrying them. More drastic statistics are found in Worktown: on 7 September forty-six percent of men and seventy-one percent of women were carrying their gas masks but by 3 January 1940 only two percent of both men and women still carried them.<sup>212</sup>

As the fear of aerial bombardment quickly subsided, the precautionary blackout restrictions – enforced on 1 September – soon became the biggest complaint of the early

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<sup>210</sup> Estimates were based on the bombing of Barcelona in March 1938 and the progress of the German Luftwaffe. Calder, *The People's War*, 21-22; Chamberlain, *Life In Wartime Britain*, 10-1; and Thorpe, “Britain,” 21.

<sup>211</sup> There was no legal requirement to carry a gas mask, however some work places sent employees home if they did not bring one and some entertainment venues also refused entry to those without their gas mask. Imperial War Museum, “Take your Gas Mask Everywhere,” Copyright 2012. <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/8426> (accessed 3 October 2012).

<sup>212</sup> Full statistics for Worktown: 7 September: 46% of men and 71% of women; 2 November: 6% of men and 24% of women; 9 November: 4% of men and 21% of women; 23 November 6% of men and 9% of women; and 3 January: 2% of men and 2% of women. At both Westminster Bridge and Worktown, younger people were more likely to be carrying their gas mask than older people. At Westminster Bridge, 53% of men and 48% of women over 40 were carrying their gas masks versus 63% of men and 73% of women under 40. In Worktown, 31% of men and 61% of women over 40 were seen with their gas masks versus 58% of men and 86% of women under 40. Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 113 and 115.

war years.<sup>213</sup> Mass Observation explored the effects of the blackout, and other wartime restrictions, on civilian morale in November's War-time Directive. When asked to "Give a list of what you yourself consider the six main inconveniences of war-time on the home front, in order of importance[,]" the responses show that for every hundred mentions of the blackout there were forty-six for transport, forty for food prices, twenty-seven for evacuation, and twenty-six for lack of news.<sup>214</sup> Despite traffic being reduced because of blackout conditions, accidents rose significantly in the first few months of the war. This is not surprising given that no light peeked out from blacked out shops and houses, and torches and car headlights were initially banned. By the end of the first month of war, road accidents and deaths had risen one hundred percent. In September 1939 there were 1,130 accidents compared to 554 road deaths the previous September, and three-quarters occurred during the blackout. These statistics do not include other blackout deaths such as "people who walked into canals, fell down steps, plunged through glass roofs and toppled from railway platforms."<sup>215</sup> The huge increase in accidents and deaths subsequently resulted in a relaxation of restrictions, including masks for car headlights to allow a tiny beam of light pointed directly at the ground to peak through and "heavily

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<sup>213</sup> Blackout conditions were in effect from 1 September 1939 to 17 September 1944; Chamberlain, *Life in Wartime Britain*, 17.

<sup>214</sup> For every hundredth mention of the blackout there was 46 for transport, 40 for prices, 40 for fuel/petrol, 39 for food shortages, 27 for evacuation, 26 for lack of news, and 25 for lack of amusements. Furthermore, approximately 25% of blackout complaints concerned the amount of time it took to blacken homes every night. Only 5% of men and 12% of women believed blackout restrictions had affected their habits 'a lot'. Mass Observation concluded that feelings about the blackout fell into three, often overlapping, categories: "Those who were fed up, depressed, etc.; [t]hose who found the darkness stimulating, because it made things look different; [and] [t]hose who were not strongly affected either way." In addition, crime rates decreased in the first few months of the war: they were lower in the September and October 1939 than in September and October 1938, suggesting a greater unity within Britain. Mass Observation, "File Report 11C: November 1939: War-time Directive No.3," and "File Report 15A: December 1939: War-time Directive No.4," Mass Observation Archive; Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 185, 192-4 and 215; and Chamberlain, *Life in Wartime Britain*, 21.

<sup>215</sup> In October 1938 there were 641 road accident deaths versus 919 in October 1939. Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 216; and Calder, *The People's War*, 63.

shrouded torches.” By the end of 1939, one in five people had sustained some form of injury because of blackout conditions.<sup>216</sup>

### 3.4 Chamberlain and Surprising Vigour: Wartime Speeches in 1939

After months and years of risings fears over immediate and catastrophic aerial bombardment and poisonous gas, the outbreak of war and the remainder of 1939 were anti-climactic. Instead of mass death and destruction, life continued for most with only minor wartime inconveniences. It is therefore unsurprising that apart from such inconveniences war featured relatively little in Britons’ everyday lives and diaries. Consequently, interest in politics and political leaders did not increase, and even diary references to the Prime Minister were few and far between. A majority of the entries occurred around wireless broadcast speeches. In 1939 after the 3 September declaration of war, Chamberlain only made one other broadcast on 26 November. In addition, his 12 October response to Hitler’s 6 October peace proposal in the House of Commons was broadcast on the wireless. It received a moderate amount of attention but the 26 November address to the nation received far more comments and reactions, as well as many more than his subsequent speeches in the winter.<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Marwick, *The Home Front*, 21; and Calder, *The People’s War*, 63.

<sup>217</sup> Chamberlain made almost weekly reviews of the war situation to the House of Commons that were heard, in part, on the wireless and seen in newspapers. In 1939, Chamberlain gave a weekly war review on 7, 13, 20, and 26 September; 3, 18, and 26 October; 2, 12, and 21 November; and 6 December. In *The Times*, announcement of the Prime Minister’s weekly review was found in “Parliamentary Notices” the day before and in “Parliament To-Day” on the day itself. Reviews of Chamberlain’s reports to the Commons are found in: “The Prime Minister Reviews The War,” *The Times*, 8 September 1939, 8; “Mr. Chamberlain On Allied Unity,” *The Times*, 14 September 1939, 8; “House of Commons,” *The Times*, 21 September 1939, 4; “Mr. Chamberlain’s Third Survey,” *The Times*, 21 September 1939, 8; “The Mounting Effort,” *The Times*, 21 September 1939, 9; “House of Commons,” *The Times*, 27 September 1939, 3; “The British Blockade,” *The Times*, 27 September 1939, 8; “Economic War,” *The Times*, 27 September 1939, 8; “House of Commons,” *The Times*, 4 October 1939, 3; “Britain Will Not Yield To Threats,” *The Times*, 4 October 1939, 8; “Responsibility For War,” *The Times*, 4 October 1939, 9; “House Of Commons,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 4; “Mr. Chamberlain’s Reply To Hitler,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 8; “War At Sea And In The Air,” *The Times*, 19 October 1939, 8; “Nazi Threats of Sterner War,” *The Times*, 27 October 1939,

Adolf Hitler speaking to the Reichstag on 6 October announced his peace proposals to the Allies.<sup>218</sup> He suggested three broad and vague terms to ensure European security: First, the

Establishment of complete clarity about the foreign policy of various States of Europe. Germany's conditions were recognition of the non-existence of the Treaty of Versailles and her right to a reasonable share of colonies. [Second,] [r]eorganization of internal trade and reform of currencies. [Third,] [d]isarmament and agreement on the renunciation of various forms of warfare, such as air bombardment, gas, and submarines.<sup>219</sup>

He further suggested a conference to address questions over these proposals, as well as the transfer of populations and division of Poland. Hitler concluded that if Britain and France refused these terms, the destruction caused by a prolonged war would be their fault alone.<sup>220</sup> Britons awaited a reply from their Prime Minister. It was originally scheduled for 11 October but was postponed until the following day.<sup>221</sup> On 12 October, Chamberlain made his much-anticipated response in the House of Commons. He

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8; "Successes By Air And Sea," *The Times*, 27 October 1939, 9; "United Support Of The Empire," *The Times*, 3 November 1939, 8; "Reprisal For Breach Of Sea Law," *The Times*, 22 November 1939, 8; and "The War Surveyed," *The Times*, 7 December 1939, 9. In addition, Chamberlain made a broadcast on 4 September specifically to the German people. "To The German People," *The Times*, 4 September 1939, 8. The Times Digital Archive.

<sup>218</sup> A new "Russo-German Pact" (as named in *The Times*) was reported with little detail on 30 September to include German and Soviet peace proposals to the Allies and the division of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. On 2 October, *The Times* reported that the "Moscow Declaration" had not swayed either public or official Allied opinion. Chamberlain's weekly review to the House of Commons on 3 October did not have any terms to officially respond to but stood firm. He stated – to loud cheers – that the new pact between Germany and the Soviet Union did not alter "Britain's determination to put an end to German aggression[,] nor would threats stop the Allies from completing this purpose. Moreover, "No more promises from the present German Government [...] would be accepted[,] however proposals would be considered. "New Agreement No Surprise," *The Times*, 30 September 1939, 6; "Allies and the Moscow Pact," *The Times*, 2 October 1939, 8; "Parliament To-Day," *The Times*, 2 October 1939, 8; "House of Commons," *The Times*, 4 October 1939, 3; and "Britain Will Not Yield To Threats," *The Times*, 4 October 1939, 3. Hitler's peace proposals: "Hitler's Review In Warsaw," *The Times*, 6 October 1939, 8; and "Hitler's Plan Of Peace For Europe," *The Times*, 7 October 1939, 6. The Times Archive.

<sup>219</sup> "Hitler's Plan Of Peace For Europe," *The Times*, 7 October 1939, 6. The Times Archive.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>221</sup> "Britain and Hitler's Speech," *The Times*, 9 October 1939, 8; "Soviet Drive In The Baltics," *The Times*, 11 October 1939, 8; "A Firm 'No' To Hitler," *The Times*, 11 October 1939, 8; and "Reply To Hitler To-Day," *The Times*, 12 October 1939, 8. The Times Archive.

contrasted the “wanton act of aggression” towards Poland with the peaceful settlement attempted by Britain. Amidst cheers, he asserted that Hitler’s proposals were “based on recognition of his conquests and his right to do as he pleases with the conquered.” Further proclaiming that Britain could not accept these peace proposals “without forfeiting her honour and abandoning her claim that international disputes should be settled by discussion and not by force.” Chamberlain then drew upon the present German government’s “repeated disregard” of their word, including at the Munich Conference, and stated that “acts – not words alone – must be forthcoming before we [...] would be justified in ceasing to wage war to the utmost of our strength.” Moreover, he noted that the Allies were in complete agreement and cited Daladier’s earlier speech. Overall, Chamberlain proclaimed that Britain and her Allies were not trying to exclude Germany from her rightful place in Europe but could not condone aggression as an accepted method of negotiation, and once real peace was established – only threatened by Germany – trade and disarmament could be discussed.<sup>222</sup>

Given the gravity and international significance of the speech, it did not receive much attention in Mass Observation diaries.<sup>223</sup> Only seventeen out of ninety-seven

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<sup>222</sup> “Mr. Chamberlain’s Reply To Hitler,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 8; “Index,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 9; and “Hitler Answered,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 9. The Times Archive.

<sup>223</sup> Chamberlain’s reply to Hitler received extensive international press. *The Times* alone reported the reactions of countries around the world in 16 different articles between 13 and 16 October. The firmness of the speech and overall praise was noted in the American, Allied and Commonwealth, and Balkan (Bulgaria and Yugoslavia) press: “Approval In America,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 8; “British Reply To Hitler,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 7; “Allies’ Terms Of Peace,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 7; “American Views,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8; “Unanimity In France,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8; “Balkans Impressed,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8; “Reactions to British Statement,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8; and “Index,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 9. In addition, the Polish Foreign Minister is noted as impressed with the firmness of the speech: “Polish Foreign Minister,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8. The neutral press also praised the speech, as well as touching on the peace proposals deserved failure: “Peace Depends On Germany,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8; “Failure of ‘Peace Offensive’,” *The Times*, 16 October 1939, 7; and “Turkish Praise Of Mr. Chamberlain,” *The Times*, 16 October 1939, 7. In addition, the Hungarian Press commended the protection for smaller states: “Hungarian Eyes On Russia,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 7. Rome’s reaction was initially neutral and claimed Chamberlain’s response was not as

diarists – ten male and seven female – who made entries in October commented on the speech.<sup>224</sup> Two entries specifically support this observation as they noted that they had not heard anyone discuss the speech.<sup>225</sup> Five diarists concisely noted that the response was as “expected” and an additional four diarists believed the speech would finally start the hostilities.<sup>226</sup> A majority of the reactions to the speech were positive. D.E. Marmion simply thought it was “good”, while Mrs M. Clayton of London further expanded: “Chamberlain’s statement good, better than Daladier’s, I thought. More explicit.”<sup>227</sup> Mr. Brian S. Inglis of Wiltshire confirmed that everyone thought it was “very good” and added, “Give it him hot!”<sup>228</sup> Miss Elizabeth Hill of Northumberland, however, described it as “a [safe] and well judged answer.”<sup>229</sup> On a similar note, Ms. B. Cross of London thought Chamberlain “stood as firm as he could[,]” and Mr. Guy Pidgeon of Blackburn remarked it was “very much stronger than I had expected[.]”<sup>230</sup>

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firm as the British Press stated. A few days later, however, they expressed their disapproval of the speech: “The Next Move With Hitler,” *The Times*, 13 October 1939, 8; and “Rome on Nazi ‘Peace’,” 16 October 1939, 7. Furthermore, there was dissension within Britain. The National Council of the Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction, with Lloyd George speaking to them in a private meeting, described the speech as “inadequate”: “Council Of Action,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 5. Negative reactions to the speech, unsurprisingly, came from Germany where Chamberlain was labeled as a warmonger: “Reactions To British Statement,” *The Times*, 14 October 1939, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>224</sup> Only 17/97 (17.5%) diarists in October made a reference to Chamberlain’s response to Hitler on 6 October. This consisted of 10/54 (18.5%) men and 7/43 (16%) women. Mass Observation, October 1939 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>225</sup> A. Hewes diary, 9-15 October 1939 (5107); and John Howard diary, 13 October 1939 (5111), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>226</sup> As “expected” entries: John Howard diary, 13 October 1939 (5111); Frank Hughes diary, 13 October 1939 (5114); David Irvine Masson diary, 12 October 1939 (5145); Eleanor Humphries diary, 13 October 1939 (5342); and Ursula May MacPherson diary, 12 October 1939 (5366). Finally start hostilities entries: Jack Lippold diary, 12 October 1939 (5132); P.F. Petherbridge diary, 12 October 1939 (5170); Brenda Cobbett diary, 12 October 1939 (5276); and Daidie Penn diary, 12 October 1939 (5396), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>227</sup> D.E. Marmion diary, 13 October 1939 (5142); and M. Clayton diary, 12 October 1939 (5275), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>228</sup> Brian S. Inglis diary, 12 October 1939 (5118), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>229</sup> Elizabeth Hill diary, 12 October 1939 (5332), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>230</sup> B. Cross diary, 13 October 1939 (5291); and Guy Pidgeon diary, 12 and 13 October 1939 (5173), Mass Observation Archive.

Comments on the Prime Minister's weakness were a common critique in diary entries throughout the Phoney War period. The firmness of this speech – less characteristic of Chamberlain than Churchill – however, hit a strong mark with those who heard it. Out of all the reactions to 12 October reply to Hitler, only Mr. Robert J. Nichols of London made a partially negative comment. He did not criticise the speech but rather emphasized the failure of Munich: “The premier could do nothing else. His appeasement aggravated world peril enough: he dare not try it again.”<sup>231</sup> Although the 12 October speech does not appear to have been widely listened to – or at least not memorable enough to be recorded in diaries – the majority of the reactions to it were positive. Apart from the partially negative comment, all other reflections show a spectrum of opinions not restricted by gender or location. This suggests that when Chamberlain displayed strength and resolve his reputation prospered.

On 26 November, Chamberlain gave his first wireless broadcast since the declaration of war. “The War And Ourselves,” broadly addressed Britain's war and peace aims:

to defeat our enemy, and by that I do not merely mean the defeat of the enemy's military forces. I mean the defeat of that aggressive, bullying mentality which seeks continually to dominate other people by force, which finds a brutal satisfaction in the persecution and torture of inoffensive citizens, and in the name of the interest of the state justifies the repudiation of its own pledged word whenever it finds it convenient.<sup>232</sup>

As the conditions in which peace aims would be carried out could not be predicted, they must be thought of in general terms. According to Chamberlain, this “Utopian Europe” would have a new spirit and be free from aggression, with lasting peace and free trade. In

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<sup>231</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 13 October 1939 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>232</sup> According to “Victory Before Utopia,” *The Times*, 27 November 1939, 6. The Times Archive.

addition, the Prime Minister thanked the Navy, RAF, Empire, and home front population for their sacrifices, and briefly discussed the new German magnetic mines.<sup>233</sup> His conclusion was both strong – “Let us then gird up our loins, confident in our own tenacity and resolute in our determination” – and somewhat controversial – “We know that in this great struggle we are fighting for the right against the wrong. Let us then go forward with God’s blessing on our arms and we shall prevail.”<sup>234</sup>

The twenty-eight available diary entries – twelve male and sixteen female – equally represent praise and criticism of the speech. There is, however, a gendered imbalance in the types of reactions. Although male and female views are represented in both types of comments, the majority of the positive reflections are female and the bulk of negative reactions are male. A commonality among many of the responses was reference to the new tone of Chamberlain’s voice – taken as resolute, comical, and too loud. Furthermore, the diary entries highlight the interrelated and recurrent disapproval towards the Prime Minister: Munich and the call for new leadership.<sup>235</sup>

Six diarists – ranging from those previously opposed to the Prime Minister to long-time Chamberlainites – reacted strictly positively to the Prime Minister’s speech. M. Kornitzer praised the speech, commenting on her new and favourable opinion towards Chamberlain, and the effect of the failure of Munich:

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<sup>233</sup> In addition, Chamberlain notes that the “new” Europe, in terms of spirit not a re-drawing of country lines, will also include an increased standard of living (because of free trade) and the gradual decrease in armaments except for those for “the preservation of internal law and order.” Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Ibid. Also discussed in “The War And Ourselves,” *The Times*, 25 November 1939, 2; “The New Session,” *The Times*, 28 November 1939, 7; and “Outrage And Reprisal,” *The Times*, 29 November 1939, 9. The Times Archive.

<sup>235</sup> 97 diarists (50 males and 47 females) made diary entries in November. Of these, 28 (12 men and 16 women) made reference to Chamberlain’s wireless broadcast on 26 November. Four diarists did not offer an opinion on the speech: C.C. Rew diary, 26 November 1939 (5180); E. VanSomeren diary, 26 November 1939 (5216); Dorothy Hughes diary, 26 November 1939 (5341); and Daidie Penn diary, 26 November 1939 (5396), Mass Observation Archive.

Listened at night to Chamberlain: he pleased and amused us – it was such a tough unyielding speech, sharpened (we say) by his gout. He sounded like a v[ery] angry and determined older gentleman. At the time of Munich I was one of his bitterest and humiliated critics – but whereas we knew what Hitler’s triumph meant, he obviously believed that he had saved Czecho [*sic*]. One can feel his sense of personal affront offered by the Nazis, and that it has made him implacable.<sup>236</sup>

Arthur Collins expressed his continued admiration:

Good old Neville! It was good to hear him tell the twirps who ask silly questions about war aims that our war aim is to win the war. What [is] more simple than this? This lad who was willing to go hand in hand towards peace with Hitler, is without doubt now his bitterest enemy. I always like to hear Mr. Chamberlain because he is the fountain head, & for me, the blatherings [*sic*] of the minor cabinet crowd are simply a waste of time.<sup>237</sup>

Miss M. Rose of Essex similarly praised the directness of the war aims, as well as the strength of his voice, stating, “Mr Chamberlain’s voice sounded vigorous [*sic*] and determined and he defined our war aims quite clearly: to conquer Hitlerism.”<sup>238</sup> Two diarists kept their praise straightforward. Irene Naylor reflected on her transformed opinion, noting, “Am much more favourably impressed than I have ever before been with any of his speeches.”<sup>239</sup> Mrs Jean Tayler of Hampshire recalled, “Just splendid speech by Prime Minister last night. Every one today said how comforting & balanced he was.”<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> M. Kornitzer diary, 26 November 1939 (5349), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>237</sup> Arthur Collins diary, 26 November 1939 (5039.1), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>238</sup> The entry continues: “I suppose we can hardly have very clear peace aims until later, but the earlier we make up our minds about them, the better. And if we are planning another League of Nations let us study our last effort and discover exactly why it failed before we fall into the same errors again. I wonder if Hitlerism would have been so popular with Germans had there been no treaty of Versailles.” M. Rose diary, 26 November 1939 (5414), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>239</sup> Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 26 November 1939 (5382), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>240</sup> Jean Tayler diary, 27 November 1939 (5439). In addition, L. Evelyn Saunders took a slightly different approach, musing comically,

After listening to the Prime Minister’s speech I felt rather tickled because across my mental vision flashed a picture of Hitler, Goering & Goebels [*sic*] all sitting at a table listening in to it, he looks on the three paces when Chamberlain dared to dispose of their land. Hitler swelled up & went purple, Goering just said immobile (mutton fat set[s] very hard when cold). Goebells [*sic*] just shrunk with the strain of thinking of his next propaganda.

The praises of Chamberlain's broadcast reflect favourably on the firmness of his voice and suggest it to be unusual but pleasing to the public. Moreover, Munich – this time as an admired legacy – is once again closely associated with Chamberlain and his reputation.

Seven diarists held negative opinions of Chamberlain's speech. Some reacted to his new tone, others to the history of appeasement. Oliver Howard stated, "he made us all laugh, click our tongues, etc. We all agreed that he had borrowed Churchill's style of delivery, but that it didn't come off."<sup>241</sup> The adoption of a Churchillian style of oratory appears to have positively affected the opinions of those previously unfavourable to Chamberlain but had the opposite affect for his existing supporters. Mr. E.S. Sykes of Cornwall, for example, remarked, "Thought his voice (which I admire) was less steady and unemphatic [*sic*], and therefore less effective, than usual. Speech itself rhetorical tommyrot, well calculated to stiffen German morale."<sup>242</sup> His wife, Hope, also reacted critically to Chamberlain and his tone: "Listened to Chamberlain & thought, as usual, that his voice is the best part of him; only tonight he seemed inclined to shout."<sup>243</sup> Other diarists focused on the content, or lack thereof, of the broadcast. Mr. G. Reilly of Luton, a self-identified pacifist, recalled, "Listened to part of the prime [*sic*] Minister's speech in the evening, but as he appeared to be saying nothing, carefully in a number of eloquent words, I switched it off. When will politicians learn that you cant [*sic*] deceive all the people all the time?"<sup>244</sup> Mr. Arthur Jacobs of Manchester – encapsulating an element of Chamberlain's ineffectual legacy – did not find the speech to be morale boosting: "I

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L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 26 November 1939 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>241</sup> Oliver Howard diary, 26 November 1939 (5104), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>242</sup> E.S. Sykes diary, 26 November 1939 (5208), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>243</sup> Hope Sykes diary, 26 November 1939 (5435), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>244</sup> G. Reilly diary, 26 November 1939 (5179), Mass Observation Archive.

listened to Chamberlain's talk: not very inspiring; I don't think he's the man to lead us to the 'new Europe' he boasts of."<sup>245</sup> Once again, diarists reacted adversely to Chamberlain because of the legacy of Munich. Moira Carr observed, "a war to stop aggression, Nazism etc. can't be waged under the men who simply stink of treachery to the League & friendship to Hitler. --- Hoare, Simon, Chamberlain etc."<sup>246</sup> Moreover, Mr. C.W. Smallbones also of Hampshire admitted his prejudice, stating, "Did not think much of it. Still I'm biased against that chap for I think him and his kind have landed us in this mess."<sup>247</sup>

A majority of the diarists expressed a range of opinion about Chamberlain's 26 November broadcast.<sup>248</sup> Mrs Edith Taunton of London, for example, charmingly records:

Enter Husband, looking nipped by the cold. 'Chamberlain' I said, leaping from seat. 'No, its [*sic*] me,' he said. 'Chamberlain's speaking to-night and I forgot.' ['I didn't know you were so keen on him.' 'Its [*sic*] War time and one listens to one's Prime Minister'. Hadn't missed much. His voice sounds more resolute than before. Liked him better, but don't feel we've won this War yet."<sup>249</sup>

Similarly, C.H. Miller commented on the firmness of the speech but qualified her regard, stating, "a good speech, more decision. One can respect the man in comparison [*sic*] with ranting blathering Germans [...] When he gets to 'peace aims' he becomes pretty [rebellious] – he cannot create a new Europe."<sup>250</sup> Likewise impressed with the new resolute tone, M.J. Hill takes offense to the religious element of the speech, noting, "Mr Chamberlain's speech sounded more pugnacious than usual – but I do object to hear God

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<sup>245</sup> Arthur Jacobs diary, 26 November 1939 (5121), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>246</sup> Moira Carr diary, 27 November 1939 (5269), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>247</sup> C.W. Smallbones diary, 26 November 1939 (5201), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>248</sup> In addition to the diarists discussed in the following section, three others made comments expressing a diversity of opinion: P.N. Mills diary, 27 November 1939 (5154); M. Clayton diary, 26 and 27 November 1939 (5275); and J. McDougall diary, 26 and 27 November 1939 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>249</sup> Edith Taunton diary, 26 November 1939 (5437), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>250</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 26 November 1939 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

called upon to bless our enterprise – war.”<sup>251</sup> Robert J. Nichols touched on a recurrent theme when he reflected, “It was a really good fighting speech and quite unlike anything I have heard him give before. All the same I would prefer another at the helm, - Churchill, Eden, or any other whose reputation for determination has not been impaired by trucking with the Hitler group.”<sup>252</sup> Other diarists, perhaps as a result of the new vigour in Chamberlain’s tone, demonstrate positively evolving opinions while still reflecting on Munich. M.A. Pratt concisely encapsulates this idea, stating, “My brother and I thought it good, if only one could ignore the man’s dreadful past[.]”<sup>253</sup> Adelaide R. Poole further expands on this concept:

I listened to Mr Chamberlain on Sunday. I did not intend to, because I so hated his policy with regard to giving in to Hitler from the time he came into office up to the war. However, I listened to the beginning and kept it on. I am glad I did because I feel that NOW he is sincere and deeply moved, and I have never felt that before, and I am more reconciled to him being where he is. All the same, remembering all he has said and done in the past I cannot understand how he can honourably hold on to his office, when all he has striven for is shown to be a failure.<sup>254</sup>

Furthermore, E.A. Stebbing succinctly reflected, “Though no Chamberlain fan, I almost completely agreed with what he had said. Didn’t like what he said about entering the war ‘to establish peace’, which always sounds silly to me.”<sup>255</sup> Joseph Welbank demonstrated a layered opinion of the speech itself: “Well, he’s made the war aim simple [...] His peace aims were vague, because he said, we cannot foresee the nature of things when it will be necessary to build that lasting peace. (lasting peace! as if!) It was the perfect

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<sup>251</sup> M.J. Hill diary, 26 November 1939 (5333), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>252</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 26 November 1939 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>253</sup> M.A. Pratt diary, 26 November 1939 (5402), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>254</sup> Adelaide R. Poole diary, 29 November 1939 (5399), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>255</sup> E.A. Stebbing diary, 26 November 1939 (5205), Mass Observation Archive.

political speech with the something-will-be done air about it.”<sup>256</sup> He continued, however, on his personal perception of Chamberlain, reflecting unfavourably:

What is there about Mr Chamberlain which brings my mind pictures of stiff collars and narrow religion? He is not up to date. He’s years behind Roosevelt. Imagine, in the year 1939, in a country of great learning and culture, the premier gets up and broadcasts to the world his belief that God will bless our arms. He can’t be up to date if he really thinks that way. The whole idea is childish, even funny. It makes me want to escape from it all, but where to? [F]or to escape from Chamberlainism into the arms of Hitlerism would be like jumping out of the frying pan into the fire. At the same time while there is such stupidity in high places I find it difficult to muster up enough enthusiasm to fight for our civilisation.<sup>257</sup>

Chamberlain’s 26 November broadcast garnered a variety of reactions regarding the speech, as well as his past actions and personality. Positive, negative, and juxtaposing positions were expressed across the country with a notable gender imbalance between the positive and negative reactions. All three categories of responses, however, comment on the new tone of Chamberlain’s voice – whether regarding it as resolute, comical, or too aggressive – as well as drawing attention to the consistent themes of disapproval: the legacy of Munich and the desire for a new Prime Minister. The assertive tone garnered approval from those usually opposed to Chamberlain whereas it drew criticism from long-time supporters.

### **3.5 The Munich Factor: Condemnation from September to December 1939**

In the first four months of war the vast majority of diary entries concerning Neville Chamberlain referred to a speech either on 3 September, 12 October, or 26 November. Relatively few diarists, perhaps because of the unreality of the war, made

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<sup>256</sup>Joseph Welbank diary, 27 November 1939 (5228), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid.

other notes about the Prime Minister, his activities, or reputation. Only eleven diarists made comments concerning Chamberlain in September, eighteen in October, seven in November, and an additional seven in December. Although the entries were predominantly negative, eleven diarists made general observations that revealed no insight into contemporary perceptions of Chamberlain. These diarists merely noted his activities including visits to France for meetings of the Supreme War Council or his weekly war reviews in the House of Commons.<sup>258</sup> On 27 November, G. Reilly mused, “It may be that Chamberlain’s policy will look better than it seemed in the immediate past, after the lapse of time.”<sup>259</sup> Two diarists, however, praised the Prime Minister. The first reflection was made the day after Winston Churchill’s first wireless broadcast, “The First Month of War,” on 1 October and the relatively mild tribute is in contrast with the First Lord’s pugnacious style.<sup>260</sup> Moreover, the diary entry is from a self-identified pacifist,

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<sup>258</sup> In September 11/127 diarists (6/69 men and 5/58 women) made reference to Chamberlain (13 comments total; 6 male and 7 female). In October 18/97 diarists (11/54 men and 7/43 women) commented on Chamberlain (24 comments total; 16 male and 8 female). In November 7/97 (6/50 men and 1/47 women) reflected on the Prime Minister (10 comments total; 9 male and 1 female). In December only 7/91 diarists (5/48 men and 2/43 women) discussed Chamberlain (8 comments total; 6 male and 2 female). Chamberlain’s visit to France is noted in R. Manser diary, 12 September 1939 (5141). Chamberlain’s addresses to the House of Commons are noted in Denis Argent diary, 4 October 1939 (5010); Guy Pidgeon diary, 3, 10, 18, and 26 October 1939 (5173); Christopher Brunel diary, 11 October 1939 (5036); Arthur Collins diary, 26 October 1939 (5039.1); and M. Clayton diary, 26 October 1939 (5275). Other general observations (without personal reactions): George Larney diary, 1 November 1939 (5129); G. Reilly diary, 27 November 1939 (5179); and Arthur Jacobs diary, 16 December 1939 (5121). Mass Observation, September to December 1939 diaries, Mass Observation Archive. According to *The Times*, four meetings of the Supreme War Council took place in 1939: 12 September and 19 December in Paris, and 23 September and 17 November in London. “The Supreme War Council,” *The Times*, 13 September 1939, 6; “House of Commons,” *The Times*, 14 September 1939, 4; “Mr. Chamberlain on Allied Unity,” *The Times*, 14 September 1939, 8; “Supreme War Council,” *The Times*, 23 September 1939, 6; “Unity of Allied Effort,” *The Times*, 18 November 1939, 6; and “Supreme War Council,” *The Times*, 20 December 1939, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>259</sup> G. Reilly diary, 27 November 1939 (5179), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>260</sup> First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill broadcast his first speech of the war on 1 October 1939. “The First Month of War” discussed the unquenchable spirit of Poland, Soviet ability to prevent Nazi eastern expansion, the war at sea, and the necessary sacrifices of the home front. The speech served to boost morale at home and held strategic importance abroad, including an attempt to foster discord between Germany and the Soviet Union. For a previous essay (“Winston Churchill and His Phoney War Radio Speeches: Establishing the Roar?”) I analysed 73 Mass Observation diaries and found that only 8/35 diarists who made entries in October referenced the speech. It was praised as “[m]agnificent”, “very

Mr. E. Symes Bond of Northamptonshire. He remarked, “Churchill is still doing his bellicose stuff, but perhaps the Cabinet are letting him do that while Chamberlain and the [others are] milder in utterance, in order to be able to repudiate him if necessary.”<sup>261</sup> The only explicit expression of admiration towards Chamberlain in 1939 is on 21 October. Arthur Collins mused, “There is only one man I listen to with respect and that is Mr. Chamberlain. If there is anything to say, he is the one who will say it, & all the underlings are just vapourising [*sic*].”<sup>262</sup> The vast majority of the diary entries present a negative view of Chamberlain, his reputation, and actions. The entries can be divided into distinct but intricately intertwined categories: the negative and lasting impact of the Munich Conference, the need for a new Prime Minister and government, the slow pace of war, and distrust of Chamberlain.<sup>263</sup>

The negative and lasting impact of the Munich Conference is the most common critique – both directly and indirectly – towards Chamberlain’s policies and reputation.

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effective”, and “very fine speech, cleverly worded and confidently spoken.” Mr. C. Z. Fozard further expressed, “A good fighting speech on ‘The first month of War’. I think [the] general feeling in the country is that ‘Churchill is at the head of the Navy, so that’s alright’.” Moreover, Mr. D.E. Marmion reflected that Churchill’s broadcast amply made up for the lack of news and, continued, “He’s a magnificent speaker, and a tonic to listen to in these days [...] No wonder [t]he Nazis hate him!” The three remaining diarists had little reaction and none of the eight diarists reacted negatively. This general praise is supported by Richard Toye’s analysis of the 1 October speech. Toye’s argument, however, fails to account for the diarists that made no comment on the speech, and further challenges the ‘myth’ of an entire nation crowded around the wireless, listening intently to Churchill, and their subsequent and unitary support of a speech. The transcript of Churchill’s speech is found in Robert Rhodes James, ed., *Winston S. Churchill: His Complete Speeches 1897-1963*, vol. VI, *1935-1942* (New York and London: Chelsea House Publishers, 1974), 6160-6164. Out of the 35 diarists who made entries in October, the following diaries referred to Churchill’s speech: Harold D. Cowan diary, 1 October 1939 (5042); C. Z. Fozard diary, 1 October 1939 (5070); Frank Hughes diary, 2 October 1939 (5114); P. M. McAnnally diary, 1 October 1939 (5136); R. McIsaac diary, 1 October 1939 (5138); D. E. Marmion diary, 1 October 1939 (5142); M. Clayton diary, 1 October 1939 (5275); and Dorothy Hughes diary, 1 October 1939 (5341). Mass Observation, October 1939 diaries, Mass Observation Archive; and Toye, *The Roar of the Lion*, 29-31.

<sup>261</sup> E. Symes Bond diary, 2 October 1939 (5209), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>262</sup> Arthur Collins diary, 21 October 1939 (5039.1), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>263</sup> One entry does not fit within these categories and is not an overt criticism but a correction as to where credit was due. Cobbett stated, “Hear uncle praise in other qualities of the wording of new leaflets dropped over Germany; find some people give all credit for this to Chamberlain. It seems to me the Labour party set the example long ago with their messages to the underground workers.” Brenda Cobbett diary, 8 September 1939 (5276), Mass Observation Archive.

On 11 September, Joseph Welbank criticized the Prime Minister's past policies and 3 September speech, stating, "If only Chamberlain had been honest. He could have delivered a speech on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, beginning something like this; 'I am afraid my policy has led this country into a hell of a mess. If I am to maintain my prestige, and of course the prestige of my country, then we must go to war.'"<sup>264</sup> Similarly, Mr. R.D. Gray of Cambridge alluded to the naivety of appeasement, recalling, "Overheard this evening on the Common – 'Chamberlain's to blame for all this' (pointing to air-raid shelters) – 'The trouble is, we're too honest – you got to be cunning with 'em [*sic*].' (the Nazis)."<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, on 16 October, Denis Argent reported a disagreement with his landlady:

Tired of all this fallacy [of] regarding Hitler as the sole cause of war, etc., & making him alone the hate-object, I suggest that madness often goes hand-in-hand [with] genius, & that our 'normal' Chamberlain has only succeeded in letting us drift into war. She then sticks up for Chamberlain on the grounds that he did what was right last Sept[ember]. I say yes, I was glad of Munich then; but then quote 'Fallen Bastions' to show what crookery [*sic*] went on in the betrayal of Czechs & assert that the public wouldn't have cheered Chamberlain then if they'd known the real situation in Czechoslovakia[.]<sup>266</sup>

This argument suggests that Chamberlain's reputation, even in the first few months of war, is very much based on Britons' interpretation of the Munich Agreement. For some, Chamberlain was held in high standing because of his success in delaying war, whereas for others, he was inadequate due to his failure to uphold commitments to Czechoslovakia and, thus, gave Hitler a free hand in Eastern Europe.

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<sup>264</sup> Joseph Welbank diary, 11 September 1939 (5228), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>265</sup> R.D. Gray diary, 6 September 1939 (5086). Similarly, two months later George Larney of Middlesex overheard a conversation: "Foreman painter age 40 [years.] Angrily. 'It isn't only Hitler who is to blame, Chamberlain is the cause of a lot of trouble, I'd like to do the whole blooming lot in' [.]" George Larney diary, 21 November 1939 (5129), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>266</sup> Denis Argent diary, 16 October 1939 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

Two diarists – M.J. Hill and Miss Brenda Cobbett of Surrey – drew negative conclusions about appeasement following the October publication of the Government White Paper, *The Treatment of German Nationals in Germany*. Also referred to as the White Paper on Nazi Atrocities, it contains letters, reports, and statements originating from Germany between 1938 and 1939, and sent to the Foreign Office about internal religious persecution by the National Socialist Government. The main focus of the White Paper is the maltreatment of Jews inside Germany from the looting and destruction of their homes, businesses, and synagogues by the SA (*Sturmabteilung*) to the imprisonment of Jews at the concentration camps of Buchenwald and Dachau. Moreover, the horrific conditions of the camps are detailed including the mental and physical abuse by guards, long days of hard labour, reduced rations, overcrowded residences, and nearly no sanitation provisions. Jews fortunate enough to be released from the camps had to produce evidence they could leave the country and show no signs of maltreatment. Furthermore, they were threatened with life imprisonment or death if they told anyone about their experiences at the camps. These documents, the White Paper states, were only published in October 1939 when all hope of a settlement with the German government was gone, as well as to combat propaganda about the horrors of British concentration camps in South Africa during the Boer War.<sup>267</sup> The documents may have increased hostility towards Nazi Germany but they also implicated the British government.

Despite knowledge of the conditions within Germany, Chamberlain and the British government still pursued a policy of appeasement with Hitler in September 1938. Only Hill and Cobbett, however, make this connection. Hill succinctly stated, “We have

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<sup>267</sup> Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, *Papers Concerning the Treatment of German Nationals in Germany, 1938-1939*.

also discussed the White Paper published this week and I feel it puts a very ugly construction on Chamberlain's behaviour at Munich – since we now see that the government knew all about the German barbarism when they negotiated to give Germany more lives to dominate[,] I think the action at Munich was wicked.”<sup>268</sup> Cobbett argued with her father and, in doing so, highlighted Chamberlain's inconsistent policies.

Get into somewhat heated argument at supper with Father, who says Hitler must be destroyed, & all the irreligious elements in Germany swept away; says ‘how can you countenance the treatment that has been given to Jews, Christians & others, in concentration camps? The Nazis are something evil which this war is meant to destroy.’ What I try to explain is that in Sept[ember] 1938, he took Mr Chamberlain's part, & supported appeasement; the Nazis then are the same Nazis today – equally responsible for Niemoller's treatment, & that of Jews, etc; if they were people England could negotiate with then, why not now?<sup>269</sup>

Although Cobbett does not state whether she had supported Chamberlain's actions at Munich, her father's opinions demonstrates that some Britons based their perceptions of Chamberlain on his dedication to peace, and remained unmoved by subsequent news including government knowledge of Nazi atrocities in Germany in September 1938.

Although no other diarists make – or at least comment on – the connection between the knowledge of Nazi atrocities from the White Paper and Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler, there were several other references to the Paper itself.<sup>270</sup> Furthermore, there were

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<sup>268</sup> M.J. Hill diary, 3 November 1939 (5333), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>269</sup> Brenda Cobbett diary, 18 October 1939 (5276), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>270</sup> Mr. A.F. Coles noted that he overheard many comments about the White Paper. A majority expressed shock and thought it an “excuse” to smash Nazism, although one diarist did not believe the report, stating “No its just part of a hate campaign. We'll get lots of that during this war.” A.F. Coles diary, 31 October and 1 November 1939 (5039.9). Similarly, Arthur Jacobs disapproved of its publication because “there is now less chance of avoiding the worst sort of atrocity propaganda: ‘Germans eat babes’ etc.” Arthur Jacobs diary, 29 October 1939 (5121). Conversely, it convinced people who did not believe existing reports including E.A. Stebbing diary, 13 November 1939 (5205); and M. Rose diary, 30 and 31 October 1939 (5414). Also noted it: C.R. Gibson diary, 24 November 1939 (5083); and Moira Carr diary, 2 October 1939 (5269), Mass Observation Archive.

two diarists who note Chamberlain's refusal to refer to the enemies as 'Nazis' rather than 'Germans'.<sup>271</sup>

Fear over a second Munich was exacerbated by the widespread belief in Chamberlain's long-expressed desire for peace and the inactivity of the war. On 7 September, for example, B. Cross recounted a conversation: "Go in Bank, assistant manager says 'Funny kind of war.' I ask him ['']what we are doing? Are we doing anything?[''] He says ['']growing feeling maybe we'll make peace when Hitler has taken Poland.[''] I say ['']too ghastly, couldn't bear it.['']" The following day, she continued, "See that Mr. Chamberlain has been asked in House if he is waging a war. Hurray."<sup>272</sup> On the same day, E. Webb echoed:

Later [Mick] comes over to my machine and I hear the first suggestion of what becomes a wider-spread idea. I had a suspicion of a like kind myself. It is, that 'we' (Great Britain) are stalling so that Germany can grab his Corridor and [*sic*] a little extra and then call for a truce and then bargain for himself and his needs. During lunch hour another printer voices the same suspicion – particularly against Chamberlain, and it was surprising to note the completely impartial point of view he had in stating his ideas. Later still this afternoon my labourer voiced the same idea only he coupled with it a rumour that Russia was Germany's ally.<sup>273</sup>

Furthermore, on 11 September, A. Hewes recalled,

Met one of the old 'regulars'. He has always been an opponent of Chamberlain and now says he doesn't believe we are at war. 'Why aren't we getting over and bombing Germany. It's all very well to say we don't want to be the first, but where's the sense of waiting until Hitler's finished with Poland and is free to attack us. You'll see there'll be a peace plan when Hitler's conquered Poland & we'll accept.'<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Arthur Jacobs diary, 19 October 1939 (5121); and John Thornley diary, 11 December 1939 (5212), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>272</sup> B. Cross diary, 7 and 8 September 1939 (5291), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>273</sup> E. Webb diary, 8 September 1939 (5224), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>274</sup> A. Hewes diary, 11 September 1939 (5107), Mass Observation Archive.

On 12 September, the day of the first meeting of the Supreme War Council, G.H. Langford mockingly but directly addressed the fear: “The news of Mr. Chamberlain’s flight to France gave us all cause for amusement. ‘Is it the prelude to another Munich?’ some ask.”<sup>275</sup> On 9 October, Miss Dorothy Hughes of Liverpool reflected, “Feel a bit depressed about the blinkin’ [*sic*] war. Doesn’t seem to be getting under way properly now. Everyone is half-hearted about it. [A] clerk [...] said to me – If Chamberlain is out to smash Hitlerism, and all it stands for, why does he even bother to consider proposals coming from Hitler?”<sup>276</sup> Miss Emmeline W. Cohen of London expressed the widespread distrust of the Prime Minister among her fellow ARP volunteers, noting:

Only one member of my shift expressed any confidence in Chamberlain – hers was a pious hope he had something up his sleeve. ‘He’s no heart in the game’ was the common phrase. He also become a comic figure in talks, although the group was not a politically conscious group. (1 singer, 1 minor actress, 2 married women, one journalist, 1 dress shop owner, 1 smart young thing, 1 elementary school teach [*sic*], two interior decorators, one secretary.)<sup>277</sup>

On 8 October, however, Irene Naylor suggested Britons – in general – were more critical of Munich than the Czechs themselves, recalling a conversation at the Business and Professional Women’s Club: “Mme. S., a Jewish refugee from Czecho-Slovakia [*sic*], who is very well-disposed towards this country and does not appear to feel so fiercely about Chamberlain and Munich as we do ourselves!”<sup>278</sup> As a result of Chamberlain’s failed role as peace-maker and appeaser, annoyance over the slow pace of the war

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<sup>275</sup> G.H. Langford diary, 12 September 1939 (5350), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>276</sup> Dorothy Hughes diary, 9 October 1939 (5341), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>277</sup> Emmeline W. Cohen diary, 10-20 September 1939 (5280), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>278</sup> Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 8 October 1939 (5382), Mass Observation Archive.

consequently increased the general distrust of the Prime Minister – and fear over a second Munich – and his ability to actually wage a war.

Many Britons blamed Chamberlain for the war and simultaneously faulted him for its slow pace and questioned his ability as a war leader. Consequently diary entries also reveal calls for new leadership. On 23 September Brenda Cobbett recalled, “Man at local hospital today says he blames the present British Government for failure to get understanding with U.S.S.R. & is convinced we were put in jeopardy at Munich; cannot think why more people have not demanded change of Government before.”<sup>279</sup> Adelaide R. Poole believed Britain needed a new Prime Minister to win the war, remarking, “I suppose it will be as in 1916, we shall go on with Chamberlain until the war is almost lost, and then someone will force him out.”<sup>280</sup> Two months later, A. White explicitly echoed these sentiments:

Will history again be repeated in this war? Shall we see Churchill [rescue] Chamberlain as Lloyd George did Asquith? Personally, I would rather like to see Winston Churchill leading the nation at the present time. I don't think Chamberlain's idea of 'awaiting the course of events' a good one for this time. Caution can be overdone. Churchill has dash [of] imagination. The Nazis fear him more than any other member of the Government. You have only to listen to their wireless to know that.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Brenda Cobbett diary, 23 September 1939 (5276), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>280</sup> The diary entry starts:

I remember Black Week during the South African war, and the week of Retreat in 1918. Today seems almost as bad. First the Russian advance in Poland and the flight of the Polish Government. Then the sinking of the Airplane Carrier. It is hard on Churchill. He has foretold all this and implored for steps to be taken to put us in a state of defence. The P.M. and others have jeered at him and flouted him. Now, because (apparently they would offend Hitler) until war was declared, instead of Churchill having been in power to prepare, he was shoved in at the last minute. Being a member of the Government he can't criticize anyone in it, nor his predecessor. Yet he will be blamed for what happens in the navy. And his superior is the man who flouted him and railed at him all these years for fore-warning the country of what was being done in Germany.

Similar sentiments are also expressed on 21 September. Adelaide R. Poole diary, 18 and 21 September 1939 (5399), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>281</sup> The entry continues, “Churchill was a much maligned man in the last war. It was the envy of others that march his ideas in then being able to prime their worth. Hitler is a cunning opportunist – it will require

While expressing his desire for a new government, G. Webb suggested the role of political allegiance in the multiplicity of opinions on Chamberlain and his leadership:

I told them that we must have a change of government immediately because we were losing the battle in this field. I was speaking to contented conservatives & they seemed surprised that there existed one individual who had no faith in the timid person named Chamberlain. They asked me who I would put in his place. There I was bottled up & I told them that I just don't know. It was agreed that Churchill is the best of the bunch but may be too old.<sup>282</sup>

Other diarists also believed Chamberlain should be replaced. Mr. R. McIsaac of Oxford thought Chamberlain should give way to Churchill, Mrs Edith Dawson of County Durham wanted Anthony Eden to become Prime Minister, and M. Clayton did not believe there were any preferable candidates.<sup>283</sup> Mr. Frank Hughes of Birmingham believed that following Churchill's broadcast on 1 October, his prestige was higher than the Prime Minister. This suggests that Chamberlain's restrained and peace-loving image was not what many Britons looked for in a wartime leader.<sup>284</sup>

Despite the Prime Minister's steadfast refusal of Hitler's peace offer on 12 October, calls continued for him to be replaced. Furthermore, these opinions were mainly from different diarists than those who called for a new Prime Minister and government in the first month of war. Guy Pidgeon identified Munich as the reason Britain needed a new government, remarking, "hardly anywhere is expressed the vital necessity of a new Gov[ernment] here as a necessary factor to real peace, or come to that real war. How

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[illegible x3] to beat him AND to win the peace. Have we a better man than Churchill for the task?" A. White diary, 17 November 1939 (5230), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>282</sup> G. Webb diary, 1 October 1939 (5225), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>283</sup> R. McIssac diary, 2 October 1939 (5138); Edith Dawson diary, 9 October 1939 (5296); and M. Clayton diary, 8 October 1939 (5275), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>284</sup> Frank Hughes diary, 2 October 1939 (5114), Mass Observation Archive.

soon they forget Munich and Spain and Abyssinia [*sic*].”<sup>285</sup> Mr. P.F. Petheridge of Surrey recorded a conversation between two men: “They say Winston is fading N[eville] out – He (W[inston]) ought to have been P[rime] Minister from the start and if Neville had been a man of honour he would have retired in his favour.”<sup>286</sup> Mr. George Larney of Middlesex believed “Chamberlain and all his crowd should be kicked out. They are responsible for the war.”<sup>287</sup> Similarly, Arthur Jacobs, in a longer discussion on Britain’s relationship with the Soviet Union and the war, mused, “The only solution seems to be first of all to kick out Chamberlain and then when we win cooperate with Russia.”<sup>288</sup> In addition, Edith Dawson’s husband echoed these feelings and drew negatively upon Chamberlain’s business legacy, remarking, “This old Gov[ernment] must be changed. Their own security comes first – armament firms piled up cash, sold to Germany! In fact I don’t believe Chamberlain & Co would care if Hitler did get here provided they were sure he would keep down workers & not interfere with their own class & its wealth.”<sup>289</sup>

Chamberlain’s age – an essential element of his weak legacy – also played negatively into contemporary perceptions. It was mentioned in several of the entries already discussed, and two additional diary entries made explicit reference to it. Mr. A.G. Errey of Sussex, a self-identified pacifist and CO, reflected that Hitler is clearly “more aware of the realities of war than the old men of the Cabinet who think in terms of years

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<sup>285</sup> Guy Pidgeon diary, 15 October 1939 (5173), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>286</sup> P.F. Petheridge diary, 20 October 1939 (5170), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>287</sup> He also comments: “England is far from a democracy, we are only fighting because the interests of the upper classes are threatened.” George Larney diary, 9 December 1939 (5129), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>288</sup> The entry begins: “Russia seems, according to the news tonight, to be goin [*sic*] for Roumania [*sic*] and Turkey too. This is giving Chamberlain support for his cause, of course: he can now say that he did not ally with Russia because he knew the sort they were, and hence conceal his own incompetence. The whole situation seems ridiculous: if we win, we may put a bourgeois government in power that would help us to fight Russia; if we lose, Hitler stays, and we become reactionary; if we make peace now, we may join Hitler against Russia – which would be intolerable.” Arthur Jacobs diary, 6 December 1939 (5121), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>289</sup> Edith Dawson diary, 18 October 1939 (5296), Mass Observation Archive.

long passed.”<sup>290</sup> Even more directly C.H. Miller stated, “Chamberlain speaking on return from France – most halting & dodderly over simple little remarks. Has he usually got it all written out? He does sound like a dodderly old man!”<sup>291</sup> Newspapers, including *The Times*, drew further attention to the Prime Minister’s age with frequent updates on his gout in November.<sup>292</sup>

In December, several diarists commented on their surprise towards Chamberlain’s apparent popularity. On 9 December, George Larney remarked, “It is surprising how popular Mr Chamberlain is.”<sup>293</sup> On 13 December Mr. A.F. Coles of London reflected, “Rather surprised at B.I.P.[O] survey on Conduct of the War. 61% seems very high for people who are satisfied.” A few days later he also questioned Mass Observation’s findings: “Why, 42% were ‘Keen on that old bathbum Chamberlain whose got two feet & one umbrella in the grave. Trying his best, perhaps but thats [*sic*] a feeble excuse. Still he’s got the prime qualification for a premier – he went to a good school & can’t see as far as the end of nose.”<sup>294</sup> G. Webb argued with his landlord over the level of Chamberlain’s popularity:

Do you agree with Mr Chamberlain? – Frank promptly replied,  
No! Now said the landlord I know where you stand! This of  
course led to further exchange grounds & the landlord said –

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<sup>290</sup> Mr. Errey identifies himself as a pacifist. A.G. Errey diary, 6 October 1939 (5062), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>291</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 19 December 1939 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>292</sup> The headline on 10 November, for example, reads: “Prime Minister Indisposed / An Accute [*sic*] Attack Of Gout”. Subsequent articles describe his inability to walk, the necessity for him to remain in bed, and meetings held in his bedroom. His otherwise good health is drawn to attention, however, as well as his continued work ethic and recovery. Moreover, or perhaps in contrast depending on how it is read, *The Times* states, “It is 18 months since he was troubled by an attack of gout, and he has borne the heavy strain of his responsibilities in recent months with a degree of resilience which has aroused the admiration of all those closely associated with him.” Our Parliamentary Correspondent, “Prime Minister Indisposed,” *The Times*, 10 November 1939, 8; Our Correspondent, “News In Brief,” *The Times*, 13 November 1939, 6; and Our Correspondent, “News In Brief,” *The Times*, 14 November 1939, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>293</sup> George Larney diary, 9 December 1939 (5129), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>294</sup> The entry concludes: “P.S. I hope this isn’t censored.” A.F. Coles diary, 13 and 16 December 1939 (5039.9), Mass Observation Archive.

99% of the people are in favour of Mr Chamberlain in wartime, its [*sic*] necessary! – I had only listened up to this: I said just a minute [...] I think you are very wide of the mark with your 99% & I [thought] previous to the war M.O had found that for [those] against Mr Chamberlain hovered about 50% & I doubted very much if it had jumped to 99% since war started.<sup>295</sup>

B. Cross explicitly stated she believed that Chamberlain and “his crew” were already done but did not know it.<sup>296</sup>

In spite of all the negative comments about Chamberlain and these diarists’ questioning the polling statistics on Chamberlain’s popularity, BIPO records that his approval rating never fell below sixty-three percent during the first four months of the war.<sup>297</sup> In November, Mass Observation initially found comparable statistics, with sixty-eight percent of those polled being “Pro-Chamberlain”, twenty-seven percent were “Anti-Chamberlain”, and six percent were doubtful. Likely influenced by the disparity between polling figures and the multifarious opinions expressed in the diaries, Mass Observation began to question whether a yes/no questionnaire showed more than a “clear-cut statistical result”. In “War-time Directive No.4” they explain, “In this present investigation this was particularly important, as the question asked is more likely to get a favourable than unfavourable reply, because people believe that a favourable reply is the done thing. Loyalty to the Prime Minister is the done thing in Britain in war-time.”<sup>298</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> G. Webb diary, 14 December 1939 (5225), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>296</sup> B. Cross diary, 10 December 1939 (5291), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>297</sup> In October, when asked, “Are you satisfied with Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister?” 63% of those polled answered yes, 31% no, and 6% did not know. In response to the same question in November, 66% answered yes, 29% no, and 5% did not know. In December, BIPO asked, “In general do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister?” 64% said yes, 30% no, and 6% did not know. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton. Slightly different figures are found in *The International Public Opinion Polls*. In October, 65% of those polled were satisfied with Chamberlain as Prime Minister, 29% were not, and 6% gave no opinion. In November, 68% were satisfied, 27% were not, and 5% gave no opinion. In December, 64% were satisfied, 30% were not, and 6% gave no opinion. Gallup, ed, *The International Public Opinions Polls: Great Britain 1937-1975*, 23 and 25-6.

<sup>298</sup> Mass Observation, “File Report 15A: December 1939: War-time Directive No.4,” Mass Observation Archive.

When Mass Observation took into account the specific phrasing and qualification of the answers – as they could see in the diaries – the figures changed substantially: only forty-two percent were “[k]een on Chamberlain” compared to fifty-two percent being “[n]ot keen”.<sup>299</sup> Based on this observation of outward British loyalty to their Prime Minister during wartime, a similar pattern can be deduced from the figures of one of BIPO’s questions in December. When asked, “If you had a choice between Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Churchill, which would you have as Prime Minister?” Fifty-two percent answered Chamberlain versus thirty percent supporting Churchill, however, an additional eighteen percent did not make a choice.<sup>300</sup> This could reflect near equality between wanting Chamberlain or a new Prime Minister, as well as the inability to publically verbalize dissatisfaction with their leader. Overall, Mass Observation’s ‘Keen/Not-Keen’ findings are supported by the varied responses within and between class, gender, and regional lines as demonstrated in the diaries and call into question BIPO statistics on Chamberlain’s popularity.

As 1939 drew to a close, Britons were growing apathetic about the conditions of the war and were soon to embark upon one of the bitterest winters in recent British history. While their public and more private opinions display a spectrum of feelings towards their Prime Minister – and many of them rooted in Munich – it is perhaps Mr. K.J. Marsden’s succinct entry that aptly captured contemporary thought: “anti-Chamberlain feeling seems to be growing; people think that the war is moving too slowly, and that prices are rising too soon, and too much. I agree.”<sup>301</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> 6% remained uncertain. Ibid.

<sup>300</sup> British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>301</sup> K.J. Marsden diary, 23 September 1939 (5143), Mass Observation Archive.

## **Chapter 4    The Bus Did Not Have Winter Tires: January to May 1940**

As a new year began, Neville Chamberlain faced the increasing public outrage at the challenges of the Phoney War period including continuing blackout restrictions, feelings of apathy towards anti-climactic inactivity, and the introduction of food rationing. Moreover, Britain was about to face the coldest winter in recent memory. While these factors, overall, were beyond Chamberlain's control, they affected both contemporary perceptions of him as well as subsequent interpretations of his premiership. Even after the harsh winter passed and the action began, he remained at fault in the minds of many Britons because of his advocacy of appeasement in 1938. Calls for a new leader only increased as winter turned to spring, as did references to Chamberlain as a dictator and Britain as a dictatorship – in a war for democracy. Even before the summer release of *Guilty Men*, 1940 was not a good year for Chamberlain.

### **4.1    The Great Freeze of 1940: No Action, Lots of Snow, and the Introduction of Rationing**

The first winter of the war, specifically January and February 1940, was the coldest in Britain for forty-five years.<sup>302</sup> Roads turned to glass, snow piled up, pipes and rivers froze, towns were cut off for days at a time, travel delays increased, and coal supplies ran out. The Thames and River Ribble froze, and ships were stuck in the Humber for a few weeks. In London, ice more than a foot thick covered water tanks to be

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<sup>302</sup> Calder, *The People's War*, 74; and Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 160. According to the Met Office, -23.3°C registered on 21 January 1940 in Rhayader (Powys) remains the “lowest daily minimum temperature record[ed]” in Wales. The temperatures for England during January and February 1940 are not available on the site, with the exception of -16.7°C being recorded as the record low by district in Cullompton, Devon on 21 January 1940. Although the complete temperatures for the winter of 1940 are not available, they must have been slightly warmer than -26.1°C, which is registered as the record low in England on 10 January 1982 in Newport, Shropshire. Met Office, “UK Climate Extremes,” Crown Copyright. <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/public/weather/climate-extremes/#?tab=climateExtremes>. (accessed 26 May 2014).

used in the event of an air raid. Vegetables disappeared from shops because the ground was too hard to dig them out. Moreover, all of this was experienced in the already dangerous and continuing blackout conditions.<sup>303</sup> The weather – a consistently popular topic among Britons – monopolized conversations and diary entries. According to Mr. J. Fry of Wembley on 21 January, it was “[t]oo cold to worry about the war. General topic seems to be frozen or burst pipes.”<sup>304</sup> The following day, he noted, “Cold spell has pushed the war out of everybody’s mind.”<sup>305</sup> Similar observations were echoed across the country, including by Mr. Brian S. Inglis of Wiltshire and Mr. George Larney of Yorkshire.<sup>306</sup> Sisters Betty and Judith Hall of Norfolk wondered if the weather was a punishment from God. On 12 February, Betty noted, “Another heavy snow fall. It is beyond a joke this time. I’m not religious but I begin to wonder if this wretched weather is not judgement from above on the people for starting the war.”<sup>307</sup> The next day, her sister, Betty, similarly commented, “Another 6 [inches of] snow. Mother says she shall take to religion, says the Almighty is annoyed with us humans for being so wicked, look how he swore at us in that terrible storm when we started this war.”<sup>308</sup> Mr. G. Reilley of Luton, on the other hand, believed the awful weather was a blessing for the Allies, stating, “The frost takes up a lot of time[,] energy and expense – extra coal, gas and

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<sup>303</sup> Mass Observation noted, “the severe winter is further irritation to housewives by, for instance, making a shortage of green vegetables.” Mass Observation, “File Report 67: US 10.” Moreover, in a study of winter sales figures in Worktown, Mass Observation found that “the war has not affected [the January sales] any more than Christmas spending. On the contrary, evidence gathered would seem to prove that they have been a much greater success than usual.” It is suggested that the continued purchasing throughout January is likely due to the combination of the weather, fear of rising prices, and local prosperity. Mass Observation, “File Report 42: US 5.” Calder, *The People’s War*, 74; Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 160-1; Mass Observation, “File Report 31: US 3;” and Mass Observation, January and February 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>304</sup> J. Fry diary, 21 January 1940 (5074), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>305</sup> J. Fry diary, 22 January 1940 (5074), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>306</sup> Brian S. Inglis diary, 29 January 1940 (5118); and George Larney diary, 2 February 1940 (5129), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>307</sup> Judith Hall diary, 12 February 1940 (5324), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>308</sup> Betty Hall diary, 13 February 1940 (5323), Mass Observation Archive.

paraffin – but I do not quarrel with it as I consider it is favouring the Allies in the war.”<sup>309</sup>

Discussion of freezing temperatures, frozen and burst pipes, dangers of ice and injuries, quantity and frequency of snow falls, transportation difficulties, as well as shortages – especially coal – featured extensively in diary entries in January and February 1940.<sup>310</sup>

Furthermore, diarists began to show increased apathy, including Mrs Daidie Penn of Cornwall remarking, “The elements certainly have been reflecting the mood of Europe of late[,]”<sup>311</sup> and Miss C.H. Miller of Sussex noting “More snow – we are fed up.”<sup>312</sup> In addition to the attention given to the harsh weather conditions, entries in the early months of 1940 also focused on the introduction of rationing.

Although petrol rationing was introduced on 22 September 1939, it was not until 8 January 1940 that food rationing came into effect. At the outbreak of war Britain imported over half of its food including more than eighty percent of fruit, seventy percent

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<sup>309</sup> G. Reilley diary, 19 January 1940 (5179), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>310</sup> Including in the diaries of: E.A. Bray diary, 12, 16 and 29 January and 3 February 1940 (5032); A. Brayshaw diary, 13 February 1940 (5033); Arthur Collins diary, 20, 26-28 January and 5 and 16 February 1940 (5039.1); A.F. Coles diary, 6 February 1940 (5039.9); A.G. Errey diary, 13 and 22 January and 8-9, 11-12, 16 and 29 February 1940 (5062); J. Fry diary, 16, 19, 21-22 and 28-29 January 1940 (5074); J.B. Gregory diary, 29 January 1940 (5089); F.R. Harris diary, 29 January 1940 (5101); Brian S. Inglis diary, 28-29 January and 29 February 1940 (5118); George Larney diary, 16, 27-30 January and 2 February 1940 (5129); D.A. Lury diary, 16 January 1940 (5135); Robert J. Nichols diary, 23 January 1940 (5163); G. Reilley diary, 19, 21 and 31 January and 12 February 1940 (5179); W.K. Scudamore diary, February 1940 (5193.1); John Thornley diary, 3, 22, 27 and 29 January 1940 (5212); A.E. Tomlinson diary, 16 January and 12 February 1940 (5215); E. VanSomeren diary, 30 December 1940 (5216); T.J. Williams diary, 17 February 1940 (5231); Martina M. Corfe diary, 28 January 1940 (5285); Marjory Davis diary, 17 and 21 January and 12-13 February 1940 (5295); Betty Hall diary, 12-13 and 19 February 1940 (5323); Judith Hall diary, 12-13 February 1940 (5324); Elizabeth Hill diary, 29 January and 12 February 1940 (5332); Dorothy Hughes diary, 3, 16 and 20 January 1940 (5341); Eleanor Humphries diary, 16 and 20 January 1940 (5342); Rina Knight diary, 15 February 1940 (5348); Gladys Lasky diary, 27 January 1940 (5352); J. McDougall diary, 20 January 1940 (5363); C.H. Miller diary, 28 January and 17 February 1940 (5376); Valentine Pearson diary, 19 January 1940 (5395); Daidie Penn diary, 15 February 1940 (5396); J.C. Pratt diary, 21 January and 4 February 1940 (5401); M.A. Pratt diary, 21 January 1940 (5402); and Jean Tayler diary, 20-21 January 1940 (5439), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>311</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 15 February 1940 (5396), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>312</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 17 February 1940 (5376). Similar comments found a few weeks earlier in C.H. Miller diary, 28 January 1940 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

of cheese and sugar, and fifty percent of meat.<sup>313</sup> Furthermore, according to Juliet Gardiner, “After twenty years of peace and cheap food imports, many British farms were almost entirely given over to pasture and, to make matters worse, livestock was almost entirely dependent on imported foodstuffs.”<sup>314</sup> In November, following the announcement of imminent rationing, Mass Observation and the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) inquired about Britons’ attitudes.<sup>315</sup> Mass Observation found that fifty-three percent of men and fifty-six percent of women were in favour of rationing, twenty-three percent of men and twenty percent of women were against it, seventeen percent of men and fourteen percent of women did not know, and eight percent of men and eleven percent of women felt “half and half”.<sup>316</sup> Similarly, BIPO found that sixty percent of those surveyed thought rationing was necessary, twenty-eight percent unnecessary, and twelve percent did not know.<sup>317</sup> On 8 January, butter, sugar, and ham and bacon were officially rationed, and on 11 March all meat was included.<sup>318</sup> The

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<sup>313</sup> Mass Observation states 22 September 1939 as the first day of petrol rationing but Flower states 16 September 1939. Ration books were issued following the National Registration Day on 29 September 1939. Britain also imported 90% of cereals and cheeses. Calder, *The People’s War*, 71; Flower, *No Phoney War*, 62; Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 160-1; Mackay, *Half The Battle*, 53 and 198-9; Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: September 1939,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/resources/chronology/sep39.aspx>. (accessed 25 May 2014); and Turner, *The Phoney War On The Home Front*, 202-5.

<sup>314</sup> Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 161.

<sup>315</sup> At the beginning of November Britons were told that rationing would begin shortly and to register with their chosen store(s) by 23 November. On 28 November, the Government announced that rationing of butter, sugar, and bacon would begin on 8 January 1940. Calder, *The People’s War*, 71.

<sup>316</sup> Mass Observation divided their findings between males and females, as well as by under and over 30 years old. 53% of males (52% under 30 and 54% over 30) and 55.5% of females (56% under 30 and 55% over 30) were in favour of rationing, 22.5% of males (23% under 30 and 22% over 30) and 19.5% of females (19% under 30 and 20% over 30) were against rationing, 17% of males (16% under 30 and 18% over 30) and 14% of females (13% under 30 and 15% over 30) did not know, and 7.5% of males (9% under 30 and 6% over 30) and 11% of females (12% under 30 and 10% over 30) were “half and half”. Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, 380.

<sup>317</sup> British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>318</sup> On 8 January 1940, rations were: 4 ounces of butter, 12 ounces of sugar, and 4 ounces of bacon and ham per person per week. According to Mass Observation’s “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945,” eggs were also rationed (2 per person per week). On 11 March, all meat was included under a slightly different system:

introduction of additional wartime inconveniences, especially during a continued period of inactivity, received more diarists' attention than the Prime Minister or home front politics.<sup>319</sup>

#### **4.2 Failed Attempts To Connect: The Prime Minister's Two Speeches In The Winter Of 1940**

Chamberlain did not broadcast directly to his countrymen in the early, cold months of 1940. Two of his speeches – part of a series of nationwide talks given by government members to keep in contact with the people – at the Mansion House in London on 9 January and the Town Hall in Birmingham on 24 February were broadcast to wireless audiences, however. The two speeches receive sparse attention in Mass

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each person being allowed a value of 1s 10d per week with “the theory being that this gave a choice between purchasing a small amount of expensive meat like a roast, steak or chops, or a larger amount of meat for stewing and braising.” Vegetarians, Muslims, and Jews were allowed to exchange their meat rations for extra cheese. Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 168 and 175; Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: January 1940,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/resources/chronology/jan40.aspx>. (accessed 25 May 2014); and Turner, *The Phoney War*, 204-5.

<sup>319</sup> Rationing and shortages are mentioned specifically and generally, including in the following diaries: Denis Argent diary, 1 November 1939 and 6 January 1940 (5010); J. Fry diary, 8 January 1940 (5074); C.R. Gibson diary, 24 November 1939 (5083); Guy Pidgeon diary, October – December 1939 (5173); G. Reilley diary, September 1939 – February 1940 (5179); C.C. Rew diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5180); G.W. Shipway diary, August 1939 – March 1940 (5199); C.W. Smallbones diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5201); R. South diary, September and November 1939 – January 1940 (5204); E.A. Stebbing diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5205); E.S. Sykes diary, August 1939 – April 1940 (5208); E. Symes Bond diary, September 1939 – February 1940 (5209); John Thornley diary, September 1939 – May 1940 (5212); M. Walton diary, September, October, December 1939 – January, March – May 1940 (5220); A. White diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5230); E.J. Ausden diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5240); M. Clayton diary, October 1939 – April 1940 (5275); Margaret V. Congdon diary, 28 November 1939 and August 1939 – May 1940 (5295); Edith Dawson diary, September 1939 – May 1940 (5296); Alice M. Franklin diary, 1 November 1939 and August – December 1939 and March-May 1940 (5312); Noreen Goodson diary, December 1939 – January 1940 (5319); Betty Hall diary, February – May 1940 (5323); Judith Hall diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5324); M.J. Hill diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5333); Eleanor Humphries diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5342); Gladys Lasky diary, November 1939 – February and May 1940 (5352); Nance Leacroft diary, December 1939 – March 1940 (5356); C.H. Miller diary, August 1939 – February and April-May 1940 (5376); J.C. Pratt diary, January – May 1940 (5401); Nancy Satterthwaite diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5419); L. Evelyn Saunders diary, September 1939 – May 1940 (5420); and Margaret D. Saunders diary, August 1939 – May 1940 (5422), Mass Observation Archive.

Observation diaries with only nine out of seventy-one diarists who made entries in January and five out of eighty-four in February making comments.<sup>320</sup>

On 9 January Chamberlain launched the series of nationwide Government talks with the wide-ranging speech, “The War, Its Progress, and Prospects,” at the Mansion House. The Prime Minister commenced by juxtaposing his previous attempts for peace and his current desire for victory, stating, “I had hoped that in my time, at any rate, war might have been averted, but since that day when war was declared my sole thought and all my actions have been directed to one purpose only – namely, to do all I could in the closest conjunction with our dauntless French Allies [...] to bring this war to a successful conclusion.”<sup>321</sup> He continued with a review of the war effort including praising Finland and Turkey, as well as the fighting forces – particularly the Navy, with the sea being the only front in “full operation”. He further touched on Britain’s relationship with France and hopes of a continued relationship after the war before turning to the home front. Describing the current conditions as the “quiet before the storm,” he commended the determination of the British people but expressed doubts as to whether they fully understood the darker times to come. Moreover, he briefly discussed taxation, labour, exports, and new rationing items. Chamberlain concluded by asserting the “unshaken confidence” of Britons and telling the German people that the responsibility for the prolonged war and suffering belonged with them, and their tyrannical leader.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>320</sup> In January 9/71 diarists (8/37 males and 1/34 females) comment on Chamberlain’s speech. In February 5/84 diarists (3/43 males and 2/41 females) comment on the speech. Mass Observation, January and February 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>321</sup> “Next Phase Of War,” *The Times*, 10 January 1940, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>322</sup> “Progress Of The War,” *The Times*, 9 January 1940, 3; “Home Service To-Day,” *The Times*, 9 January 1940, 3; “Mr. Chamberlain On The War Effort,” *The Times*, 10 January 1940, 6; “The Task Ahead,” *The Times*, 10 January 1940, 7; and “Next Phase Of War,” *The Times*, 10 January 1940, 8. The Times Archive.

Only nine of seventy-one diarists – eight male and one female – who made entries in January referred to Chamberlain’s speech broadcast from the Mansion House. Mr. A.G. Errey of Sussex, a self-identified pacifist and Conscientious Objector (CO), was the sole diarist to note a positive reception: “Mr. Chamberlain’s broadcast speech has been received favourably – even by those who are most opposed to him.”<sup>323</sup> Touching upon a common reaction, Errey continued, “There was some surprise, however, that he did not refer (directly at any rate) to the [Hore-Belisha] matter.”<sup>324</sup> Leslie Hore-Belisha was, until his resignation on 5 January 1940, the Secretary of State for War. Although some had labelled him a warmonger – like Churchill – his resignation was received with shock and appal by a large section of the British public. It added to the growing list of high profile resignations from the Chamberlain government, most notably Anthony Eden in February 1938, which did not reflect favourably on Chamberlain or his appeasement policy. Moreover, Hore-Belisha’s resignation accurately reflected growing public disillusionment with Chamberlain’s policies and sparked increased criticisms of the government as a dictatorship, in a war fighting for democracy. Mr. A. White of Leeds similarly called attention to absence of Hore-Belisha’s resignation while critiquing the speech: “Listened in’ to the Prime Minister’s speech this afternoon. No mention of Mr. Hore-Belisha. Mention of ‘sterner’ war. Also that we should spend less on luxuries. I don’t like the tone of his talk.”<sup>325</sup> Mrs J. McDougall of Surrey, the lone female diarist, recorded, “J. and I exclaim over Chamberlain’s Mansion House speech. Why does no one seem to notice the fact that the man has delusions of grandeur? His egomania is

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<sup>323</sup> A.G. Errey diary, 9 January 1940 (5062), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>324</sup> Errey referred directly to Hore-Belisha in a preceding sentence: “The Hore-Belisha business seems to be dying down a bit. I think most people have had time to think twice.” Ibid.

<sup>325</sup> A. White diary, 9 January 1940 (5230), Mass Observation Archive.

incredible. His condescending manner towards the [illegible] is infuriating.”<sup>326</sup> This is not the first time McDougall commented on Chamberlain’s egotism. On 26 November she described him as a dictator and discussed “his egomaniac attitude”.<sup>327</sup>

The financial segment of Chamberlain’s broadcast speech – reflecting his own upper-class status and his inability to truly connect with other classes’ sacrifices – stimulated hostility even within the predominantly middle-class National Panel. For example, George Larney recorded, “Chamberlain’s speech causes my farmer friend to let loose some hot air. Particularly re [*sic*], ‘the wealthy classes who have had to make sacrifices.’”<sup>328</sup> J. McDougall recalled a conversation with her friend, who “says Mr. Chamberlain said something very significant in his speech when he said that wages will have to be kept down. Workers will strike, she thinks, but they will have to be kept down by the police[.]”<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, Mr. F.R. Harris of London sounded off on the inequity of the sacrifice, as well as Chamberlain’s character, stating,

Felt disgusted with account of Chamberlain’s speech. He says we must have no increased wages even though prices are rising, and in the next breath says we must save more. An extra 5/- or 10/- in cost of living is going to make life very hard for the man who earns, say £3 a week. Chamberlain cannot eat more food than the average [illegible], so he should only have the same 5 or 10/- week increase expenses for food, - a mere flea-bite to him. Once again, it is the poorer classes who are hit. And so it will always be. And this is our democracy, for which our men are fighting & dying. Why doesn’t Chamberlain take a flat in a poor district & try to live on £3, or even £10 a week; he could do it if he tried. And what’s left over from his salary might help to take some of the burden off the poorer classes. No, grind the poor further into the dust; the rich must still be richer & richer, come what may.

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<sup>326</sup> J. McDougall diary, 9 January 1940 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>327</sup> She stated: “We listen to Chamberlain’s broadcast and are incensed by his egomaniac attitude. Who cares about his health and strength? He talks as if he were England’s dictator, as if were [*sic*] fighting this war for his sake.” J. McDougall diary, 26 November 1939 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>328</sup> George Larney diary, 10 January 1940 (5219), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>329</sup> J. McDougall diary, 11 January 1940 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

Our statesman would try to convince us that Germans are living in terrible conditions. We may have no concentration camps over here, but our old people are trying to exist (not live) on a miserable sum which any of our statesmen would spend on cigars in one day. And what of the dependents of our men in the forces? Are they any better off? Pah! Chamberlain & his collaborators are a lot of wretched rogues & hypocrites.<sup>330</sup>

These reactions to the focus on, and perspective of, upper-class sacrifice suggests that despite Chamberlain's previous work for the lower classes, he was still unable to grasp the continuing and increasing sacrifices of a majority of the country. This upper-class appraisal of sacrifice and morale is visible throughout Chamberlain's premiership. For example, in the speech he questioned whether Britons could comprehend the grim days that lay ahead in the war but failed to acknowledge that many working-class Britons already faced poverty, disease, and malnutrition on a daily basis. In doing so, Chamberlain underestimated the fortitude of most Britons. Representative of other entries, Mr. Arthur Collins of Sheffield touched on this, stating, "Mr Chamberlain, following closely on Sir John Anderson, warns us of tough times ahead. No doubt he wants to prevent us becoming too slack, but I think most people realize what is coming."<sup>331</sup> In a review of the speech, *The Times* captured a level of disconnect between the government and the people when describing the upcoming series of speeches:

It is better to define it thus than as a programme of exhortation; for assuredly the spirit of this people needs no oratory to stiffen it for the formidable ordeals it has to face. Indeed, if there were any danger of a failure of confidence in the national leadership, it would be likely to arise from the people's suspicion that too little rather than too much was being demanded of them. On the other hand it will be [of] urgent importance throughout the war to give the country the fullest intelligence consistent with

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<sup>330</sup> F.R. Harris diary, 10 January 1940 (5101). Similar comment in Robert J. Nichols diary, 9 January 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>331</sup> Arthur Collins diary, 10 January 1940 (5039.1). Similar comment in Denis Argent diary, 9 January 1940 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

strategical [*sic*] necessities about the Government's plans – if for no other reason, in order to give assurance that the universal popular determination is fully reflected in higher places.<sup>332</sup>

Although a large portion of the criticisms focused on what Chamberlain said, Mr. Ronald Frank of Wiltshire, a CO, believed the speech lacked content, reflecting, “Chamberlain’s speech had run for ¾ [hour] then and I thought how ingeniously he had avoided saying anything, but still got volumes of applause from a hero-worshipping audience.”<sup>333</sup>

Six weeks later, Chamberlain spoke at the Birmingham Town Hall to close the series of Government ‘connection’ speeches. The Prime Minister began by reminding the city that the last time he spoke to them was nearly a year ago during a personal “black moment” following Hitler’s annexation of Bohemia and Moravia.<sup>334</sup> Yet again, he referred to his crusade for peace and the broken promises of the German Chancellor. Then turning to the war situation, he described the Nazis’ dissatisfaction with merely conquering small states and their desire for the “extermination of peoples who resist aggression.”<sup>335</sup> While Chamberlain then praised the mighty spirit of the Finns against the Soviet giant, his focus was on the neutrals; warning them of their inevitable fate given the previous treatment of neutrals and the dangers of indiscriminate German attacks on shipping. He reaffirmed that Britain did not stand alone in her attempt to preserve civilization having strong partnerships with France and the Empire.<sup>336</sup> Together they fight

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<sup>332</sup> “The Tasks Ahead,” *The Times*, 10 January 1940, 7. The Times Archive. The disconnect between the Government and the people – particularly understanding of morale and opinions of government policies – is also discussed in Harrison and Madge, *War Begins at Home*, v.

<sup>333</sup> Ronald Frank diary, 9 January 1940 (5071), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>334</sup> “War Aims Of Allies,” *The Times*, 26 February 1940, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>335</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>336</sup> *Ibid.*; and Our Special Correspondent, “Intransigence and Self-Praise,” *The Times*, 26 February 1940, 6. The Times Archive.

against the Nazi menace that aims for “destruction of this nation and domination of the world.”<sup>337</sup> Chamberlain further expanded on the Allied war aims, noting,

We are fighting for the freedom of individual conscience and for the freedom of religion; we are fighting against persecution wherever it may be found. Lastly, we are fighting to abolish the spirit of militarism and the accumulation of armaments which is pauperizing Europe, and not least Germany herself. Only by the abolition of that spirit and those armaments can Europe be saved from bankruptcy and ruin.<sup>338</sup>

He continued that these aims were to be secured through the re-establishment of Czechoslovakian and Polish independence, and a new German government. The stability of a new Europe would be based on a strong foundation of British and French unity. It was Germany, however, that must take the next step. Chamberlain ended amidst cheers on a resolute note: “until we are satisfied that freedom is safe we shall continue to do battle with all our soul and with all our strength.”<sup>339</sup>

Only five of eighty-four diarists – three male and two female – who made entries in February referred to the speech broadcast across the country from the Birmingham Town Hall on 24 February. This is the lowest percentage of comments for Chamberlain’s five broadcast speeches during the Phoney War.<sup>340</sup> This is supported by the entry of Mr. W.C. Eyre Hartley of London, recalling a conversation at work and no one having heard the speech.<sup>341</sup> The majority of comments were neutral with a slightly negative slant, yet did not reveal much information about the perceptions of either Chamberlain or the

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<sup>337</sup> “War Aims Of Allies,” *The Times*, 26 February 1940, 8. The Times Archive.

<sup>338</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.* The speech is also discussed in: “Various,” *The Times*, 24 February 1940, 6; “Mr. Roosevelt’s Envoy In Rome,” *The Times*, 26 February 1940, 6; and Our Special Correspondent, “Intransigence and Self-Praise,” *The Times*, 26 February 1940. The Times Archive.

<sup>340</sup> Only 6% of diarists who made entries in February comment on Chamberlain’s speech versus 65% for 3 September 1939, 18% for 12 October 1939, 29% for 26 November 1939, and 13% for 9 January 1940. Mass Observation, September 1939 – February 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>341</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 25 February 1940 (5103), Mass Observation Archive.

speech.<sup>342</sup> Two female diarists held negative views on the speech. J. McDougall noted, “Listened to Chamberlain’s speech in the afternoon, not worth listening to. This whole business of speeches with roars of cheering at the mention of ‘our allies’ or ‘the dominions’ seems like a strange tribal ceremonial.”<sup>343</sup> Ms. Christabel S. Nicholson of London mused, “Heard Chamberlain 3.30 talking rather as if he was a nonconformist preacher. Listened, first irritated by talk of ‘Fight again Evil’ & ‘Crusade’ which seem to me hypocritical.”<sup>344</sup> They both, however, also recorded more positive views. Nicholson listened to the speech again: “Later refound [*sic*] patience & thought he put forward just & sensible war aims.”<sup>345</sup> Whereas McDougall noted the reaction of a teacher: “[I]t certainly was a fighting speech.”<sup>346</sup>

While the praises and criticisms of Chamberlain’s speeches in 1939 are comparable in number, the speeches of 1940 have no such balance. Although there are commonalities in the criticisms towards the 9 January speech – specifically the financial segment and lack of reference to Hore-Belisha – they do not adhere to the dominant themes of 1939, namely the negative legacy of Munich and call of a new Prime Minister. Neither do the reactions to 24 February speech. This reflects the diarists’ focus on the content of the speech itself rather than on Chamberlain’s reputation. The lack of comments possibly reflect the general war and weather weariness occurring in Britain. There is a notable drop in diary numbers at the beginning of 1940, and a comparable decline in references to wireless speeches and programmes. Furthermore, a decrease in

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<sup>342</sup> Including: A.W. Dickson diary, 25 February 1940 (5058); and C.H. Bacon diary, 24 February 1940 (5014), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>343</sup> J. McDougall diary, 24 February 1940 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>344</sup> Christabel S. Nicholson diary, 26 February 1940 (5386), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>346</sup> J. McDougall diary, 24 February 1940 (5363), Mass Observation Archive.

the quantity and variety of references to speeches is noticeable by December 1939, and possibly reflects the increasing apathy of an anti-climactic war and harsh winter weather coinciding to reflect a general decrease in war and political interest.<sup>347</sup>

#### **4.3 Little Action, Little Interest: Diarists' Reflections on Chamberlain from the New Year to Norway**

Increasing apathy towards the war is clear in the National Panel's diaries with more time spent describing the weather and shortages – especially coal – and a noticeable drop in references to wireless broadcasts and politics. As with the first four months of war, general reflections on Chamberlain are predominantly negative, as well as a few positive remarks and entries expressing dualities of opinions. The praise, however, does not reveal detailed thoughts. Mr. E.A. Bray of Middlesex, for example, recorded that his Gran “is a strong Chamberlain-ite” but did not elaborate or mention his own feelings.<sup>348</sup> Miss Nancy Satterthwaite of Birmingham noted, “I thoroughly agree with Mr Chamberlain about people who live well away from the seat of war criticizing us. It's a

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<sup>347</sup> Diary references to Winston Churchill's wireless broadcasts, on the other hand, remain relatively consistent. 24% of diarists who made entries in October mentioned his 1 October broadcast, 23% referenced his 12 November speech, only 7% noted his 18 December broadcast, 23% reflected on his 20 January talk, and only 8% referenced his last radio broadcast as First Lord of the Admiralty on 30 March. Mass Observation diarists made repetitive notes of generally listening to the wireless or wireless, and a majority also mentioned listening to foreign broadcasts. There are frequent notes about the following speeches (in addition to Chamberlain and Churchill): Clement Attlee, Anthony Eden, King George, David Lloyd George, Lord Halifax, John Hilton, Samuel Hoare, Leslie Hore-Belisha, Herbert Morrison, President Teddy Roosevelt, Sir John Simon, Sir Archibald Sinclair, Lord Swinton, Sir Kingsley Wood, and Archbishop of Canterbury, Duff Cooper, Queen Elizabeth, Arthur Greenwood, A.P. Herbert, William Morrison, Oliver Stanley, and H.G. Wells. Wireless programmes and broadcasters also received attention in the diaries. The most notable personalities include: Gracie Fields, Tommy Handley, Lord Haw Haw, J.B. Priestley, and Christopher Stone. Most frequently referenced programmes: Adolf in Blunderland, The Shadow of the Swastika, and various Mass Observation programmes. Mass Observation, September 1939 – April 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>348</sup> E.A. Bray diary, 18 February 1940 (5032), Mass Observation Archive.

cluk!”<sup>349</sup> Mrs E. Agnes Norman of London recalled two overheard conversations commending the Prime Minister:

A middle-aged and middle-class woman sitting in the corner settled herself comfortably and informed the person opposite that now everything would be all right because Mr. Chamberlain had made such a wonderful speech. I heard something of the same kind of remark from a member of the Conference I was attending. He said Mr. Chamberlain was a very cautious person, never carried away, and wouldn't have made such a cheerful speech if there were nothing behind it.<sup>350</sup>

Similar to 1939, there were several neutral observations on Chamberlain's addresses to the House of Commons, as well as Hore-Belisha's resignation, the situation in Finland, and Cabinet changes.<sup>351</sup> Furthermore, as with the last four months of 1939, condemnation focused on the intertwined categories of calls for a new leader, distrust in Chamberlain, the continued slow pace of the war, and the negative legacy of Munich. In addition, many negative comments also referred to Hore-Belisha's resignation and Finland.

Criticisms of Chamberlain in the early months of 1940 continued with many of the same factors as the preceding autumn with ever-increasing calls for a new Prime Minister. On 25 February, Mr. Denis Argent of Essex, a self-identified pacifist and CO, indirectly condemned Chamberlain's intelligence, stating, “[My mother] was looking at Gabriel's Week-End Review w [*sic*] its contorted Halifax & remarked ‘I see Halifax is being talked of as a likely successor to Chamberlain. I think he's the man for the peace

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<sup>349</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 20 March 1940 (5419), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>350</sup> E. Agnes Norman diary, 5 April 1940 (5388), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>351</sup> Seven diarists reference Chamberlain without expressing any opinion towards his actions, policy, or reputation. Mr. F.R. Harris of London calls democracy a farce but this comment is not specifically applicable to the Prime Minister's reputation. F.R. Harris diary, 17 January 1940 (5101). A majority of the entries reference Chamberlain's weekly war reviews in the House of Commons: J. Nichols diary, 1 February 1940 (5163); and P.F. Petheridge diary, 19 March 1940 (5170). Two of the diarists specifically mention reviews to do with the situation in Finland: Arthur Collins diary, 11 March 1940 (5039.1); and Dorothy Hughes diary, 20 March 1940 (5341). In addition, two diarists discuss the Cabinet changes: M. Clayton diary, 3 and 4 April 1940 (5275); and M.J. Hill diary, 4 April 1940 (5333), Mass Observation Archive.

treaty. He's a long-headed man: the brainy sort of type you want for that job."<sup>352</sup> On 14 March, Mr. John Thornley of Lancashire recorded an overheard conversation criticizing Chamberlain for Finland, his business interests, and calling for a new Prime Minister. He stated:

Many working class ladies are shocked by the collapse of Finland and blame 'this weak kneed Government': Chamberlain is not wanted. One woman thinks 'Chamberlain has money invested abroad. He is in the banking business and there are things going on we don't know about – too much underhand! Chamberlain is no use. Anthony Eden should be Prime Minister.'<sup>353</sup>

Thornley then reflected, "The Government, except Churchill, are unpopular – no wonder!"<sup>354</sup> Mrs L. Evelyn Saunders of Birmingham comparably remarked and faulted Chamberlain's character: "I shall never vote unionist again until we've got men of character in power, Eden, Churchill, Duff-Cooper, Sir Archibald Sinclair & for them to choose men of character as strong as their form of government."<sup>355</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley, on the other hand, believed Halifax would be an "excellent" Prime Minister and continued, "the sooner Mr C. retires to the Birmingham Council the better."<sup>356</sup> Mr. P.F. Petheridge of Surrey recorded a conversation with an elderly man who believed "we were now in a b----- [*sic*] fine mess [and] [d]id not think Chamberlain was the man for the job."<sup>357</sup> However, he did not agree with Thornley, Saunders, or Eyre Hartley's replacements.<sup>358</sup> Mr. R. McIssac of the Isle of Wight offered no potential substitutes but mused, "Wondered what this new French Premier would be like – couldn't be worse than

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<sup>352</sup> Denis Argent diary, 25 February 1940 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>353</sup> He continues: "Three other women – who were not asked who they would chose – said Eden should be P.M." John Thornley diary, 14 March 1940 (5212), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 18 March 1940 (5240), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>356</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 27 March 1940 (5103). Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>357</sup> P.F. Petheridge diary, 18 March 1940 (5170), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>358</sup> Ibid.

Daladier I hoped. Perhaps an omen that Chamberlain would soon be going – why the devil can't we have some leadership in this country?"<sup>359</sup> Calls for a new Prime Minister continued after the Cabinet changes – including Churchill's appointment as senior Service Minister in charge of the armed forces – at the beginning of April 1940. For example Mr. Robert J. Nichols of London representatively remarked,

Although the daily press was on the whole favourable to the Cabinet changes the weekly press, *New Statesman*[,] *Spectator* and *Manchester Guardian*, were more critical. They want on the whole a change of brains which is the impression I had formed. More ministers are needed with push and [drive]. I firmly believe that until Chamberlain is out of it we shall continue to lack driving force in the Government.<sup>360</sup>

L. Evelyn Saunders mused, "I am pleased at Churchill being put in the supreme position. Is Chamberlain at last using a bit of latent common sense or does he see which way the wind is blowing?"<sup>361</sup>

Desire for a new Prime Minister stemmed from a lack of faith in Chamberlain and the inactivity of the war. Mass Observation diaries suggest that distrust in Chamberlain was related to his image as an appeaser and was only worsened by the slow pace of Britain's war. Friends of Christabel S. Nicholson and Ms. J.C. Pratt, both of London, had "no faith in Chamberlain," and regarded "Mr. Chamberlain and his government with loathing."<sup>362</sup> C.H. Bacon mentioned that many people did not trust the Prime Minister to continue the war: "[I]t is interesting to note that everyone here believes Chamberlain capable of negotiating such a peace behind our backs – one or two feel it would be

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<sup>359</sup> R. McIssac diary, 20 March 1940 (5138), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>360</sup> On 4 April Nichols also expressed his dissatisfaction with the Cabinet changes with the exception of Churchill which was met with "unanimous approval at home and abroad." Robert J. Nichols diary, 4 and 5 April 1940 (5163). Similar comments are found in John Thornley diary, 26 March 1940 (5212), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>361</sup> L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 5 April 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>362</sup> Christabel S. Nicholson diary, 21 February 1940 (5386); and J.C. Pratt diary, 7 January 1940 (5401), Mass Observation Archive.

betrayal of our cause [...] – a majority feel that is inexpedient to make peace on these terms – a few want peace at any price.”<sup>363</sup> John Thornley’s father had plenty to say about Chamberlain and the Government’s inaction. On 12 March he ranted,

If only those weak kneed yellow livered buggers in Parliament had half the spirit of little Finland! Chamberlain and Co., knew Finland was at her last gasp, drained of blood but they didn’t do a thing. Now on the eve of this forced peace they calmly, casually inform the world that for 3 months 50,000 men, and ships were waiting to go to Finland when the Finns asked us for help! Finnish spokesmen have done nothing else for the past month. Chamberlain is an umbrella man – no man worth the name would carry one! The whole thing makes me sick. He said ‘If Poland is attacked we fight!’ and what the devil have we done about it? The allies are impotent and might as well admit it. [...] It’s a good job there’s no general election for the government would lose every seat they hold!<sup>364</sup>

Robert J. Nichols believed, “Chamberlain and his Munich pals have no yet shown that they hate Nazism enough.”<sup>365</sup> P.F. Petheridge kept it concise, stating, “People do seem fed up [with] the inactivity and Chamberlain will have to smarten himself up to capture peoples [*sic*] enthusiasm which I think is at lowest ebb it has been since this war started.”<sup>366</sup> These feelings are supported by BIPO findings. When asked in January 1940, “In general, do you approve or disapprove of Mr. Chamberlain as Prime Minister?”, fifty-six percent approved, thirty-three percent disapproved, and eleven percent did not know. These figures are down from a sixty-four percent approval rating in December 1939.

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<sup>363</sup> C.H. Bacon diary, 26 February 1940 (5014), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>364</sup> He further expressed similar sentiments later the same day, and then, a few days later, recorded:  
I have neither the spirit nor the desire to read newspapers. Britain must be the clown of the world. What has the government done to save Poland and Finland? Nothing. What will it do to save Rumania? Exactly the same. Why don’t we submit to Stalin and Hitler if we are afraid or don’t mean to fight? The umbrella women! There is only one man and he was ostracized until war came. No wonder British soldiers home on leave from France complain of boredom!

John Thornley diary, 12 and 15 March 1940 (5212). Frank similarly commented on 19 March about Chamberlain’s clarification on the aids sent to the Finns, but questions “How is that Mr. C. can commit us to what would certainly has been a war with Russia without asking by your leave of those who would have to fight.” Ronald Frank diary, 19 March 1940 (5071), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>365</sup> J. Nichols diary, 4 April 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>366</sup> P.F. Petheridge diary, 18 March 1940 (5170), Mass Observation Archive.

Apart from a slight increase in February, with an approval rating of sixty percent, Chamberlain's ratings continued to decline dramatically to thirty-three percent by May. Moreover, while the difference between approval ratings in February and March was only two percent, the disapproval rating increased more notably. While twenty-nine percent of those surveyed in February were dissatisfied with Chamberlain as Prime Minister and an additional ten percent did not know how they felt, by March disapproval was up to thirty-six percent and uncertainty down to six percent.<sup>367</sup> It is important to contextualise these figures with Mass Observation's findings, in late 1939, of the public loyalty of Britons to their Prime Minister in wartime. Therefore Chamberlain's statistics are likely more favourable than the private reality.<sup>368</sup>

Interestingly, although not surprising given the contemporary climate, the only entries about the "God Bless You, Mr. Chamberlain" song, released in the wake of Munich in 1938, were negative. While John Thornley recorded, "It makes me spew, what blasted rot!", in late November 1939, the only other reaction to the song was by Mr. J.R. Aldam of London.<sup>369</sup> He recorded that the first time he heard the song was in March 1940, played by Harry Roy in response to popular demand. He continued: "So someone must have given Roy the usual bribe to play it – the old 'song plugging' business. Anyway the whole thing is so shocking in taste. I could imagine the band, unseen,

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<sup>367</sup>In January 1940, 56% approved of Chamberlain as Prime Minister, 33% disapproved, and 11% did not know. In February, 60% approved, 29% disapproved, and 11% did not know. In March, 58% approved, 36% disapproved, and 6% did not know. I could not find any statistics for this question in April 1940. In May 1940, only 33% approved, 60% disapproved, and 7% did not know. In addition, in February 1940, BIPO asked "In general, are you satisfied with the Government's conduct of the war?" They found that 59% were satisfied, 19% dissatisfied, 13% did not know, and 9% wanted the war stopped. British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

<sup>368</sup> Mass Observation, "War-Time Directive No.4: December 1940," Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>369</sup> John Thornley diary, 24 November 1939 (5212), Mass Observation Diary.

making rude gestures as they sang with patriotic fever in the studio.”<sup>370</sup> Thornley and Aldam’s reactions illustrate how far Chamberlain’s reputation had fallen since the song was recorded in late 1938.

A significant portion of negative reactions to the Prime Minister occurred in January following the resignation of Hore-Belisha on 5 January. The responses centred on the overlapping themes of Britain as a dictatorship and the lack of information being given. On 16 January Mr. T.J. Williams of Bristol recorded, “What I think is that Chamberlain gets rid of any man who becomes too popular, and it doesn’t matter how successful he is. But to go on like that while there’s a war on – well – it’s madness. I cant [*sic*] understand it at all.”<sup>371</sup> Diarists continued to be dissatisfied with the lack of information given about Hore-Belisha’s resignation following addresses to the House of Commons on 16 January.<sup>372</sup> Williams, for example, continued,

The statements with regard to the resignation of Mr. Hore-Belisha are very unsatisfactory. Father and mother agree. [...] [M]other said that Mr. Chamberlain’s secretiveness was ‘disappointing’. If Mr. Chamberlain is unable to announce his reasons for making changes, if such announcements would make it impossible [to] make changes, Chamberlain had better get out. I still want to know why the War Minister was sacked.<sup>373</sup>

Mrs Winifred M. Vanstone of Cheshire was also dissatisfied: “I thought Hore-Belisha’s speech very fine and controlled, but did not think much of Chamberlain’s as it was neither one thing nor the another.”<sup>374</sup> Mr. Joseph Welbank of Birmingham used Chamberlain’s own words against him, stating, “I felt annoyed when I read Chamberlain’s and Belisha’s speeches. They told us nothing. It is all very undemocratic.

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<sup>370</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 9 March 1939 (5006), Mass Observation Diary.

<sup>371</sup> T.J. Williams diary, 16 January 1940 (5231), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>372</sup> “An End To Rumour,” *The Times*, 17 January 1940, 9. The Times Archive.

<sup>373</sup> T.J. Williams diary, 16 January 1940 (5231), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>374</sup> Winifred M. Vanstone diary, 16 January 1940 (5448), Mass Observation Archive.

As a democrat, soon to be fighting for that privilege [*sic*] of that label, I reckon I have the right to know.”<sup>375</sup> C.H. Miller similarly and directly ranted, “Chamberlain’s maddening black-out about Hore-Belisha affair – democracy? Statesmanship!!”<sup>376</sup> Diarists alluding or explicating referencing a dictatorship in Britain is reflective of the fallout from Chamberlain’s manipulation of the press in the pre-war period.

A few diarists expressed a plurality of opinion within their reactions.<sup>377</sup> Mrs Gweneth E. Dean of Portsmouth, for example, begins, “Belisha’s dismissal, Chamberlain becomes more of a Dictator with every move he makes[.]”<sup>378</sup> She continued, however, “even so, I still believe he has a sounder backing in the country..... than ever before[.]”<sup>379</sup> Dean further commented, “I think the only thing that would move this country violently against him, would be the dismissal of Churchill, otherwise he can do what he likes with the rest of the Cabinet.”<sup>380</sup> Ms Nance Leacroft of London first recorded, “There is much conversation in London re [*sic*] Hore Belisha: some say it’s the end of Chamberlain[.]”<sup>381</sup> She continued, “I rather feel it is a colossal blunder – in any case it’s a great pity it was made public for it does not do any good with the rest of the world – as to Chamberlain: well events have proved he was right in the handling of the Russian pact - & he was torn to piece over that = But I don’t think Chamberlain is always wise[.]”<sup>382</sup> Concluding, however, “On the whole, I think Chamberlain is sound[.]”<sup>383</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Joseph Welbank diary, 17 January 1940 (5228), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>376</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 16 January 1940 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>377</sup> Diarists also recorded differing opinions between themselves and others on Hore-Belisha’s resignation and the fault of Chamberlain: J. McDougall diary, 14 January 1940 (5363); A.G. Errey diary, 6 January 1940 (5062), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>378</sup> Gweneth E. Dean diary, 16 January 1940 (5297), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>379</sup> Ibid.

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> Nance Leacroft diary, 8 January 1940 (5356), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>382</sup> The entry continues: “But I don’t think Chamberlain is always wise: the Czechs say [Runciman] who was sent ?1937-38 [*sic*] to find out conditions in Czecho-Slovakie [*sic*] was got hold of by the pro-Germans

Diarists also expressed a plurality of opinion – whether within in their own or in contrast with others – on Munich. Nance Leacroft, for example, recorded a very detailed conversation with the postman:

Chamberlain is one of the cleverest men in Europe – that I admire him greatly – but that I’ll never forget in Chamberlain’s speech after the Munich-1938 – how in about 6 words – utterly callous – the gist was ‘Czech-slovakia is nothing to us – they must stew in their own juice.’ I’ll never never never forget the awful shock that gave me. [I]f we had to dismiss any thought of helping them – at least it could also have been put in a nicer way. To me it was terrible – and I found to many others also: we all wished to hide our heads – for weeks we felt terribly ashamed of England. One other thing I cannot stand about Chamberlain is – he’s always saying ‘peace in OUR time’ or peace in MY time. Not one thought of the future and peace for all time. To us who have children – its hell to think of 1914 over again: but how much more do we wish to save our children from going through exactly the same horrors for THEIR children. That’s where I think Chamberlain goes wrong: so long as peace lasts out his time – why bother about the future: at least that is the feeling one gets.<sup>384</sup>

On 24 January, however, Leacroft remarked, “I never tackle people re [*sic*] Chamberlain because I dislike hearing him run down[.]”<sup>385</sup> In addition, two other diarists expressed

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& his reports to Chamberlain were so coloured - & therefore Chamberlain left Czecho-S [*sic*] to stew[.]”  
Ibid.

<sup>383</sup> Ibid.

<sup>384</sup> The postman, according to Leacroft, believed that Hore-Belisha’s resignation was due to “incompatibility”, Munich was a delay because Daladier needed a year to get the whole nation behind the war, the British nation was not 100% behind the war and many people “wish for a patched-up peace – and that is what the Govt. [*sic*] is very worried about.” Furthermore, she recorded their contrasting views about women: while he stated that most women were not behind the war because they did not want to fight for other people, Leacroft noted her “experience was totally different: among the women I found them unanimous in aching to help all those oppressed.” Nance Leacroft diary, 23 January 1940 (5356), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>385</sup> Leacroft makes additional entries expressing varied opinions, most notably on 24 January:

I never tackle people re Chamberlain because I dislike hearing him run down, but someone in office brought it up: but he said ‘he’s the right man in the right place, but what I cannot stand was his Xmas card with umbrella, etc. & Peace in our time: also at Mansion House Speech the other day, it was painful to see him waiting for applause’ = That’s his opinion – personally I don’t think Chamberlain is like that: I always remember after Munich when he was urged to have a General Election & would have romped home for 57 years, he absolutely refused to take advantage of his new popularity. I dislike grading people in classes – but I do find the working & lower middle classes are against Chamberlain - & the upper strata all for him – at least [illegible] few dissentients.

contradictory opinions towards Munich. Mr. Alan Davie of Essex stated: “I admired Chamberlain’s strenuous efforts to keep an impossible peace[.] I am a pacifist, but I am not sure that my position is not analogous with that of a member of a crew of a ship which is in troubled water owing to bad seamanship on part of the Captain.” W.C. Eyre Hartley recorded a conflict of opinion in a conversation at work, recalling,

Made disparaging remark about Chamberlain to Mrs W (aged 40) Who said ‘Well could you have done better.’ I replied that the fact that I might be killed within a year in the war did not prejudice me in his favour. I added that as we are at war we could hardly have been worse under another policy. ‘We would have been worse off had we gone to war earlier as some people wanted’ she replied. I said ‘I prefer having no war at all’[.]<sup>386</sup>

These entries support the spectrum of reactions to Chamberlain, his reputation, actions, and speeches found within Mass Observation diaries throughout the Phoney War across class, gender, and regional lines.

#### **4.4 “Hitler Often Takes A Taxi”:<sup>387</sup> The Simultaneous End of the Phoney War and Neville Chamberlain, April – May 1940**

On 4 April 1940, Chamberlain addressed the Central Council of the National Union of Conservatives and Unionist Associations. He expressed “ten times” more confidence in victory than in September, and remarked that Hitler had not tried “to strike a knock-out blow at Britain and France[.]”<sup>388</sup> He continued, that for whatever reason,

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I can’t bear to hear him spoken of as ‘that old woman – or, - old fool’ & that is the general wording used.

Nance Leacroft diary, 24 January 1940 (5356), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>386</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 9 March 1940 (5103), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>387</sup> Member of Parliament Clement Davis speaking at Oxford on 3 May 1940 stated, “What right had the Prime Minister to say the other day, ‘I am ten times more confident . . . Hitler has missed the bus’? As a friend said to him, ‘Hitler often takes a taxi.’” According to “War Cabinet And Norway,” *The Times*, 4 May 1940, 3. The Times Archive.

<sup>388</sup> “Confident Of Victory,” *The Times*, 5 April 1940, 8. Also discussed in “Mr. Chamberlain’s Confidence,” *The Times*, 5 April 1940, 9. The Times Archive.

“Hitler missed the ‘bus’ and had consequently allowed Britain to enormously expand her fighting strength.<sup>389</sup> Four days later, German forces invaded Denmark and Norway.

Although Denmark surrendered within three hours, Chamberlain announced to the House of Commons, later that day and amidst loud cheers, that Britain was sending full aid to Norway. By 14 April troops landed at Narvik and Trondheim.<sup>390</sup>

The German invasion of Denmark and Norway – often considered the end of the Phoney War in Britain – garnered a large amount of attention from Mass Observation diarists. Out of the seventy diarists who made entries in April thirty-nine mentioned the invasion.<sup>391</sup> Although none of the diarists who further elaborated on the event discuss the Prime Minister, they did express excitement that the war had finally started. Mr. C.R.

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<sup>389</sup> Ibid. One diarist, Miss Betty Hall of Norfolk makes reference to this speech on April 5: “Everybody seems very pleased & amused by Mr. Chamberlain saying ‘Hitler missed the bus.’ When people miss a bus they are usually in good time for the next one.” Betty Hall diary, 5 April (5323), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>390</sup> “Full Aid To Norway,” *The Times*, 10 April 1940, 8. The Times Archive; and Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: April 1940,” Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/resources/chronology/apr40.aspx>. (accessed 25 May 2014). In addition, the Supreme War Council met in London within hours of Germany’s invasion of Denmark and Norway. “Allied Council Meets,” *The Times*, 10 April 1940, 8.

<sup>391</sup> Of 39/70 diarists (19/38 males and 20/32 females) mentioned the German invasion of Denmark and Norway. Five of the male diarists did not make their entries in the few days following the invasion but either later on in the month or in a general entry for the entire month. J.R. Aldam diary, 11 April 1940 (5006); C.H. Bacon diary, 9-10 April 1940 (5014); E.A. Bray diary, 9 April 1940 (5032); Arthur Collins diary, 28 April 1940 (5039.1); C.H.B. Cotton diary, 9 April 1940 (5041); David Cox diary, April 1940 (5044); A.G. Errey diary, 10 April 1940 (5062); C.R. Gibson diary, 8 April 1940 (5083); W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 9 April 1940 (5103); Brian S. Inglis diary, 9 April 1940 (5118); F.C. Jennings diary, 9-10 April 1940 (5123); George Larney diary, 9-10 and 12 April 1940 (5129); Robert J. Nichols diary, 9 April 1940 (5163); C.W. Smallbones diary, 9-10 April 1940 (5201); E.A. Stebbing diary, 9 April 1940 (5205); John Thornley diary, 24 April 1940 (5212); T.J. Williams diary, April 1940 (5231); D. Wilson diary, April 1940 (5234); C.R. Woodward diary, 9 April 1940 (5235); E.J. Ausden diary, 10 April 1940 (5240); M. Clayton diary, 9 April 1940 (5275); Martina M. Corfe diary, 9 April 1940 (5285); B. Cross diary, 9-10 April 1940 (5291); Marjory Davis diary, 9 April 1940 (5295); Alice M. Franklin diary, 9 April 1940 (5312); Muriel Friend diary, 8-10 April 1940 (5313); Betty Hall diary, 9 April 1940 (5323); M.J. Hill diary, 8-10 April 1940 (5333); Dorothy Hughes diary, 9 April 1940 (5341); Eleanor Humphries diary, 10 April 1940 (5342); Rina Knight diary, 9-10 and 12 April 1940 (5348); J. McDougall diary, 9 April 1940 (5363); Ursula May MacPherson diary, 9 April 1940 (5376); J.C. Pratt diary, 13 April 1940 (5401); D. Reilly diary, 9 April 1940 (5404); Joan Ridge diary, 9 April 1940 (5406); Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 9-10 April 1940 (5419); Hope Sykes diary, 9 April 1940 (5435); and Mass Observation, April 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

Gibson of Bristol, for example, remarked, “On hearing news re [*sic*] Norway & Denmark, I experienced a feeling of elation: a feeling that at last something was going to happen[.]”<sup>392</sup> Similarly Nancy Satterthwaite observed, “People do not seem depressed or pessimistic about the war, they seem cheerful and singing as ever.”<sup>393</sup> On April 12, George Larney noted, “Still plenty of talk about Norway. People are elated by the news, and seem happier. Interest in the war has returned[.]”<sup>394</sup> On the other hand, Mr. F.C. Jennings of Birmingham stated, “There is very little mention of it today: very little more war talk than usual.”<sup>395</sup> Entries noting the German invasion were present in at least half of both male and female diaries, and were made across the country. The entries that expand upon their feelings, particularly their excitement, however, all originate in towns and cities in and below central England, predominately in the south.

While no diarists called for the immediate replacement of Chamberlain upon hearing the news of the Norwegian situation, the calls soon resumed. On 28 April, John Thornley remarked, “Chamberlain must go. We want a man of fury, devilish cunning & energy.”<sup>396</sup> Calls for a new Prime Minister increased following the evacuation of British forces from Trondheim on 1 and 2 May, and Chamberlain’s speech to House of Commons on 2 May.<sup>397</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley noted, “Chamberlain is making a statement

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<sup>392</sup> C.R. Gibson diary, 8 April 1940 (5083), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>393</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 10 April 1940 (5419). Similar expressions of excitement are found in: E.A. Bray diary, 10 April 1940 (5032); W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 9 April 1940 (5103); and Eleanor Humphries diary, 10 April 1940 (5342), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>394</sup> George Larney diary, 12 April 1940 (5129), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>395</sup> F.C. Jennings diary, 10 April 1940 (5123), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>396</sup> He also noted his father’s views on getting the Nazis out of Norway: “There’s only one chap tackling the job properly and unfortunately he cannot be head of the Navy and Army as well!” John Thornley diary, 24 and 28 April 1940 (5212). Only one other diary entry about Chamberlain is made prior to his 2 May address to the House of Commons. Mr. H. Dent of Sheffield suggested Chamberlain should be replaced by Churchill but questions his record regarding the abdication crisis, Antwerp, and Gallipoli. H. Dent diary, 1 May 1940 (5057), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>397</sup> On 28 April 1940, German forces started a five-day bombing of Krisitiansund in Norway. On 1 May, British troops began evacuating. Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: April 1940,” and

to-day. The silly old B---- [*sic*] there is only one statement to make for him and that is his resignation.”<sup>398</sup> Subsequent remarks echoed similar sentiments, such as Miss Alice M. Franklin of Chester: “[H]eard a report of Mr Chamberlain’s speech. Just as I thought. It is time they ceased underestimating the enemy. What will be the effect on the neutrals? They will trust us less than ever, and I dont [*sic*] blame them. Its [*sic*] time Chamberlain went, but his hide is so thick I expect he will stand this too.”<sup>399</sup> Thornley mused,

I am stunned, very disillusioned and afraid through our retreat from Norway. Because I understood Mr. Chamberlain was ‘10 times more confident of victory’ and he made me believe we would drive the Germans out of Scandanavia [*sic*]. Now the wind is out of my sails I feel subdued and expect to hear more bad news. I am afraid because I know the wrong men are at the helm. Haven’t we, can’t we, find more men of Churchill’s breed? Considering the millions there are in Britain surely there’s one man among them who can out-wit Hitler?<sup>400</sup>

After hearing Chamberlain’s address, Eyre Hartley questioned, “When will this obstinate useless old failure get out[?]” and recorded the comparable, yet diverse, feelings of those around him.<sup>401</sup> Robert J. Nichols had a lot to say about Chamberlain on 3 and 4 May.

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“WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: May 1940”, Mass Observation Online: British Social History, 1937-1972, from the University of Sussex. <http://www.massobservation.amdigital.co.uk.ezproxy.library.dal.ca/resource/s/chronology/may40.aspx>. (accessed 25 May 1940). Chamberlain informs the House of Commons on 2 May that “[t]he decision to withdraw from this area was taken last week, when it became evident that, owing to local German air superiority, it would be impossible to land the artillery and tanks necessary to withstand the enemy.” Cited in “Withdrawal South Of Trondheim,” *The Times*, 3 May 1940, 6. The Times Archive.

<sup>398</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 2 May 1940 (5103), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>399</sup> Alice M. Franklin diary, 2 May 1940 (5313), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>400</sup> John Thornley diary, 3 May 1940 (5312), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>401</sup> The entry begins by listing Chamberlain’s failures including letting Eden go, Austria, Sudetenland, Prague, Poland, and Norway. The full list of characteristically British varied reactions towards Chamberlain following the withdrawal from Norway:

J. Bank Manager, 42 previously pro-Chamberlain ‘The silly old man.’

W. typist, 40. ‘We always start with defeats and win in the end.[’]

D. Bank Clerk, 31 I am happy – 2 ardent Chamberlainites referred to him as a ‘silly old B-----’ this morning so we may get rid of him.

O. Married woman, warden, 40 They want to get Eden back quickly.

E. Widow, 65 I think Mr. C. is an honest man but he is so gullible and slow.

W. business man, 45 We shall do no good until Chamberlain goes – he has been a rank of failure from

First noting, “Surprise is expressed everywhere that Chamberlain still remains in power.”<sup>402</sup> He continued, referring to the upcoming debate on Norway, “He is to make a statement on Tuesday the 7<sup>th</sup>. Perhaps he will have the decency to hand the job over to someone else. I cannot see him carrying on after what has happened.”<sup>403</sup> The next day he further expanded on the common desire for a new leader: “Nearly everyone I speak with suggests Churchill for premier. It would not surprise me that he were asked to form a Cabinet. If Chamberlain persists in his old game of general post and just has a reshuffle of jobs all round, with the same mediocrities, then I think the Country will be placed in grave danger.”<sup>404</sup> Moreover, and drawing upon a persistent condemnation of Chamberlain, Nichols noted, “The appeasement gang are not fit to conduct ruthless war.”<sup>405</sup> Finally, he noted the lack of hostility towards the Prime Minister and his leadership in the press, and thus confirming that a true evaluation of Chamberlain’s contemporary reputation cannot be garnered solely from newspaper reports and publically gathered statements.<sup>406</sup>

Diarists also held a variety of reactions to Chamberlain’s address to the House of Commons on the withdrawal of British troops from Norway. A majority of the diarists reacted critically, including Mr. E.A. Stebbing of Essex: “Effect of Chamberlain’s speech negative, disappointing, however much I try to look on the bright side [...] Chamberlain

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the start. He has got rid of all the men with ‘go’ – Eden, Duff Cooper, Hore Belisha etc and he only took Churchill because he had to.

H. bank clerk, 60 We have messed it up. C. has been wrong all along – he has been too slow in everything

– look how slow they are calling people up.

W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 3 May 1940 (5103), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>402</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 3 May 1940 (5163). Similar sentiments expressed in: C.H. Miller diary, 2 May 1940 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>403</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 3 May 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>404</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 4 May 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 3 and 4 May 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

seemed all the time to be trying to make excuses for weak policy. Effect on my family the same, only moreso [*sic*].<sup>407</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite succinctly noted, “It is a serious reverse for us and nothing Mr Chamberlain can say can make it otherwise.”<sup>408</sup> J.C. Pratt, however, found Chamberlain’s statement “too soothing” given its detrimental significance.<sup>409</sup> J.R. Aldam noted his co-worker’s praise of the speech: “Fem-sec (30ish) [*sic*] says that earlier in the week it was getting her down badly, but that after hearing Chamberlain speak on radio, she feels better about it.”<sup>410</sup> Daidie Penn also reacted positively and described the speech as “all very skilfully and plausibly put[.]”<sup>411</sup>

In between the Prime Minister’s address to House of Commons announcing the withdrawal of British troops of 2 May and the debate on the Norway campaign on 7 and 8 May, diarists continued to call for a new leader. They argued that Chamberlain was too old, was incapable of waging a real war, and blamed him for the evacuation from Norway.<sup>412</sup> Daidie Penn encapsulated many of these sentiments:

[It is useless] to go on under our present leadership. I think that Mr.C. [*sic*] is sincere enough in his statements he makes – I think he speaks the truth as far as a politician ever does speak the truth – but he hasnt [*sic*] the vision – the competence or the driving power to deal with opponents like the Germans and I maintain that if he persists in office – it will be the end of the war for us – however long it may drag on. He is damaging what reputation we had the whole world over by his incompetence – his fumbling – he should retire.<sup>413</sup>

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<sup>407</sup> E.A. Stebbing diary, 2 May 1940 (5205), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>408</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 3 May 1940 (5419), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>409</sup> J.C. Pratt diary, 3 May 1940 (5401), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>410</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 3 May 1940 (5006), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>411</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 3 May 1940 (5396). In addition, three diarists make neutral observations on the speech that do not reveal opinions towards Chamberlain or the effect of the announcement, or simply state it happened: Arthur Collins diary, 2-3 May 1940 (5039.1); A. White diary, 3 May 1940 (5230); and Dorothy Hughes diary, 3 May 1940 (5341), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>412</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 7 May 1940 (5006); E.A. Stebbing diary, 7 May 1940 (5205); Dorothy Hughes diary, 6 May 1940 (5341); and Daidie Penn diary, 6 May 1940 (5396)Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>413</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 6 May 1940 (5396)Mass Observation Archive.

This reaction encompassed many of the criticisms of Chamberlain since the declaration of war.

On 7 May, the debate on the Norway campaign opened in the House of Commons. According to *The Times*, Chamberlain defended his actions – amidst cheers – and discussed Churchill’s new and expanded duties. Clement Attlee, Herbert Morrison, and David Lloyd George all drew upon public anxiety over the deficiency of information and absence of vigour in the prosecution of the war. They not only called for a new Prime Minister but also argued that the war could not be won without one. Churchill was the last one to speak and called for an end to pre-war political party conflict as hatred should be focused on the enemy. In the end, the vote was 281 for the government and 200 against.<sup>414</sup> For now, Chamberlain remained Prime Minister because, once again, his enemies were unable to unite.

Many diarists commented on the proceedings reported on the wireless and in newspapers, and focused predominantly on Chamberlain’s actions in the war and whether he would remain Prime Minister. A majority of diarists questioned when Chamberlain would resign and expressed their desire for it to happen.<sup>415</sup> Mr. C.W. Smallbones of Hampshire, for example, commented, “Everyone at work on about the political situation. General expressions of fed-upness [*sic*] with the Cabinet especially Chamberlain.

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<sup>414</sup> “House Of Commons,” *The Times*, 8 May 1940, 3; “Mr. Chamberlain’s Case,” *The Times*, 8 May 1940, 7; “Labour Challenges A Division,” *The Times*, 9 May 1940, 6; and “Labour And The War,” *The Times*, 9 May 1940, 7. The Times Archive.

<sup>415</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5006); Arthur Collins diary, 9 May 1940 (5039.1); A.G. Errey diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5062); H. Dent diary, 7 May 1940 (5057); W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 9 May 1940 (5103); C.W. Smallbones diary, 9 May 1940 (5201); John Thornley diary, 7, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5212); M. Walton diary, 9 May 1940 (5220); T.J. Williams diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5231); Marjory Davis diary, 8 May 1940 (5295); Muriel Friend diary, 9 May 1940 (5331); M.J. Hill diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5333); Dorothy Hughes diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5341); C.H. Miller diary, 9 May 1940 (5376); Daidie Penn diary, 7 and 9 May 1940 (5396); Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 8 May 1940 (5419); Margaret D. Saunders diary, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5422); Mass Observation Archive.

Churchill however is still ‘the man to win the war’.<sup>416</sup> Similar to many other diarists throughout the first eight months of war, John Thornley did not think Chamberlain was the right leader for wartime: “Mr. Chamberlain must go. One cannot be sentimental in wartime and though he is an excellent peacemaker he is no use for war.”<sup>417</sup> He then lambasted: “His pitiful excuses yesterday, muddled thinking, and idiotic saying – ‘The people of this country don’t know what they are up against!’ Don’t we? He most surely doesn’t when he is ‘10 times more confident of victory’ and believes Hitler has ‘missed the bus’ blasted rot!”<sup>418</sup> Daidie Penn wondered, “has Mr Chamberlain got away with again?”<sup>419</sup> She continued, condemning him and the futility of war if he remained Prime Minister, “If he has – and if we allow him to remain in office I feel that we might just as well save what we can and come to terms with Hitler at once. It [*sic*] amazing – the blindness of this man – he seems completely enveloped in the fog of his own complacency[.]”<sup>420</sup> Mrs Muriel Friend of Sussex expressed her surprise “that papers now say Govt.’s [*sic*] effort at peace ineffective. Eighteen months ago Chamberlain was so popular that to criticize him was enough to get a person labelled a Communist, now even the Conservative papers say he is a washout.”<sup>421</sup> On the other hand, Robert J. Nichols observed, “All points which favour Chamberlain are given headlines and sub-headlines on the front page. Nasty criticism is reported on [minor] pages.”<sup>422</sup> Although several diarists named their preferred Prime Ministerial candidates – mainly Churchill – one

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<sup>416</sup> C.W. Smallbones diary, 9 May 1940 (5201), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>417</sup> John Thornley diary, 7 May 1940 (5212), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

<sup>419</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 7 May 1940 (5396), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>420</sup> Ibid. Similar sentiments about Chamberlain’s running of the war are echoed in E.J. Ausden diary, 7, 8 and 9 May 1940 (5240), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>421</sup> Muriel Friend diary, 9 May 1940 (5331), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>422</sup> Robert J. Nichols diary, 8 May 1940 (5163), Mass Observation Archive.

diarist noted his co-worker's continued admiration for Chamberlain.<sup>423</sup> J.R. Aldam recorded:

Fem-sec (30-ish) [*sic*] is distressed at what came out in the Parliamentary debate, - details, she thinks, of too confidential nature. She thinks it may tempt the Germans to attack us, as we are so unprepared[.] This has much shaken her confidence, though she is still pro-Chamberlain and blames all our troubles on the Labour Party, on whom she puts the blame for our weak defences.<sup>424</sup>

The loyalty of Aldam's co-worker, however, does not appear representative of Britons as a whole, and despite their characteristic diversity of opinions towards the debate and Chamberlain, they appeared predominantly in favour of a new Prime Minister. This is supported by a survey of newspapers on 10 May. Most of them call for a new leader, including the *Daily Mail* stating, "It is clear that Mr. Chamberlain's Government have lost the confidence of the country. They have only one course. They must resign."<sup>425</sup> Others call for a complete change of government and specifically mention the Air Ministry. The few that did not explicitly call for new leadership, did call for a more vigorous government, however.<sup>426</sup>

On 10 May 1940, Germany invaded Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France. Mass Observation described it as "a full scale Blitzkrieg attack involving advanced bombing raids on key cities and installations, the deployment of glider troops and parachutists to capture major bridges and road junctions and a massive tank and troop

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<sup>423</sup> Calls for Churchill to become Prime Minister: C.W. Smallbones diary, 9 May 1940 (5201); Dorothy Hughes diary, 8 May 1940 (5341); and Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 8 May 1940 (5419). Against Churchill becoming P.M.: M.J. Hill diary, 8 May 1940 (5333), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>424</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 9 May 1940 (5006), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>425</sup> The *Daily Herald*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Manchester Guardian*, *Morning Post*, and *News Chronicle* all called for Chamberlain to be replaced. According to "The War Debate And After," *The Times*, 10 May 1940, 3. The Times Archive.

<sup>426</sup> The *Daily Express* and *Daily Mirror* specifically mentioned the Air Ministry. The *Birmingham Post*, *Liverpool Post*, and *Yorkshire Post* called for a stiffening of the present government for a more vigorous prosecution of the war. Ibid.

assault.”<sup>427</sup> Britain and France sent troops to Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, and France came under air attack from Germany.<sup>428</sup> The Phoney War was definitively over. A majority of diarists simply commented that the invasion had happened but a few expressed excitement and many more condemned Chamberlain.<sup>429</sup> Arthur Collins encapsulated the relief felt by many Britons on the morning of the 10 May, stating, “Hurray! Here it is at last. What a day! For 8 months I have listened to the 8 AM News for the announcement made this morning.”<sup>430</sup> The relief, almost comparable to the alleviation of tension on 3 September and the declaration of war, while felt by many was tempered by the cancellation of the Whitsun bank holiday.<sup>431</sup>

The invasion, inevitably, resulted in backlash directed at the Prime Minister and continued and increased calls for his resignation. The criticisms conformed to their usual patterns of distrust in Chamberlain and his past a peacemaker and appeaser. John Thornley concisely stated, “Chamberlain will have to go. The country won’t trust itself to him.”<sup>432</sup> C.H. Bacon further expanded, “I heard many comments relatively adversely to Chamberlain. I don’t think his popularity was ever so low & our confidence in the

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<sup>427</sup> Mass Observation, “WWII Chronology, 1939-1945: May 1940.”

<sup>428</sup> Ibid.

<sup>429</sup> Diarists that simply comment the German invasion of the Low Countries happened (all entries from 10 May 1940 unless otherwise noted): E.A. Bray diary (5032); Fred Brown diary (5035); A.G. Errey diary (5062); Brian S. Inglis diary (5118); William Kaye Quin diary, 9 [*sic*] May 1940 (5175); W.K. Scudamore diary (5193.1); C.W. Smallbones diary (5201); E.A. Stebbing diary (5205); John Thornley diary (5212); E. VanSomeren diary (5216); Marjory Davis diary (5295); Betty Hall diary (5323); M.J. Hill diary (5333); Dorothy Hughes diary (5341); Eleanor Humphries diary (5342); M. Kornitzer diary (5349); Gladys Lasky diary (5352); Ursula May MacPherson diary (5366); M.M. Paton diary (5394); D. Reilly diary (5404); M.F. Roberts diary (5411); and Margaret D. Saunders diary (5422). In addition, C.R. Gibson does not directly refer to the invasion but comments that the balloon barrage is up in full force and ARP wardens are more vigilant. C.R. Gibson diary (5083), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>430</sup> Arthur Collins diary, 10 May 1940 (5039.1). Similar sentiments also expressed in: J.R. Aldam diary, 10 May 1940 (5006); and E.J. Ausden diary, 10 May 1940 (5240), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>431</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 10 May 1940 (5006); E.A. Bray diary, 10 May 1940 (5032); Fred Brown diary, 10 May 1940 (5035); A.G. Errey diary, 10 May 1940 (5062); Robert J. Nichols diary, 9 May 1940 (5163); William Kaye Quin diary, 10 May 1940 (5175); T.J. Williams diary, 10 May 1940 (5231); E.J. Ausden diary, 10 May 1940 (5240); Alice M. Franklin diary, 10 May 1940 (5312); Dorothy Hughes diary, 10 and 11 May 1940 (5341); and Ursula May MacPherson diary, 10 May 1940 (5366), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>432</sup> John Thornley diary, 10 May 1940 (5212), Mass Observation Archive.

High Command [is] much diminished.”<sup>433</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley observed, “Another nail in Neville’s coffin but will the crisis be his excuse to stop?”<sup>434</sup> Mrs M.M. Paton of London recalled her hairdresser’s feelings: “Chamberlain will have to go – he is alright in peace, but we must have some-one strong.”<sup>435</sup> Adding her own thoughts, she noted, “and without exception Mr Churchill [is] the favourite.”<sup>436</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite recorded the simultaneous desire of two women wanting rid of Chamberlain but also expressing sympathy. The first stated, “Well he’s done his best, but we ought to get a move on[,]” and the other reflected, “Its [*sic*] a shame for him, but he’s getting old, we want somebody new I suppose.”<sup>437</sup> While still expressing their desire for Chamberlain to be replaced as Prime Minister, two diarists also noted their concern that following the invasion of Holland, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the government changes would be postponed. Daidie Penn, for example, stated, “This morning it was announced that Mr Chamberlain could not form another government – but now that this news has broken it looks as though we are to be left with him as leader – there wont [*sic*] be any time for any other adjustments.”<sup>438</sup>

On 9 May 1940, Chamberlain met with his two potential successors, Halifax – his preferred candidate – and Churchill. Halifax, however, refused the position, “recogniz[ing] that in the extraordinary conditions of war, it was precisely Churchill’s qualities that were needed.”<sup>439</sup> Churchill, of course, “did *not* demur.”<sup>440</sup> Chamberlain

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<sup>433</sup> C.H. Bacon diary, 10 May 1940 (5014), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>434</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 10 May 1940 (5103), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>435</sup> M.M. Paton diary, 13 May 1940 (5394). Similar sentiments echoed in: C.H. Miller diary, 10 May 1940 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>437</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 10 May 1940 (5419), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>438</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 10 May 1940 (5396). Also expressed in: Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 10 May 1940 (5392), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>439</sup> Gardiner, *Wartime Britain*, 193.

received word the following morning that although the Labour Party would serve in a Coalition government, they would not do so under him. Upon handing his resignation to King George VI, he recommended Churchill as his successor.<sup>441</sup> On the evening of 10 May 1940, Chamberlain announced his resignation of the premiership. He addressed Hitler's advantageous attack of the Low Countries when Britain was experiencing internal political turmoil, and that unity of the government and country could only be secured under another Prime Minister. As with each of his broadcast speeches since the declaration of war eight months earlier, Chamberlain stated that he devoted all of his attention to peace until it was clear that war was the only option, and then put all of his efforts towards war.<sup>442</sup>

Several diarists focused their reactions primarily the speech itself, and discussed relief over Chamberlain's resignation, his weakness, expressed sympathy, and reflected upon Munich. Many of the diarists simply revealed relief, such as C.H. Miller noting, "– thank God – he's resigned."<sup>443</sup> Miss Irene Anderton Naylor of London recorded her surprise that he actually did it.<sup>444</sup> The speech itself garnered mostly negative reactions focusing on its tone, described as pitiful, pathetic, and melodramatic.<sup>445</sup> On the other hand, J.R. Aldam felt Chamberlain went "down fighting" and E.A. Stebbing thought it

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid., 192-4; Feiling, 441; and Smart, *National Government*, 216-222.

<sup>442</sup> "My Duty Was Plain," *The Times*, 11 May 1940, 3. The Times Archive.

<sup>443</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 10 May 1940 (5376). Other diarists who express relief that Chamberlain resigned: J.R. Aldam diary, 10 May 1940 (5006); Denis Argent diary, May 1940 (5010); C.H. Bacon diary, May 1940 (5014); Arthur Collins diary, 10 May 1940 (5039.1); T.J. Williams diary, 11 May 1940 (5231); Dorothy Hughes diary, 11 May 1940 (5341); C.H. Miller diary, 10 May 1940 (5376); Daidie Penn diary, 15 May 1940 (5396); and L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 10 May 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>444</sup> Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 10 May 1940 (5382), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>445</sup> Marjory Davis diary, 10 May 1940 (5295); Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 10 May 1940 (5382); Daidie Penn diary, 15 May 1940 (5396); and Margaret D. Saunders diary, 10 May 1940 (5422), Mass Observation Archive.

was a good speech.<sup>446</sup> He further added, “My opinion of him is that he is a brave man, a good man, even a great man, but unimaginative, weak, and inefficient.”<sup>447</sup>

Unsurprisingly, several diarists commented on the Munich Conference but expressed slightly differing views. C.H. Miller recorded the opinion of her friends: “they still believe in Chamberlain! He did his best, Munich was good etc etc [*sic*] [...] Yet [they were] glad Chamberlain had gone now, not quite efficient apparently.”<sup>448</sup> On the other hand, Anderton Naylor remarked, “[It] is what I have desired almost more than anything ever since Munich[.]”<sup>449</sup> Muriel Friend reflected on the evolving views of Munich for Chamberlain’s reputation, stating,

M.’s mother said she thought Chamberlain was pro-Hitler, & M. said she thought the same thing. What struck me was that in a short time (18 months) Conservative people are saying what Labour & Communists were saying. I made much milder remarks about Chamberlain (saying he represented the interests of the rich people in this country to some members of my Guild) just after Munich & was dubbed as a Communist at once.<sup>450</sup>

Other diarists expressed sympathy including Mr. William Kaye Quin of Birmingham listening with his aunt and mother. He remarked, “We felt a bit sorry for him, so determined, but with no strength or brain or power to carry his determination through.”<sup>451</sup>

A large majority of the diarists reflected favourably on Chamberlain’s resignation, the new Prime Minister and Cabinet changes, and the prospect of impending action. Several diarists connected the accession of Winston Churchill with a more vigorous

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<sup>446</sup> J.R. Aldam diary, 10 May 1940 (5006); and E.A. Stebbing diary, 10 May 1940 (5205), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>447</sup> E.A. Stebbing diary, 10 May 1940 (5205), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>448</sup> C.H. Miller diary, 13 May 1940 (5376), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>449</sup> Irene Mary Anderton Naylor diary, 10 May 1940 (5382), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>450</sup> Muriel Friend diary, 12 May 1940 (5313), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>451</sup> William Kaye Quin diary, 9 [*sic*] May 1940 (5175). In addition, Saunders noted that her mother and father “are staunch Chamberlain supporters, my Mother gets quite ‘Het up’ when we talk what we think.” L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 12 May 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

war.<sup>452</sup> Denis Argent listened to the resignation speech with co-workers and recalled, “when he sd [*sic*] that Churchill was to take over as P.M. there was a sort of general intake of breath – a sort of audible grin which indicated, I shd [*sic*] say, ‘Now we’ll see something!’”<sup>453</sup> L. Evelyn Saunders further expanded on this and expressed a general sense of relief, stating, “At last things are coming more right, all the heart burnings, the irritabilities & worried looks are [giving] place to a sense of peace through knowing we have at last, proper leadership. Churchill. The first nail in Hitlers [*sic*] coffin. Oh, the relief everywhere, & everything now happening all at once.”<sup>454</sup> The following day Nancy Satterthwaite noted, “Winston Churchill is popular as Prime Minister [...] They all believe Winston will get a move on and we shall be alright now.”<sup>455</sup> A few days later, Daidie Penn similarly expressed the renewed determination of the country: “The accession of Mr. Churchill to the premiership, however has heartened up the country and one notices that people, though quieter about things are now more determined in their spirit. The new government has been welcomed on all hands[.]”<sup>456</sup> While a majority of diarists were pleased with Churchill becoming Prime Minister, a few diarists expressed doubts.<sup>457</sup> A.G. Errey, for example, noted, “Disgusted to hear that Churchill is Premier,

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<sup>452</sup> Denis Argent diary, May 1940 (5010); W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 10 May 1940 (5103); Marjory Davis, 10 May 1940 (5295); Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 11 May 1940 (5419); and L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 10 May 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>453</sup> Denis Argent diary, May 1940 (5010), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>454</sup> L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 10 May 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>455</sup> Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 11 May 1940 (5419), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>456</sup> Daidie Penn diary, 15 May 1940 (5396), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>457</sup> Diarists happy with the accession of Churchill: J.R. Aldam diary, 10 May 1940 (5006); Denis Argent diary, May 1940 (5010); William Kaye Quin diary, 9 [*sic*] May 1940 (5175); C.W. Smallbones diary, 11 May 1940 (5201); E.A. Stebbing diary, 10 May 1940 (5205); T.J. Williams diary, 11 May 1940 (5231); Marjory Davis diary, 10 May 1940 (5295); Dorothy Hughes diary, 11 May 1940 (5341); Eleanor Humphries diary, 12 May 1940 (5342); Daidie Penn diary, 15 May 1940 (5396); Nancy Satterthwaite diary, 11 May 1940 (5419); and L. Evelyn Saunders diary, 10 and 14 May 1940 (5420), Mass Observation Archive.

though I expected it. Heaven help England! – Heaven help Europe!”<sup>458</sup> Additionally, other diarists qualified their opinions towards Churchill, specifically that he was the right man for war but not peace.<sup>459</sup>

As the seasons changed, action started; the Phoney War and Chamberlain’s premiership ended simultaneously. Many Britons got their wish for a new leader, wartime action, and a more vigorous prosecution of war. As the aerial bombardment of the British home front began that summer, Churchill’s instantly iconic, morale-boosting, resolute words were heard around the country. While it is impossible to know if the events of the summer of 1940 – the defining period of the Second World War for Britain and Churchill’s legacy – would have gone differently under Chamberlain’s leadership, one thing is certain: how the events did play out sealed Chamberlain’s ineffectual, weak, and appeasing legacy and shot Churchill’s rising star far into the blitzed out sky and into his place on Mount Olympus.

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<sup>458</sup> A.G. Errey diary, 10 May 1940 (5062), Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>459</sup> W.C. Eyre Hartley diary, 10 May 1940 (5103); and M. Kornitzer diary, 15 May 1940 (5349), Mass Observation Archive.

## **Chapter 5    Establishing A Legacy: An Analysis**

The home front during the Second World War is most often characterized by the “myth” of the Blitz – a cheery, steadfast, and united Britain. The ‘myth’ is generally and uncritically applied to both the preceding and following periods of the war, and taken to represent unanimity of goals and opinions. Moreover, it indirectly implies that the period preceding the Blitz – and Winston Churchill – was unimportant and inconsequential and, therefore, further diminishes Neville Chamberlain’s premiership and reputation. Based on the diaries of Mass Observation, the English home front was not unanimous in its thinking during the Phoney War, and especially in private attitudes towards the Prime Minister. The diaries are an invaluable source as they not only provide insight into contemporary opinions untainted by hindsight but they also allowed diarists’ to express their thoughts on events without worrying about censorship or appearing unpatriotic. As discussed in the preceding chapters, these considerations no doubt influenced British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO) and basic Mass Observation polls in favour of Chamberlain, but an analysis of the National Panel diary entries reveal a greater spectrum of opinion and challenge the prevailing assumption that criticism of the Prime Minister was a predominantly working-class phenomenon. Furthermore, Mass Observation diaries undermine the assumption that it was only after the invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940 and the release of *Guilty Men* in June 1940 that Chamberlain’s popularity faltered.

### **5.1    Wireless Broadcast Speeches**

A majority of the diary entries referring to Chamberlain occurred around his wireless broadcast speeches on 3 September 1939, 26 November 1939, 9 January 1940,

and 24 February 1940, as well as his response to Hitler's peace proposals on 12 October 1939. The four main speeches all started with the Prime Minister describing his failed efforts to preserve peace, and his subsequent commitment to victory. This repetitive admission of failure kept the policy of appeasement and the Munich Agreement in the public mind. The speech on 12 October was the only one that did not explicitly reference Chamberlain's personal failure and is also the only speech to receive predominantly positive feedback. Only one diarist reacted adversely but focused on the negative legacy of appeasement, not the speech itself. The majority of the diarists reflected favourably to the firmness and content of the speech. This suggests that Chamberlain's constant reminder of his long commitment to peace – and as such, the Munich Agreement – further exacerbated negative public perceptions of his leadership and his policies. It is only following the speech on 26 November, however, that diarists begin to call, in earnest, for a new leader. On 3 September, Chamberlain's admission of guilt over his failure to preserve peace created a gender imbalance in diarists' reactions with proportionally more males reflecting critically and females expressing sympathy. A similar gender imbalance is present on 26 November with a majority of males reacting negatively compared to predominantly positive female opinions.

Beginning on 12 October and continuing on 26 November, Chamberlain's tone was different. The unusual strength and determination in his voice was more characteristic of Churchill – and diarists comment on this – than the Prime Minister. In October, both men and women from across the country reacted positively to the new tone suggesting that when Chamberlain displayed strength and resolve his reputation prospered. In November, however, there was a more diverse reaction and an interesting

pattern emerged. Existing Chamberlainites reacted adversely to the Prime Minister's new tone and described it as too aggressive or comical, whereas those diarists previously opposed to Chamberlain praised his new resolve. Following the broadcasts on 3 September and 26 November, a few diarists criticized Chamberlain's inability to boost morale or hearten the nation's spirit. While this was not a frequent criticism in Mass Observation diaries for the duration of the Phoney War, it does become a central component of Chamberlain's later stigmatization especially when contrasted with Churchill.

Criticisms of the Prime Minister's speeches in 1939 focused on his weak image, his inabilities, his egotism, and his age, as well as his endorsement of appeasement. There were frequent calls for a new leader. A majority of the negative reactions in the first four months of war reflected on his actions and reputation rather than on the content of his speeches. This changed in 1940. On 9 January, only one diarist reflected favourably on the broadcast while the other eight diarists displayed hostility towards the content, or lack thereof, of the speech. A majority of the entries criticized the financial segment that demonstrated an upper-class appraisal of hardship and sacrifices, and highlighted the distance between the Chamberlain government and the people. Many diarists were also displeased with the absence of information on Hore-Belisha's resignation a few days earlier. Only one female diarist commented on the speech, and criticized Chamberlain's continued egotism. This may suggest that men and women possessed different thought processes in judging speeches with men focusing more on the content of the speech rather than on existing reputation. On 24 February only five diarists made note of the speech. While the comments were either neutral – simply commenting it was on – or conflicted –

juxtaposing positive and negative reactions in the same diary entry. The sheer lack of references to the speech is likely reflective of increasing war weariness.

Increasing apathy towards the war in the early months of 1940 is supported by diary entries of the National Panel, with more time spent describing the weather and shortages – especially coal – and a noticeable drop in references to politicians and wireless broadcasts. There is a notable drop in diary numbers at the beginning of 1940, as well as a comparable decline in references to wireless speeches and programmes. In September 1939, one hundred and twenty-eight diarists made entries, ninety-seven in both October and November, and ninety-one in December. By January 1940 only seventy-one diarists made entries, seventy-two in March and sixty-six in April, only in February was there a slight increase to eighty-four diarists making entries. February is also the month with the fewest references to a Chamberlain speech. While in November, twenty-nine percent of diarists mentioned the wireless broadcast only seven percent did in February.<sup>460</sup> Furthermore, a decrease in quantity and variety of speech references is noticeable by December 1939. Even comments on Churchill's speeches dropped from twenty-three and twenty-four percent in October and November 1939, respectively, to only seven percent in December and eight percent the following March. His January broadcast, however, was commented on by twenty-three percent of diarists. This possibly reflects the increasing apathy of the public during a period of inactivity and harsh winter weather coinciding to reflect a general decrease in interest in war and politics.

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<sup>460</sup> 65% of diarists who make entries in September reference Chamberlain's declaration of war on 3 September. In October, 18% of diarists mention the reply to Hitler's peace proposals. In November, 29% of diarists reference the Prime Minister's wireless address to the nation. In January, 13% of diarists mention Chamberlain talk from the Mansion House and in February, only 7% reference the Prime Minister's final broadcast speech of the Phoney War. Mass Observation, September 1939 – April 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

Overall, Britons displayed a multiplicity of reactions to Chamberlain's wireless broadcasts during the Phoney War. Analysis of the predominantly middle-class National Panel demonstrate the wide-ranging opinions held within one social class on a given topic. This challenges the generally held opinion, articulated by Angus Calder and Arthur Marwick, that it was only the working classes that were hostile towards Chamberlain and his government.<sup>461</sup> The positive reactions to 3 September broadcast originated predominantly in the south – including southeast and southwest – with only one from the north of England. Opinions on the four other speeches, however, do not indicate any regional differences. Continued reflections on the Munich Agreement and calls for a new Prime Minister were present across class, gender, and regional lines. Although the “myth” of the Blitz experience suggests Britons act as one in times of crisis and war, this should not be equated with unanimity in private opinions towards the Prime Minister's broadcasts during the Phoney War. However, a multiplicity of attitudes should not be taken to represent national disunity either, but rather serve as a testament to the very democracy they were fighting for – both at home against government press manipulation, and abroad against Fascism and Communism.

## **5.2 General Reflections on The Prime Minister**

The anti-climactic inactivity of the first eight months of war on the British home front fostered a general disinterest in politics and politicians. As such, references to Chamberlain mainly centred on his broadcast speeches. Although a few diarists gave positive appraisals of Chamberlain and his premiership, and several more made general observations about his actions – including addresses to the House of Commons and

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<sup>461</sup> Calder, *The People's War*, 34; and Marwick, *The Home Front*, 14-5.

Supreme War Council meetings – most diarists’ references to Chamberlain were negative. As with reactions to the speeches, the entries fall into the prevailing categories of the negative legacy of Munich and calls for a new leader. In addition, diarists criticized the slow pace of the war and expressed distrust for Chamberlain. These four categories are intertwined. For example, Chamberlain was blamed for both the war and its slow pace. Inactivity exacerbated fear over a second Munich and consequently increased distrust in the Prime Minister, resulting in calls for a new leader, and, sometimes, a new government. Many diarists not only wanted a new leader but also believed that the war could not be won without one. While Churchill was most frequently cited, diarists also mentioned Anthony Eden, Duff Cooper, and Lord Halifax as desirable replacements. Some diarists, however, did not believe there were any suitable replacements available in the government. Inevitably, calls for a new leader increased following the invasion of Norway in April 1940 and reached a fever pitch on 10 May with the invasion of the Low Countries.

The legacy of Munich, calls for a new leader, slow pace of the war, and distrust in Chamberlain were consistent diarist criticisms for the duration of the Phoney War. The lack of official news was a constant criticism after the outbreak of war – and before – but by December 1939 diarists were beginning to note surprise over Chamberlain’s popularity and satisfaction ratings in the press. The ratings gathered by BIPO, however, were likely skewed by the British tradition of outward public support for the Prime Minister during wartime. In January 1940 the resignation of Hore-Belisha and the continued absence of official news culminated in thoughts of Britain as a dictatorship, and Chamberlain as the dictator. By April, diarists began to note surprise over the lack of

hostility towards Chamberlain in the press. Varied reactions continued on 10 May with Chamberlain's resignation and Churchill's succession. Although a large majority of diarists expressed relief over Chamberlain's resignation and excitement for an actual war, select diarists continued to express sympathy towards Chamberlain and were not happy with the chosen replacement. Overall, Mass Observation diaries provide more representative opinions than those in the press, and reveal more nuanced attitudes. Furthermore, the opinions presented in the diaries challenge the reliability of using newspapers, and BIPO statistics, as an accurate measure of public opinion.

### **5.3 Analytical Conclusion**

Based on the National Panel, contemporary attitudes towards Chamberlain during the Phoney War were multifarious. Reactions towards his speeches were both positive and negative with no notable regional differences, with the exception of 3 September when praises originated chiefly from the south of England. Although women tended to react more sympathetically than men who were generally more critical, both called for a new Prime Minister. Chamberlain's constant reminder of his failure to preserve peace increased public hostility, from both men and women, towards him and his policies. This is supported by reactions to 12 October speech in which he did not explicitly reference his failure and the comments, with one exception, were all positive. Chamberlain, therefore, negatively impacted his own legacy. Moreover, it appears that men focused more on the content of the speech itself rather than Chamberlain's reputation. This is supported by the predominantly male reactions to 9 January speech that fostered hostility based on its content, or lack thereof. The only female diarist to comment on this speech criticized Chamberlain's egotism. Reactions to the speeches were positive, negative, and

neutral, with some diarists expressing a plurality of opinion – whether within their own thoughts or contrasted with others. General observations about Chamberlain, however, were predominately negative and focused on the four intricately intertwined categories of the negative and lasting legacy of Munich, calls for a new leader, slow pace of the war, and distrust in Chamberlain. The diaries of the National Panel question the validity of the satisfaction polls taken during the war, especially by BIPO. Mass Observation diarists illustrate that Britons’ opinions were never as simple as the unitary reaction characteristic of the Blitz experience, but were among a spectrum of opinions that were influenced by many factors – although predominantly rooted in Munich.

## Chapter 6 Conclusion

Many works on Neville Chamberlain and appeasement begin by stating how the two are intricately linked.<sup>462</sup> Others go further and state that Chamberlain and appeasement are twin symbols of “moral cowardice and national dishonour.”<sup>463</sup> In the past seven decades, the two have become one and the same – one cannot be mentioned without the other, just as Munich has become synonymous with appeasement. This thesis has shown that during the remainder of Chamberlain’s premiership and the Phoney War, the legacy of his efforts to preserve peace had a negative impact on Britons’ perceptions of him. His negative reputation is not only a product of literature – including Cato’s *Guilty Men* (1940) and Churchill’s *The Gathering Storm* (1948) – and history, but is rooted in contemporary public attitudes.

In the pre-war period, public opinion towards Chamberlain was never static. News of his first visit to Hitler, at Berchtesgaden, sent his popularity soaring amongst all social classes, and both men and women. A week later, news of his meeting with Hitler at Godesberg, and later the terms, substantially decreased his popularity and began a pattern that would continue throughout the pre-war and Phoney War periods: a tendency for male criticism and female sympathy. While news of the Munich Agreement initially boosted Chamberlain’s popularity to new heights, it was arguably less a result of his actions (concessions) than relief over avoiding war. Britain, after all, was far from prepared for a total war. In the immediate wake of the Munich Agreement Chamberlain received thousands of letters but despite representation otherwise, they were not solely positive.

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<sup>462</sup> Including but not limited to: Goldstein, “Neville Chamberlain,” 276; Kennedy, “The Tradition of Appeasement,” 195; Parker, *Chamberlain and Appeasement*, 1; Pyper, *Chamberlain and His Critics*, ix-x; Rock, *Neville Chamberlain*, 7; and Smart, *Neville Chamberlain*, xi.

<sup>463</sup> Ruggiero, *Neville Chamberlain and British Rearmament*, 1.

As quickly as his popularity soared, it fell. It started with the press slowly breaking free from his grasp and criticizing the Agreement, the House of Commons debate showing increasing dissenting voices against Chamberlain's full control, and the public soon began to express shame over the terms of the Agreement, particularly the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia. Within a week of the Munich Agreement, diverse attitudes towards it – and the Prime Minister – were apparent.

Chamberlain's satisfaction ratings, according to the British Institute of Public Opinion (BIPO), remained consistent throughout the pre-war period, even following the German occupation of Prague and consequential failure of the appeasement policy. This forced Chamberlain to take a firmer stance on foreign policy. His subsequent guarantee of Polish independence at the end of March 1939 may have offset public dissatisfaction over Czechoslovakia. His approach to foreign policy for the remainder of the pre-war period, particularly his reluctance to form an alliance with the Soviet Union, did not reflect public attitudes. Opposition towards Chamberlain's actions was growing within the government and public. On the eve of war, Britons held a multiplicity of opinions towards their leader.

During the first eight months of war, Mass Observation diarists' reflections on Chamberlain were limited by the sheer unreality of the war. As apathy grew, comments on the Prime Minister decreased in number as disillusionment with his leadership increased. While many conditions of the Phoney War including the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) restrictions (blackout, gas masks, air raid warnings, and shelters), rationing, winter weather, and even Britain's lack of participation in the war itself were beyond Chamberlain's control, they still had an impact on his popularity. The slow pace of the

war and fear of a second Munich fostered distrust in Chamberlain. These factors further increased calls for a new leader. A large portion of the criticism was rooted in his actions at Munich – although, occasionally, this worked in his favour. Dedicated Chamberlainites believed his heroic actions at Munich put him beyond criticism. His critics, however, were far greater in number and condemned all of his actions because of his advocacy of appeasement. Moreover, many of the mixed opinions were a result of contrasting Chamberlain's present actions with his 'awful' past. The general reactions to the Prime Minister – separate from reflections on his speeches – were predominantly negative. They criticized his weakness, inabilities, ego, and age. They called for a new leader able to prosecute a vigorous war, a war worthy of the British nation. Many of these criticisms were rooted in Chamberlain's action at the time of Munich.

The National Panel's reflections on Chamberlain's speeches were more diverse. Both men and women from across England criticized and praised them. There was a preponderance of female sympathy and male criticism, as well as a tendency for women to appraise a speech based on their opinions of Chamberlain's reputation whereas men were more likely to critique the content of the speech itself. Furthermore, based on the diary entries, it appears that Chamberlain's constant repetition of his failure to preserve peace – an admission of guilt and reminder of shame – had a negative impact on his reputation. This is supported by the overwhelmingly positive reactions to 12 October speech – the only one in which he did not explicitly refer to his failure. Chamberlain was sealing his own legacy. Moreover, his tone is a frequent topic in the diaries, particularly following 26 November speech. The new tone was considered too loud or comical by existing Chamberlainites but received as resolute and praised for its strength by others.

This suggests that when Chamberlain broke away from his weak image – that of an appeaser – his reputation prospered.

Chamberlain's declining hold over the government became clear following the invasion of Norway. He managed to survive another month as Prime Minister until the evacuation of British forces from Trondheim and subsequent debate in the House of Commons at the beginning of May. Dissident voices were growing and diarists' calls for a new leader not only continued but also increased. The invasion of the Low Countries on 10 May 1940 was the final nail in Chamberlain's premiership coffin. He resigned and was succeeded by Churchill. Yet even this move, contrary to what popular memory believes, was not met with unanimous approval from the British public. Chamberlain died six months after his resignation, before he had the chance to rehabilitate himself – an event that benefitted Churchill greatly.

There is no existing literature that specifically examines Chamberlain's contemporary reputation amongst the British public. Yet the works that touch on it, briefly, rely on misleading newspapers and BIPO statistics. Based on this, they often conclude that Chamberlain's reputation was intact until May 1940 when the fallout from the Norwegian campaign and the Nazi invasion of the Low Countries resulted in a thirty-three percent satisfaction rating.<sup>464</sup> My analysis of Mass Observation diaries shows that Chamberlain's popularity was already declining, although not without fluctuations. This decline began with Chamberlain's meetings with Hitler in September 1938 and continued after the occupation of Prague. Throughout the Phoney War, both male and female diarists of the predominantly middle-class National Panel from across England reacted diversely to the Prime Minister and his speeches. Although the general comments were

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<sup>464</sup> British Institute of Public Opinion (Gallup) Polls, 1938-1946, uploaded by J. Hinton.

predominantly negative, they were not unanimous in their reasoning despite falling in to the dominant and intertwined categories of distrust, the slow pace of the war, calls for a new leader, and the legacy of Munich. The reactions to the speeches feel across a spectrum from positive to negative but also adhered to the same categories. Despite Britons' determination to win the war, they were not as united in their thoughts towards the Prime Minister and his actions as the 'myth' of the Blitz, uncritically applied to the Phoney War, would suggest. Neville Chamberlain's legacy is not solely a product of history or a result of *Guilty Men*. Much of his legacy is rooted in contemporary public opinion that, of course, was deeply rooted – for better but most often for worse – in his actions at Munich. Chamberlain's biggest success was his greatest downfall. What he thought would make him the hero of history instead made him the personification of British shame over appeasement.

Appendix A: Diarist Summaries<sup>465</sup>

Diarist #	Name	Gender <sup>466</sup>	Birth Year	Marital Stat <sup>467</sup>	Occupation	Location	Entry Months <sup>468</sup>
5002	A.S.E. Ackermann	M	1868	M	Engineer/ Consulting	Surrey	1-3, 10
5003	L.T. Ackerman	M	1910	S	Artist & Gardener	Kent	7-8
5006	J.R. Aldam	M	1913	M	Manager of Office for Tea Propaganda Board	London	6-10
5007	R.C. Amsden	M	1915	M	Journalist	Sussex	1-2
5010	Denis Argent	M	1917	S	Journalist	Essex	1-10
5011	J.D. Aspland	M	1915	S	Clerk	London	1-2
5012	James Austin	M	1912	M	Solicitor Assistant	London	1-2
5014	C.H. Bacon	M	1912	N/A	RAF	Lincolnshire	7-10
5026	M.W. Beresford	M	1920	S	Student	Warwickshire	8
5032	E.A. Bray	M	1918	S	Estimator on Airframe Contract	Middlesex	4-10
5033	A. Brayshaw	M	1872	M	Clerk	Hertfordshire	1-10
5035	Fred Brown	M	1894	M	Power Loom Turner	Huddersfield	1-10
5036	Christopher Brunel	M	1921	S	Student Film Maker	Buckinghamshire	3
5039.1	Arthur Collins	M	1901	M	Clerk	Sheffield	1-10
5039.7	G.G. Clutterbuck	M	N/A	N/A	N/A	Somerset	4
5039.9	A.F. Coles	M	1921	S	Civil Servant	London	1-7
5040	Margate Cornhill	M	1922	S	Clerk	Kent	2

<sup>465</sup> Mass Observation, August 1939 – May 1940 diaries, Mass Observation Archive.

<sup>466</sup> Male (M), Female (F).

<sup>467</sup> Single (S), Married (M), Widowed (W), Not Available (N/A), Divorced (D).

<sup>468</sup> August 1939 (1), September 1939 (2), October 1939 (3), November 1939 (4), December 1939 (5), January 1940 (6), February 1940 (7), March 1940 (8), April 1940 (9), May 1940 (10).

5041	C.H.B. Cotton	M	1906	M	Brazilian Consular Officer	Brighton	9
5042	Harold D. Cowan	M	1901	S	Accountant	Essex	2-3
5044	David Cox	M	1914	N/A	Engineer	Manchester	9
5054	Alan Davie	M	1916	S	Tea Merchant	Essex	1-2, 4-7
5057	H. Dent	M	1912	M	School Master	Devon & Sheffield	1-2, 9-10
5058	A.W. Dickinson	M	1882	M	Postmaster/Newsagent	Newcastle	1-8
5059	W.R. Dunlop	M	1915	S	Farmer	Sussex	3
5061.1	L.R. England	M	1920	N/A	Student	London	2-3
5062	A.G. Errey	M	1919	S	Student	Sussex & Lancashire	1-2, 5
5064	Paul Farnell	M	1921	S	Clerk	Birmingham	2, 4-10
5070	C.Z. Fozard	M	1903	S	Bank Cashier	Yorkshire	3-4
5071	Ronald Frank	M	N/A	N/A	Agricultural Worker	Wiltshire, Middlesex, & Hampshire	6-8
5073	V.M. Fromm	M	1915	M	Printer	Sussex	2-5
5074	J. Fry	M	1916	S	Engineer (Aircraft)	Wembley	6-7
5080	Kenneth Gee	M	1908	S	Reviewer	London & Hants	1-2
5083	C.R. Gibson	M	1920	S	Clerk	Bristol	4-10
5084	R. Gorvill	M	1921	S	Student	Devon	2
5086	R.D. Gray	M	1920	S	Student	Cambridge & London	1-3
5089	J.B. Gregory	M	1915	N/A	Postal Sorter	London	2-10
5090	Leonard Grugeon	M	1917	N/A	Bank Clerk	Wiltshire	2-4
5092	M.M. Gundry	M	1898	M	Office Worker	London	1-2, 10
5101	F.R. Harris	M	1914	M	Chemist	London	1-2, 4-6
5103	W.C. Eyre Hartley	M	1909	M	Bank Clerk	London	7-10
5104	Oliver Howard	M	1917	S	Student	Manchester	2, 4-5
5106	G.A. Heads	M	1896	S	Newspaper Reporter	County Durham	2
5107	A. Hewes	M	1919	S	Bank Clerk	Bradford	1-3

5111	John Howard	M	1906	M	Electrician	Hampshire	2-4
5114	Frank Hughes	M	1903	N/A	N/A	Birmingham	3
5118	Brian S. Inglis	M	1922	S	Surveyor's ARP Assistant	Wiltshire	1-10
5120	Jackman	M	1917	N/A	Civil Servant	London	1-2
5121	Arthur Jabobs	M	1922	N/A	Student	Manchester	3-5
5123	F.C. Jennings	M	1903	M	Technical Process Controller	Birmingham	9
5126	J.J. Kipling	M	1921	S	Student	Bradford & Oxford	2-5, 8-10
5129	George Larney	M	1906	M	Unemployed	Middlesex & Yorkshire	3-9
5132	Jack Lippold	M	1906	S	Buyer	Birmingham & London	2-3, 5
5133	Harold D. Lowcock	M	1918	S	Poster Writer	Lancashire	1-3
5135	D.A. Lury	M	1922	S	Civil Servant	Surrey	2, 4-8
5136	P.M. McAnally	M	1909	M	Research Director (store)	London	3, 7
5138	R. McIssac	M	1920	S	Student	Oxford & Isle of Wight	1-3, 8-9
5141	R. Manser	M	1922	S	Bank Clerk	Kent	1-2
5142	D.E. Marmion	M	1917	S	Student	Surrey	2-5
5143	K.J. Marsden	M	1921	S	Student Draughtsman	Wigan	2-3
5145	David Irvine Masson	M	1916	S	Librarian Assistant	Leeds	2-9
5147	D.L. Medd	M	1917	S	Student	Kent	1-2
5154	P.N. Mills	M	1922	S	Clothing Manufacturer's Assistant	Ipswich	2-5, 7-8
5155	F.H. Milner	M	1907	M	Engineer's Draughtsman	Surrey	1
5163	Robert J. Nichols	M	1892	S	Park Keeper	London	1-10

5164	L.G. Norman	M	1917	S	Clerk	Bristol	2, 4-5
5170	P.F. Petheridge	M	1905	S	Clerk	Surrey	1-10
5173	Guy Pidgeon	M	1902	M	Chief Electrician	Blackburn	3-5
5175	William Kaye Quin	M	1916	N/A	Journalist	Birmingham	10
5179	G. Reilly	M	1878	M	Technical Chemist	Luton	1-7
5180	C.C. Rew	M	1881	S	Independent	Hampshire	1-10
5182	A.H. Ridge	M	1914	S	Civil Servant	Leeds	1-2, 4-5
5183	Michael Riley	M	1913	N/A	Mechanical Engineer	Dudley	4
5185	J.A. Roberts	M	1918	S	Student	Liverpool	2
5187	G.L. Rogers	M	1916	S	Student	London & Cambridge	2
5190	W.H. Sayer	M	1884	M	Aeronautical Engineer	Wolverhampton	1-10
5193.1	W.K. Scudamore	M	1892	M	Author	London	1-3, 7-10
5197	F.G. Shaw	M	N/A	S	Advertising	Cheshire	7-9
5199	G.W. Shipway	M	1876	M	Railway Draughtsman	Cheshire	1-8
5201	C.W. Smallbones	M	1907	M	Electrical Substation Attendant	Hampshire	1-10
5204	R. South	M	1892	M	Journalist	Manchester	2, 4-6
5205	E.A. Stebbing	M	1920	S	Unemployed; (Jan 1940) Shop Assistant	Essex	1-10
5206	James Stevens	M	1924	S	Bookstall Assistant	London	7
5207	A.J. Stobbs	M	1913	N/A	Trainee Draughtsman	Leicester	9
5208	E.S. Sykes	M	1913	M	Shopkeeper	Cornwall	1-9
5209	E. Symes Bond	M	1878	M	Master Printer	Northampton-shire	2-7
5211	Geoffrey H. Thomas	M	1915	S	Building Society Clerk	Yorkshire	7
5212	John Thornley	M	1911	S	Printer's Agent	Lancashire	2-10

5215	A.E. Tomlinson	M	1911	M	Secretary	Peterborough	2-10
5216	E. Van Someren	M	1904	M	Chemist Researcher	Hertfordshire	1-5, 10
5217	H.B. Vanstone	M	1912	M	Accountant	Cheshire	1-4
5220	M. Walton	M	1904	M	Teacher	County Durham	2-3, 5-6, 8-10
5223	K. Watts	M	1924	N/A	Student	Hampshire	1-2, 5
5224	E. Webb	M	1913	N/A	Letterpress Machine Minder	Bristol	1-2
5225	G. Webb	M	1889	N/A	Aircraft Fitter	Southampton	3-6
5228	Joseph Welbank	M	1914	S	Textile Warehouse- man	Birmingham	1-8
5229	S.F. Wells	M	1915	S	Teacher	Cambridge- shire	1-3
5230	A. White	M	1896	M	Shopkeeper	Leeds	1-10
5231	T.J. Williams	M	1920	S	Librarian Assistant	Bristol	1-4
5234	D. Wilson	M	1917	N/A	Metallurgi- cal Chemist	County Durham	10
5235	C.R. Woodward	M	1907	M	Teacher	Middlesex	7-9
5237	C. Wooster	M	1914	S	Architect's Assistant	London	1-10
5240	E.J. Ausden	F	1897	S	Teacher	Watford	1-10
5246	M. Bates	F	1911	S	Assistant	Surrey	1
5249	M. Bell	F	1905	S	Civil Servant	Cambridge	2, 4-8
5250	Marial Bennett	F	1909	M	Actress	London	1-3
5255	Mildred Bosanquet	F	1890	M	Housewife & Ambulance Driver	Kent	8
5262	D. Brinton Lee	F	1897	M	Housewife	London	2, 5
5263	Nancy Brown	F	1910	S	Librarian	Devon	4-8, 10
5269	Moira Carr	F	1912	S	Unemploy- ed	Hampshire	1-5
5275	M. Clayton	F	1890	M	Film Strip Producer	London	3-9
5276	Brenda	F	1906	S	Masseuse	Surrey	1-5

	Cobbett						
5278	O.E. Cockett	F	1912	S	Civil Servant	London	1-3, 7-10
5280	Emmeline W. Cohen	F	1902	S	Psychiatrist	London	2, 5
5283	Margaret V. Congdon	F	1887	N/A	Nurse Companion	Somerset & Bristol	2-10
5285	Martina M. Corfe		1913	S	Ambulance Driver	London	6-9
5291	B. Cross	F	1908	N/A	Journalist/ Writer	London	1-3, 5, 10
5292	Elisabeth Crowfoot	F	1914	S	Unemploy- ed	Suffolk	1-4, 6-9
5295	Marjory Davis	F	1910	S	Cookery Demonstra- tor	Kent	1-10
5296	Edith Dawson	F	1885	M	Housewife	County Durham	2-10
5297	Gweneth E. Dean	F	1910	M	Housewife	Portsmouth	1-2, 6
5300	Marjorie Dewsbury	F	1918	S	Sales Clerk	Sheffield	1-4
5306	Annie Elliot	F	1891	M	Housewife	Burnley	4
5312	Alice M. Franklin	F	1901	S	Nursing Sister	Chester	1-5, 8-10
5313	Muriel Friend	F	1905	M	Domestic Worker	Sussex	2-3, 5-10
5315	Dora Gandy	F	1895	S	Teacher	London	2-3
5319	Noreen Goodson	F	N/A	M	Teacher	Reading	5-6
5322	Barbara Hale-Hall	F	1917	S	Clerk	Berkshire	1-8
5323	Betty Hall	F	1914	S	Garage Assistant	Norfolk	1, 7-8
5324	Judith Hall	F	1921	S	Garage Assistant	Norfolk	1-10
5325	E. Hamilton Grant	F	1876	W	Housewife	Kent & London	7-8
5332	Elizabeth Hill	F	1905	S	Teacher	Northumber- land	1-7
5333	M.J. Hill	F	1909	S	Housewife	Huddersfield	1-10
5336	Hilda Hodges	F	1904	M	Housewife	London	1-3
5340	T.M. Hope	F	1894	S	Landed Gentry	Essex	1-2, 4-7
5341	Dorothy Hughes	F	1916	S	Shorthand Typist	Liverpool	1-10

5342	Eleanor Humphries	F	1903	M	Housewife	London	1-10
5345	N. Jung	F	1916	S	Architect's Assistant	Southampton	1-3
5348	Rina Knight	F	1897	M	Music Teacher/ Housewife	Yorkshire	2-9
5349	M. Kornitzer	F	1905	S	Unemploy- ed	London	1-4, 7, 10
5350	G.H. Langford	F	1890	D	Teacher & Reporter	London	1-2
5351	Joy Langley	F	1919	M	N/A	Essex	4
5352	Gladys Lasky	F	1922	S	Student	Northampton & London	4-7, 10
5356	Nance Leacroft	F	1889	W	Proprietor of Leacroft Service Bureau	London	5-8
5362	B. McAnnally	F	1913	M	Part-time Air Raid Warden	London	2
5363	J. McDougall	F	1913	M	Housewife	Surrey	1-9
5366	Ursula May MacPherson	F	1894	M	Housewife	Cambridge	1-10
5376	C.H. Miller	F	1900	S	Teacher	Sussex	1-7, 9-10
5382	Irene Mary Anderton Naylor	F	1898	S	Social Worker	London	1-6, 10
5383	Audrey Neck	F	1916	S	Civil Servant	Surrey	2-3
5386	Christabel S. Nicholson	F	1890	N/A	Doctor	London	7
5388	E. Agnes Norman	F	1887	M	N/A	London	7-9
5390.1	R.M. Oldroyd	F	1915	S	Teacher	Cheshire	1-2, 4
5394	M.M. Paton	F	1894	M	Housewife	London	10
5395	Valentine Pearson	F	1915	S	Researcher, Welder, Ambulance Driver	Sheffield	1-7
5396	Daidie Penn	F	1903	M	Artist	Cornwall	1-5, 7, 9- 10
5397	Mary Pickles	F	1913	S	Teacher	Liverpool	1-2
5399	Adelaide R. Poole	F	1879	S	Nurse (Retired)	Sussex	1-2, 4

5401	J.C. Pratt	F	N/A	S	Architect	Buckinghamshire & London	6-10
5402	M.A. Pratt	F	1882	S	Retired Teacher	London	1-2, 4, 6
5404	D. Reilly	F	1914	S	Teacher's Assistant	Derbyshire	9-10
5406	Joan Ridge	F	1914	M	Housewife	Leeds	1-5, 7, 9
5408	A. Riley	F	1866	S	Teacher (Retired)	Sussex & Yorkshire	1
5411	M.F. Roberts	F	1915	S	Teacher	Blackburn	9-10
5413	I.M.R. Rolfe	F	1892	M	N/A	Hertfordshire	7
5414	M. Rose	F	1916	S	Clerk	Essex	3-5
5416	M.E. Rothwell	F	1880	S	Nurse	Essex	3-5
5419	Nancy Satterthwaite	F	1908	S	Fish Fryer	Birmingham	1-10
5420	L. Evelyn Saunders	F	1902	M	Housewife	Birmingham	2-10
5421	Magdalene C. Saunders	F	1918	S	Housewife	London	7-8
5422	Margaret D. Saunders	F	1915	S	Ambulance Driver	London	1-10
5424	Ivy Skinner	F	1891	M	Housewife	Essex	2
5425	Pamela Slater	F	1915	S	Architectural Assistant	London & Wiltshire	1-5, 7-8
5426	B.W. Smith	F	1914	M	Secretary	Cambridge	1-2
5431	Yvonne Stuckey	F	1914	M	Pharmacist	Lancashire	2, 4-5
5434	Doris Kale Swan	F	1894	M	Housewife & Mental Nurse	Northumberland	2-3
5435	Hope Sykes	F	1915	M	Shopkeeper	Cornwall	1-9
5437	Edith Taunton	F	1905	M	Book Keeper	London	1-5
5438	L.C. Tavener	F	1887	M	Teacher	London	7-8
5439	Jean Tayler	F	1890	M	Teacher & Housewife	Hampshire	1-2, 4-7
5445	M.C. Towler	F	1900	M	Housewife	Yorkshire	1-5, 10
5448	Winifred M. Vanstone	F	1911	M	Housewife	Cheshire	4, 6
5453	P.W. Wallace	F	1905	M	N/A	Newcastle	4-5
5456	G.H. Warrack	F	1904	S	V.D. Researcher	Kent	2
5458	Doreen	F	1920	N/A	Telephone	Southampton	1-2

	Whiteman				Operator		
5463	Wragg Penwith	F	1892	S	Teacher & Social Worker	Cheshire	2

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