

“Peace for our Time” (1938)

Abstract

On September 30, 1938, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned from a meeting with Hitler that resulted in the Munich Agreement. After disembarking his airplane at the Heston Aerodrome west of London, Chamberlain spoke with great relief and satisfaction of the agreement with Hitler to allow the Reich to annex German-speaking areas of Czechoslovakia, also known as the Sudetenland. During the height of the crisis in September, Europeans feared another world war, and the concept of appeasement held some measure of respect. Many believed that their leaders must do anything within reason to avoid another outbreak of hostilities. Later that day, outside of 10 Downing Street, Chamberlain praised the agreement as having established “Peace for our time” (often misstated as “Peace in our time”). The term itself was an echo of Prime Minister Disraeli’s own declaration after returning from the Congress of Berlin in 1878. Given the Nazis’ eventual invasion of the rest of Czechoslovakia in 1939, this speech and the appeasement it represented has gone down as a great folly, with Chamberlain having been deceived into thinking he could do honest business with Hitler. At the time, the speech was not universally applauded, with thousands of people protesting this policy, which left Czechoslovakia out of the negotiations altogether.

Source

This morning I had another talk with the German Chancellor, Herr Hitler. And here is the paper which bears his name upon it as well as mine. [cheers]

Some of you perhaps have already heard what it contains. But I would just like to read it to you.

“We, the German Führer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting today and are agreed in recognizing that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe. We regard the agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again. [cheers] 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 to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.” [cheers]

Source: screenocean / reuters

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