

A PAGE OF ANCIENT HISTORY

"In Search Of Peace" By Neville Chamberlain

NOT this year, nor next year, nor the year after, not perhaps for a hundred years, will the world dare to accept any final assessment of Neville Chamberlain, who died on November 9, 1940.

Even one hundred years from now there will still be some who will look back on the Chamberlain who set out for Munich, and the shouts of the crowd: "Stick up for the Checkos"; and as many who will look back on the Chamberlain who returned, and the relief that a nation breathed when it heard his words: "I think this means peace in our time."

The only adequate obituary at this time is surely the wording of the cable that announced his death: "Mr. Neville Chamberlain . . . died peacefully at his home in the country. He was 72 years of age."

If there is a better one it is the title of the book he wrote after Munich, and before September of 1939. Munich was over, and Czechoslovakia had suddenly disappeared. Mr. Chamberlain of Munich was becoming Mr. Chamberlain of conscription and bigger armaments. Our extracts from what he wrote are taken from the book which Putnam's published.

It was called:

"In Search of Peace."

Here is the man himself explaining himself as his policy came to its crisis:

WHATEVER may be the ultimate verdict on the events through which we passed in the last year, and which have left their mark on some of us—whatever may be the verdict on the part which has been played by the British Government, we can be sure that the period will stand out as one that is memorable in the history of the British people (wrote Mr. Chamberlain in his book).

We ourselves have been through the whole gamut of the emotions—anxiety deepening until it became acute, then intense relief, varied by renewed doubts and fears until now the people have settled down into a mood of firm and fixed resolve, confident in our strength, clear in our conscience that we have done and are doing all that men can do to preserve peace. Convinced of the rightness and the unselfishness of our aims we are as ready as ever to listen to the views of others, but determined not to submit to dictation. And whatever differences there may be among us as to the methods, I feel satisfied that throughout our country there is fundamental union on the principles of the policy which we are following.

"A Lot of Rotten Eggs"

I seem in these days to be the target for a lot of rotten eggs, but I can assure you that does not keep me awake. The British people have watched the old umbrella going round—they have, I believe, approved our efforts, strenuous, and up to now successful, to keep Europe out of war.

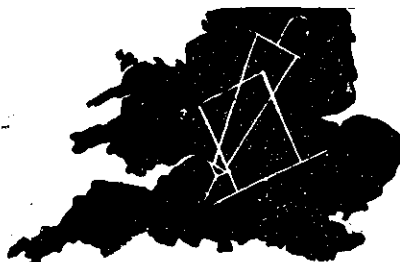
Nothing would induce us to enter upon a war unless we are absolutely convinced that it could not be avoided without

sacrificing our own liberties and our own good name. I am confident that the British people will be behind us in any measures we may think it necessary to take in order to deter others, if others there be, who would seek to substitute methods of force for the methods of discussion which we ourselves employ in settling our own disputes at home.

"Never Meddlesome Busybodies"

Recent developments in our policy have been forced upon us and have led us to undertake new commitments in Europe leading inevitably to fresh increases in the armed power of the nation. It has never been part of our policy to be meddlesome busybodies interfering in other people's concerns. We have long had certain alliances and engagements on the Continent and, of course, we have a general interest in the maintenance of peace; but so long as these things were not threatened, we had no desire to go farther.

And as for Germany's actions, we were not necessarily concerned with them so long as they were confined within the limits which Germany laid down and sought only to promote the interests of Germany without threatening the independence of non-German countries. But, when Bohemia and Moravia, countries inhabited by a population the great majority of which was not German—when those countries were annexed to the Reich, well, then other countries began at once to ask where is this pro-



liberate policy of some foreign power.

Well, let me say now, as I have said before, that never has it entered our thoughts to isolate Germany or to stand in the way of the natural and legitimate expansion of her trade in Central and South Eastern Europe, still less to plan some combination against her with the idea of making war upon her. . . .

"Not Prepared to Sit By"

On the other hand, I want to make it equally plain that we are not prepared to sit by and see the independence of one country after another successively destroyed. Such attempts in peace time have always encountered our resistance, and it is because there can be no rest,



NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN on his 71st birthday

cess going to stop. Indeed, the natural result was that every neighbour of Germany felt its security threatened, and a suspicion, a widespread suspicion, was created that we were only watching the first step in a policy which might contemplate the swallowing of State after State with the intention ultimately of dominating the world.

Nazi Ambitions

It may be that the Nazi leaders have no such ambitions. They themselves say that there is nothing farther from their minds than to use these gigantic forces which they have accumulated for the purpose of aggression against others or of attempting the economic, political and military domination of smaller States.

If that be so, then I say that Germany has nothing to fear from British policy . . . I can understand that people who suffered after the war from the consequences of severe privation, have a dread of being stifled or restricted by the de-

liberate policy of some foreign power.

Well, let me say now, as I have said before, that never has it entered our thoughts to isolate Germany or to stand in the way of the natural and legitimate expansion of her trade in Central and South Eastern Europe, still less to plan some combination against her with the idea of making war upon her. . . .

no security in Europe, until the nations are convinced that no such attempt is contemplated, that we have given these assurances to Poland, to Rumania, and to Greece, which have been so warmly welcomed by them.

It is with the same purpose of calming and stabilising the situation that we have entered upon conversations with other countries, particularly with Russia and Turkey. . . .

Let me say here and now that neither in armaments nor in economics do we desire to enter into unbridled competition with Germany. We have already made an Anglo-German payments agreement which has proved, I think, of mutual benefit, and which has resulted in a fair volume of reciprocal trade in spite of the great differences in the economic systems of the two countries. And, moreover, we would not refuse to enter into a discussion upon measures for the increase of our mutual trade or for the improvement of our economic condition; but, of course, only if unmistakable signs can be given to us of a desire to restore that confidence which has been so shaken.

It must be apparent that these assurances to European countries have added greatly to our responsibilities, and, therefore, the necessity that we should put ourselves in a position to fulfil them. War in these days is no longer preceded by those preliminary stages which in old days gave ample warning of its approach. To-day it is a carefully prepared surprise and the lightning blow which give the first notification, and we must take our precautions accordingly. . . .

Doubts of Our Intentions

In the course of the discussions which we have been carrying on with these European countries it became clear to

(Continued on next page)