

The Making of the Twentieth Century

This new series of specially commissioned titles focuses attention on significant and often controversial events and themes of world history this century. The authors, many of them already outstanding in their field, have tried to close the gap between the intelligent layman, whose interest is aroused by recent history, and the specialist student at university. Each book will therefore provide sufficient narrative and explanation for the newcomer while offering the specialist student detailed source-references and bibliographies, together with interpretation and reassessment in the light of recent scholarship.

In the choice of subjects there will be a balance between breadth in some spheres and detail in others; between the essentially political and matters scientific, economic or social. The series cannot be a comprehensive account of everything that has happened in the twentieth century, but it will provide a guide to recent research and explain something of the times of extraordinary change and complexity in which we live.

The Making of the Twentieth Century

Series Editor: CHRISTOPHER THORNE

Other titles in the Series include

Already published

Anthony Harrison, *The Framework of Economic Activity: The International Economy and the Rise of the State*
David Rees, *The Age of Containment: The Cold War 1945-1965*

In preparation

Mark Abrams, *The Rise of Public Opinion*
Dennis Austin, *Africa: The Transfer of Power*
George Grün, *The Illusion of Peace: International Relations 1918-1933*
Dennis Gunning, *The Origins of the First World War*
Anthony Hartley, *Gaullism: Its Roots and Development*
Anthony Hartley, *Germany: East/West*
C. P. Hill, *Government, Business and People: The U.S.A. in the Twentieth Century*
C. P. Hill, *Isolation and Involvement: The United States and the World in the Twentieth Century*
Desmond King-Hele, *The End of the Twentieth Century?*
Hans Kohn, *The Racial Problem in the Twentieth Century*
J. Miller, *1917 in Russian and World History*
Tony Nicholls, *Weimar and the Rise of Hitler*
B. N. Pandey, *The Break-up of British India*
B. N. Pandey, *Problems of Independence in South and South-East Asia*
P. B. Reddaway, *Literature and Politics in the Soviet Union*
E. M. Robertson, *Mussolini, Abyssinia and the League*
E. M. Robertson, *The European Powers and the Spanish Civil War*
Richard Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia*
Ann Williams, *Britain and France in the Middle East*
Elizabeth Wiskemann, *Fascism in Europe*
R. C. Wofinden and A. W. Macara, *Population, Resources and Public Health*
John Wren-Lewis, *Doubt and Belief in the Twentieth Century*

The Approach of War, 1938–1939

Christopher Thorne

Truly, the souls of men are full of fear:
Ye cannot reason almost with a man
That looks not heavily and full of dread.

Richard III, Act II, Scene iii

Macmillan Education

ISBN 978-0-333-03478-1

ISBN 978-1-349-15234-6 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-15234-6

© Christopher Thorne 1967

Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1967 978-0-333-09759-5

MACMILLAN AND COMPANY LIMITED

Little Essex Street London WC2

also Bombay Calcutta Madras Melbourne

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY OF CANADA LIMITED

70 Bond Street Toronto 2

ST MARTIN'S PRESS INC

175 Fifth Avenue New York NY 10010

Library of Congress catalog card no. 67-10649

FOR

B. L. T. and P. D. W.

Contents

<i>List of Plates and Maps</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
1 Opportunity, Appeasement, and Aggression	I
2 Anschluss	35
3 Munich	54
4 Prague, Memel, Tirana	92
5 The Search for Security	113
6 Danzig: Western Fears and Nazi Reality	152
7 War for Danzig and more	179
<i>Chronological Table</i>	205
<i>Bibliography</i>	211
<i>Index</i>	221

Plates and Maps

The cover picture shows Hitler delivering his Sudetenland Ultimatum in the *Sportpalast*, Nuremberg.

PLATES

between pages 114 and 115

- 1a Halifax visits Goering, November 1937
- b Hitler arrives in Vienna, 14 March 1938
- 2a Hitler takes the salute at the Party Rally at Nuremberg, 12 September 1938
- b Chamberlain departs for Godesberg, 22 September 1938
- 3a Chamberlain and Hitler after their final talk at Godesberg
- b Hitler speaks: the *Sportpalast* meeting, 26 September 1938
- 4a Gas masks being fitted at Holborn Town Hall, 26 September 1938
- b Bonnet, Daladier and Gamelin in London for talks, 26 September 1938
- 5a Departure for Munich from Heston, 29 September 1938
- b Arrival at Munich Airport
- 6a Return from Munich: Heston Airport
- b Return from Munich: crowds in Downing Street
- 7a Return from Munich: Hitler's reception in Berlin
- b Ciano, Halifax, Chamberlain and Mussolini in Rome, January 1939

- 8a German troops enter Prague, 15 March 1939
 b Beck arrives for Anglo-Polish talks in London, 3 April
 1939

Grateful thanks are due to the following for permission to reproduce the plates: 1a, Erich Kordt; 1b, Austrian National Library; cover picture, 2a, b, 3a, b, 4a, b, 5a, 6a, 7a, b, 8a, b, The Radio Times Hulton Picture Library; 5b, 6b, Central Press Photos.

MAPS

1	Europe, 1933	4
2	Europe, 1938-1939	85
3	Japanese penetration in China, June 1939	157

Grateful thanks are due to the following for permission to reproduce the maps:

Maps 1, 2: Messrs. Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., based on R. R. Sellmann, *A Student's Atlas of Modern History*.

Map 2: Messrs. Hamish Hamilton Ltd., based on A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*.

Map 3: H.M.S.O., based on J. R. M. Butler, *Grand Strategy*, vol. ii of *History of the Second World War*, in the 'United Kingdom Military History' Series.

Abbreviations

- D.G.F.P.* *Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918–1945, Series D* (H.M.S.O., vols. i–vii).
- D.B.F.P.* *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919–1939, 3rd series* (H.M.S.O., 9 vols.).
- N.C.A.* *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression* (Washington, 10 vols.).
- New Documents* *New Documents on the History of Munich* (Prague, 1958).
- Dirksen Papers* *Documents and Materials Relating to the Eve of the Second World War*, vol. ii (Moscow, 1948).
- I.M.T. Proceedings* *The Trial of German Major War Criminals: Proceedings of the International Military Tribunal sitting at Nuremberg* (H.M.S.O., 1946–50, 22 parts).
- D.D.I.* *I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani*, 8th series, vols. xii and xiii (Rome, 1952–3).
- F.R.U.S.* *Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1938, vol. i, and 1939, vol. i (Washington, 1955 and 1956).

Preface

THIS book does not claim to analyse all the causes of the Second World War. It is essentially a study of the diplomatic activity of the last two years of so-called peace, but I have endeavoured to point out the considerable limitations placed upon the influence and significance of this diplomacy during the period, while giving due weight to other elements. These include the press and public opinion, the destructive savagery of National Socialism, and the personalities and roles of such men as Chamberlain and Mussolini, for both of whom regular diplomatic channels became little more than a tiresome formality. Above all, of course, one has to attempt to penetrate as far as one may the dark recesses of that diseased mind which, more than any other single factor, was to bring war to Europe.

Though the ground has been covered several times before, the clash of rival theories makes an attempt at a fresh assessment still seem worthwhile, and the vast amount of source material has enabled little-known facets to be brought out here and there, as in the case of Memel. I have provided detailed references in a way which enables the non-specialist to ignore them if he chooses, while others may examine more fully the grounds for what I have written. Also, in so brief an essay an indication of where further information may be obtained has often been the most I could offer those wishing to pursue the subject at greater length.

Perhaps I should also add a word concerning the standpoint from which I have approached British foreign policy in particular. The simple, 'guilty men' interpretation of these years is presumably — and rightly — now recognised as an

inadequate one. Nor does it become subsequent generations lightly to dismiss that idealism which contributed to the country's weakness when faced with Hitler, or for those who feared for the lives of their children during the Cuban crisis to ignore the voices which were uttering a similar cry in September 1938. I include on page 1 the decorations of the Assistant Editor of *The Times* as a reminder that the most fervent advocates of 'appeasement' had often been tried and not found wanting in the most hideous conditions of warfare.

Yet it remains impossible to ignore the considerable shortcomings of many of those in high places during the approach of war. I have tried to be fair, but I have not altogether followed the advice of some older and wiser heads and removed all traces of the dismay which at times, despite earlier works, accompanied my study of the period. Had I done so a better book might well have resulted, but perhaps a slightly less honest one.

I alone, therefore, am responsible for the opinions which appear below, but despite this and the brevity of the essay there are several to whom I must express much gratitude for the help and encouragement they have given me. The staff of that remarkable institution, the Wiener Library, have been unfailingly kind; Erno Nagy has patiently answered and transmitted to friends my questions on the Central European scene, and in particular Hungary, as he and they saw it at the time; and Luisa Gunning has made good my deficiency by translating documents from Italian. With their great first-hand knowledge of so many aspects of the subject, Elizabeth Wiskemann and the Rt. Hon. Harold Macmillan have been kind enough to read and comment upon the work in typescript and answer further questions, while the immense debt I owe my wife and Philip Whitting is all too inadequately repaid by the book's dedication.

October 1965

C. G. T.