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Czechoslovakia, Czech-Slovakia and the Munich Agreement

In Czech - which is not the same thing as Slovak - popular memory, the agreement that was signed at Munich in the small hours of the night 29-30 September 1938 was a national catastrophe, a disaster comparable to the loss of Bohemian independence in 1620 or the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968. The infamous document, signed by Hitler for Germany, Mussolini for Italy, Daladier for France and Chamberlain for Britain - but, crucially, not Beneš for Czechoslovakia - is seldom mentioned in neutral terms. The treaty is referred to, with irony, as the *Mnichovská ‘dohoda’* (Munich ‘Agreement’), the scare quotes used to indicate that there was no ‘agreement’ from the country whose territory was being decided. Or it is described, with bitterness, as the Munich ‘*diktát*’, the foreign loanword used to show what language the dictator spoke and to trump Germanophile notions of a ‘*Versailles diktát*’. In the equally common formulation *Mnichovská zrada* (Munich betrayal),¹ the invisible finger of blame is pointed at the British and French, the turncoat allies, rather than at the Czechs’ traditional enemies, the Germans. The expression ‘*O nás, bez nás*’ (About us, without us), which is understood to refer specifically to the Munich Agreement, accentuates the injustice of Czechoslovakia having been left out of the deliberations.² The intended moral is clear: *they*, not *we*, were responsible for this terrible episode.

The notion that Czechoslovakia was sacrificed, martyred, even crucified, has particular resonance across Central Europe, where an originally Catholic trope became a nationalist commonplace. The poignant, recurrent refrain in František Halas’s 1938 poem ‘*Zpěv úzkosti*’ (Song of Anxiety) ‘*Zvoní, zvoní zrady zvon/ čí ruce ho rozhoupaly/Francie sladká hrdý Albion/A my jsme je milovali*’ (the bell of betrayal tolls/whose hands swung the bell?/sweet France, proud Albion/and we had loved them), evokes indignation at the Allies’ treachery and pity at Czechoslovakia’s plight: to have been betrayed by those it had loved and trusted, but could trust

no more. Halas's mournful verses, memorised by generations of Czech schoolchildren, also refers to 'clenched fists', an allusion to mobilization and the widespread perception that the Czechoslovak people, prepared to fight for their country, were denied that satisfaction by President Benes's acquiescence.³ In Czech especially, the words 'Munich' and 'betrayal' go together, almost like synonyms. The associations are so entrenched that the Czech Wikipedia dictionary-style entry (which is translated into Slovak word for word) give three alternative names for the four-power pact signed at Munich in September 1938: *dohoda*, *zrada*, *diktát* (agreement, betrayal, *diktat*).⁴. Unsurprisingly, Czech and Slovak accounts agree that Munich was a disaster. What came next is more contentious, since Fr Jozef Tiso's Slovak Republic of 1939-1945, which was closely allied to Nazi Germany, was the first ever Slovak state.

In Czech newspapers, magazines, TV and film documentaries, as well as in popular histories and school textbooks, the events of September 1938 are endlessly rehearsed. The question as to whether or not it would have been better to refuse to accept the Munich *diktát* and fight alone, holding out long enough to be joined by the Soviet Union, is perpetually debated: not only in books, magazines and documentaries, but also in pubs and around dinner tables. *What if things had turned out differently?* is the title of both a popular Czech counterfactual paperback and a prime-time Czech Television TV series.⁵ One of the most lavishly funded recent portrayals of this moment of truth appeared in the 2013 TV documentary-drama series *České století* (the Czech Century). In the episode called 'The Day after Munich', a rather wooden Czechoslovak President Edvard Beneš is shown having to cope with the outrage brought to him by his chiefs of staff. 'I tried everything', the president explains, 'I kept offering different solutions. One plan after another. A third plan. A fourth. Autonomy. Then I offered a fifth plan. But they kept wanting more...'. General Vojtěch Luža interjects: 'the British gave us hope. They kept winking at us as if to say that you had everything under control'. General Lev Prchala bursts out at Beneš: 'You need to name a new government – a military government – and mobilise. We need to show the world – they are testing our strength, don't you understand?' Beneš: 'But we are weak.

Without France and Poland, we are weak.' Prchala responds: '*You* are weak! We can't just accept this. If we don't want to be slaves, we have to defend our honour.'⁶ But Beneš, pale and drawn, refuses to give the order. Instead, he accepts the loss of the Sudetenland and prescribed 'settlement' of Hungarian and Polish grievances as a *fait accompli*.

Czechoslovakia's reputation as an 'island of democracy' in a hostile, totalitarian sea, a stalwart nation whose interests were shamefully betrayed by its would-be protectors - the story that was to become such an important trope in Allied wartime propaganda and beyond - began to be fixed as early as 1938.⁷ In now familiar documentaries, compilations of newsreel and voice-overs with titles like 'the Road to War' or 'the Price of Appeasement', the signing of the Munich Agreement at the end of September 1938 is invariably followed by images of German troops marching into Prague in mid-March 1939, as if one act immediately followed the other, without the intervening months.

The implied or stated connections between the signing of the Munich Agreement and the collapse of the Czechoslovak have come to be popularly linked roughly as follows. After Munich, Hitler promised that he had no further territorial demands to make. Chamberlain returned to Britain in triumph, claiming to have preserved peace. On 15 March 1939, German troops marched into Prague while France and Britain – signatories to the Munich Agreement and Czechoslovakia's closest allies - stood by. The implication is that Hitler had broken the terms of the Munich Agreement, and the other signatories should therefore have defended Czechoslovakia's post-Munich borders. Only after Hitler attacked Poland, on 1 September 1939, did France and Britain finally declare war on Germany. Czechoslovakia, so the familiar moral of the story goes, had been sacrificed in vain, made to pay for Allies' naïve trust in Hitler's promises and policy of Appeasement. Those who sought to evade war inadvertently helped to bring it about. Worst of all, because Germany was simply handed over the strategically and militarily important parts of the Bohemian Crown Lands, the war lasted longer, and was even more horrifying, than necessary.

In Czech, the notions that Munich was a terrible wrong inflicted by the French and British, that the Czech people were ready to fight but prevented from doing so by Beneš's acceptance of the Munich *diktát*, and that this humiliation had serious consequences for the Czech nation's self-belief and self-respect, have a particular salience. This is because the so-called 'Munich complex' has been used widely to explain the Czechs' subsequent acceptance of authoritarian regimes, first of the extreme political right and later of the extreme political left. The rapidity with which democracy was abandoned after Munich, the extent of wartime collaboration with the Nazis, the brutality with which German-speakers were expelled after the Second World War, the ease with which the Communists came to power in 1948, and the speed with which 'Normalization' was re-imposed by the Czechoslovak Communist Party after the Prague Spring: all these sensitive topics have been excused or explained as indirect consequences of Munich. Those dark chapters which cannot so easily be made to fit the Munich narrative – for example, the post-war expulsion ('exchange') of Hungarians, the pre-war persecution of Roma (gypsies) or the state-sponsored discrimination against Jews by Slovak and Czech authorities before 15 March 1939 - remain largely absent from both public discourse and official memory.⁸

The Munich Agreement was interpreted differently under the varied Czecho-Slovak, Czech, Slovak, and Czechoslovak regimes which followed the fall of the First Czechoslovak Republic at the end of September 1938. Two underlying meta-narratives continue to dominate. The first meta-narrative, which dates from the Second World War, was consciously developed and promoted by ex-Czechoslovak President Beneš, as part of his tireless wartime campaign, as a voluntary exile in the USA and in Britain, to restore the Czechoslovak state to its pre-Munich borders; annul the Munich Agreement; return to power; realign the country's security alliances; and remove the non-Slav minorities (above all the Germans, but also the Hungarians and the remaining Jews) from a reunited Czech and Slovak post-war state.⁹ This wartime narrative was itself built on what Andrea Orzoff has aptly termed the modern 'myth of Czechoslovakia in Europe' as put forward during the First Republic by the Castle Group (a close circle of advisors,

intellectuals and politicians surrounding founding father and first Czechoslovak president T.G. Masaryk and his disciple Edvard Beneš), according to which Czechoslovakia was ‘one of the most enlightened, developed and progressive democracies east of the Rhine’ and T.G. Masaryk a great humanist and democrat.¹⁰

The second meta-narrative, developed during the socialist/Communist period after the Second World War, built on pre-existing Castle narratives of Czechoslovak exceptionalism and post-Munich disenchantment with multi-party democracy, but introduced new criticism of the ‘bourgeois’ aspects of the First Czechoslovak Republic. ‘The Communist version of the Munich story’, as Karel Bartošek observed during what turned out to be the Czechoslovak Communist regime’s last year in power (1989), ‘practically never wavered from the single theme that Czechoslovakia was betrayed, not only by “the western bourgeoisie” but also by “domestic reactionaries” such as the “traitors among the right-wing socialist leaders and the Castle bourgeoisie.”’¹¹ This device enabled Czech patriotism, nationalism, and disillusionment with Munich all to seem supported by Communism.

Although many Communist set interpretations were discredited and overturned after the 1989 revolution, removing symbols of the Soviet liberation of Prague proved controversial. In the end, some – most notably Tank 23, which once stood on a concrete plinth in the middle of ‘Tank-Drivers’ Square’ in Prague – were removed; while others, such as the statue ‘Brotherhood’, depicting a feminised Czech soldier embracing and presenting a bouquet of lilies to a manly Soviet liberator – remains, undisturbed, outside Prague’s main railway station. Similarly, while some Czech scholars cast doubt on the Soviet Union’s genuine readiness to intervene on Czechoslovakia’s behalf in 1938, most reproduce, unchallenged, the Communist-era interpretation in which the bourgeois, Western allies (France and Britain) betrayed Czechoslovakia whereas the Soviet Union - alone of all the state’s allies - remained true.¹²

In 2015, in anticipation of the 80th anniversary of the signing of the Munich Agreement, the Czech film director Petr Zelenka released a semi-comedy, ‘*Ztraceni v Mnichově*’ (‘Lost in

Munich’). The film opens with familiar newsreel images from 1938 of demonstrations outside the Czechoslovak parliament, mobilization, and the signing of the four-power pact. These well-known images are accompanied by highly emotive orchestral music, all racing strings and thundering timpani, with a grim voice-over. ‘Munich, 1938’, begins the narrative. ‘A stirring drama of betrayal. The event that led directly to the unleashing of the Second World War. Ten days that decided the fate of the Czechoslovak nation for long years to come’.¹³ After an hour and a half of post-modernist romp, centred around the making of a film within a film featuring Eduard Daladier’s talking parrot, ‘Lost in Munich’ ends with another few minutes of archive footage, this time without voice-over, allowing us silently to witness the Czech government’s sycophantic welcome, on 15 March 1939, to Konstantin von Neurath, the first German *Reichsprotektor* of the so-called ‘Protectorate’ of Bohemia-Moravia. Cringing, we hear Adolf Hitler fulsomely praised and the newly-established German ‘Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia’ welcomed by the Czech cabinet as guaranteeing the nation ‘a happier future’. We are released from our embarrassment only after watching the diminutive Czech Prime Minister give the new German *Reichsprotektor* a deep bow.

The Czech national myth which ‘Lost in Munich’ unpicks is the same one which Jan Tesař, the essayist and historian to whom Zelenka dedicated his film, declared to rest on a ‘pseudo-problem’.¹⁴ The question of whether or not Czechoslovakia ‘could have fought’ in September 1938, argues Tesař, was never the real problem. In contrast to official memory, in 1938 the vast majority of the Czechoslovak population was anti-war; the army was in any case unprepared; and the strength of the alliance with France, let alone the Soviet Union, exaggerated. The ‘real trauma [bold in original],’ argues Tesař, ‘which was carefully concealed in myth and cloaked in a pseudo-problem’,¹⁵ was not that Czechoslovakia was prevented from using its excellent army to resist the German fascist oppressor. Rather, it was that the Czech weapons used by the Nazis were manufactured *after* Munich, not before. It was this voluntary collaboration, after Munich

but *before* the German takeover of Bohemia-Moravia, which constituted the Czech nation's real shame and 'failure' (*selhání*).¹⁶

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When historians and journalists write of the Munich Crisis, they nearly always telescope the five and a half months between the signing of the Munich Agreement on the night 29-30 September 1938 and the establishment of the German Protectorate of Bohemia-Moravia on 15-16 March 1939 as if one event automatically followed from the other. If we want to understand what really happened to Czechoslovakia after Munich, and to chart how democracy ended in authoritarianism and quasi-fascism, paving the way for both wartime fascism and post-war Communism, we need to rewind, so to speak, and pay attention to the fine detail, played in slow motion, of the events which actually connected the Munich Agreement (September 1938) and the collapse of the Czechoslovak state (March 1939). This period, known as the Second Czech-Slovak Republic, when the state's regions began seriously to challenge the central government, also requires that we look beyond Prague and the Czech-dominated historic Bohemian Crown Lands (Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia) and pay due attention to the other regions (Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia) that made up the state.

The classic presentation of Czechoslovakia at the time of Munich as sacrificial lamb in a drama orchestrated by a bullying Germany, spineless Britain and immoral France was not accidental, but the result of intense diplomatic and propaganda effort. Debate over whether or not Czechoslovakia 'ought' to have refused to accept the terms of the Munich Agreement and fought, rather than hand over its most heavily militarised zone intact, began immediately, with press and media coverage of the four-power meeting in Munich.¹⁷ From the first, the 'Munich Complex' was used to deflect at least some attention from the rapidly escalating domestic crisis which followed the signing of the Agreement. President Beneš, who had remained in office throughout the build-up to the Munich crisis, did not resign immediately but hung on for nearly a week, by which point Poland had begun occupying Teschen, Hungary had demanded the whole of

Subcarpathian Ruthenia and a strip of southern Slovakia, negotiations over the Sudetenland had descended into shouting-matches, Hitler refused point-blank to negotiate with Beneš, and the Slovak cabinet minister Matúš Černák, having threatened on 3 October to resign if autonomy were not granted to Slovakia within 24 hours, did in fact resign on 4 October, bringing down the entire Czechoslovak government with him.

The *coup de grâce* for Beneš came, not from Hitler, but from the Slovak People's Party, at the time the single strongest party in Slovakia. On 5 October 1938 the Slovak People's Party announced that, as a consequence of the crisis, it would be making a public declaration, the next day, 'concerning the right of self-determination for the Slovak nation'. Beneš took to the airwaves that night to resign as president and bid farewell to the nation. In his broadcast, Beneš blamed the crisis in which the country found itself on vague, impersonal forces such as 'the whole system of the balance of power in Europe', 'European development', and 'influences from abroad'. Avoiding any references to structural flaws within the state or mistakes in his own foreign policy decisions over the previous twenty years, Beneš stressed the immediate responsibility of 'four Great Powers' who 'met and agreed among themselves' the 'sacrifices which they asked from us in the name of world peace'. These sacrifices, he went on, 'which we were asked to accept and which were then forced upon us' were 'out of all proportion and unjust'. On the brighter side, he reminded his Czech and Slovak listeners, there were some advantages to losing those parts of the republic which were mainly inhabited by linguistic minorities.¹⁸ Although the Czechoslovak state, which had lost the Sudetenland, along with some Hungarian and Polish-speaking territory, had had 'some branches' lopped off, the roots of 'the nation' (in other words, the Czech/Slovak people) remained 'firm in the earth' and would one day 'put forth new shoots'. It was imperative, Beneš stressed, that the Czechs and Slovaks, the two state-forming peoples, should stick together at this moment of crisis, not worrying about 'this or that concession' but give way to each other in 'small things' to prevent an even worse calamity: the collapse of the post-Munich Czechoslovak state.¹⁹

In blaming Munich for the constitutional crisis which was unfolding in front of his eyes, Beneš was able to deflect at least some attention from his own part in the tragedy. It was, after all, Beneš who (as part of the Czechoslovak delegation to the Paris Peace Conference which won approval for the creation of the state in 1919) had publicly estimated the German-speaking population at ‘approximately 800,000’ (privately, he and Masaryk had been working with a more plausible figure of 2.5 million). It was also Beneš who had repeatedly promised the Allies that Czechoslovakia would become ‘a sort of Switzerland’ with an ‘extremely liberal’ minorities policy, implying that autonomy would be granted to the most important non-Czech populations through something like the Swiss canton system. Instead, Masaryk and Beneš, far from setting up a canton system, had repeatedly delayed implementing autonomy even in Subcarpathian Ruthenia – the region which was described as ‘autonomous’ in the Czechoslovak Constitution – but was in practice treated like a colony.²⁰ Nor did they fulfil expectations raised for Slovak autonomy by the controversial 1918 Pittsburgh Agreement whose implementation became the interwar Slovak People’s Party’s *cause célèbre*. Beneš, who had served the Czechoslovak state as Foreign Minister for 17 years and President for three, was particularly vulnerable to criticism that the crisis of 1938, although provoked by Germany, was also the culmination of years of misguided Czechoslovak domestic and foreign policy.

On 19 September 1938, after it had been agreed between Hitler and Chamberlain at Berchtesgaden that Czechoslovak districts which were more than half German population should be ceded to Germany, their decision was conveyed to Beneš via the French and British ministers in Prague. On 20 September, Kamil Krofta, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, told the heads of the British and French legations that his government was prepared to accept these terms.²¹ Beneš, although he spent the next few days looking feverishly at alternatives – including resisting a German attack and holding out for three weeks until Soviet and French troops could come to the rescue – did not publicly reject the Anglo-French note and – according to the Czechoslovak press – conveyed his agreement before the Munich conference met.²² In exchange for his cooperation,

Beneš presumably asked to be spared the political suicide of formally signing his acceptance of the Munich Agreement. Beneš saw the crucial importance of ensuring that no Czechoslovak representative be physically present in the room at the Munich conference where the document was signed, and that Czechoslovak representatives there be described, in all press statements, as ‘advisors’ or ‘observers’, rather than ‘representatives’ or ‘participants’.²³ This would encourage the world press to present Czechoslovakia as the passive victim of German brutality and allied treachery, and help to bury rival headlines about the Czech oppression of minorities which could be used to support German, Hungarian, Slovak and other hostile, counter-narratives.²⁴

On 6 October 1938, the morning after Beneš’s resignation as president, the expected Manifesto of the Slovak People’s Party was proclaimed in the Slovak Catholic and nationalist heartland of Žilina. ‘We Slovaks’, began the Žilina Manifesto, ‘as an independent nation which has inhabited the territory of Slovakia since time immemorial, hereby put into effect our right to self-determination.’ Vowing to remain ‘at the side’ of ‘all nations fighting against Jewish Marxism’, and to contribute to ‘a Christian disposition of affairs in Central Europe’, the manifesto demanded that legislative and executive powers be immediately devolved to ‘Slovaks in Slovakia’.²⁵ The manifesto was endorsed on the spot by all Slovak political parties present. This deliberately excluded the Jewish, Social Democratic and Communist parties, who were not informed about the meeting. On 10 October 1938, the Catholic priest Fr Jozef Tiso, leader of anti-Semitic and anti-Bolshevik Hlinka’s Slovak People’s Party, declared himself Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of a newly autonomous (devolved) Slovakia.

To the east of Slovakia, in Subcarpathian Ruthenia, a copycat, similarly extreme right-wing ‘Ukrainian Central National Council’, was called in Užhorod, the regional capital, by the freshly appointed Minister for Ruthenia. This gathering announced that it demanded ‘the same rights’ for Ruthenia ‘as have been or will be granted to Slovakia’.²⁶ Slovakia and Ruthenia, meeting no resistance from the helpless central government in Prague, seized the autonomy which had been promised, but never delivered. Constitutional Laws on Slovak and Ruthenian autonomy

were passed on 22 November 1938, turning the previously ‘Czechoslovak’ state into the emphatically hyphenated second ‘Czecho-Slovak’ republic. From the American Embassy in Prague, U.S. diplomat George Kennan observed the autonomous regions with wry amusement. Both the Slovak and Ruthenian political leaders, he judged, were ‘making awful fools of themselves; dressing up in magnificent fascist uniforms, flying to and fro in airplanes, drilling comic-opera S.A. units and dreaming of the future grandeur of the Slovak or Ukrainian nations’.²⁷

The shift to the political right had not come out of the blue. As throughout the rest of Central Europe, almost every part of Czechoslovakia was moving ever-further to the political right in the second half of the 1930s. Warning lights in the 1935 Czechoslovak general election had come not only in the landslide victory for the Sudeten German party (which polled more votes than any other single party), but also in the strong regional showing by the Slovak, Ruthenian and Polish autonomist parties, each of which was becoming steadily more radical, nationalist and anti-Czech. George Kennan, who took up his post as US *chargé d'affaires* in Prague on the day the Munich Agreement was signed, was taken aback by the cynical, bitter atmosphere he found in post-Munich Czecho-Slovakia. ‘Every feature of liberalism and democracy’, he confided to Washington in early December 1938, is ‘hopelessly and irretrievably discredited.’ During weekend visits in the country ‘the guests did nothing but toss down brandy after brandy in an atmosphere of total gloom and repeat countless times: “How was it possible that any people could allow itself to be led for twenty years by such a *Sauhund* – such an international, democratic *Sauhund* as Beneš? Such a people doesn’t deserve to exist.”’²⁸ As portraits and statues of Masaryk and Beneš began to be removed or defaced, sometimes with anti-Semitic slogans, Beneš was adamant that the blame should be laid firmly at the door of the British and French: ‘We were not defeated by Hitler’, he insisted, ‘but by our friends’.²⁹

The Czech-speaking territories of Bohemia and Moravia were not immune from the wave of contempt for liberalism and democracy and thirst for ‘strong’ leaders. Rudolf Beran, the leader

of the Agrarian party (the rough equivalent of the Conservative Party in Britain or the Republican Party in the USA, and the most important interwar Czech political party), seized the opportunity to promote an ‘authoritarian and disciplined democracy’ which would put ‘state’ before ‘party’ interests and radically ‘simplify’ the parliamentary system.³⁰ On 18 November 1938, all right-wing and centrist Czech parties were forcibly merged with the Agrarian Party into a single mass political organization, the Czech party of ‘National Unity’ (*Národní jednota*).³¹ On 30 November 1938, Emil Hácha, a Catholic and conservative, was elected Czechoslovakia’s third president while Beran, as the leader of Czech National Unity, took over as Prime Minister. Czechs were henceforward given the choice of voting for just two political parties: the ruling right-wing National Unity or the left-wing Party of Labour. All other political parties were outlawed.

In Czech-speaking regions, there was still at least the choice of voting for one out of two parties – even if only one stood a realistic chance of being elected. Elsewhere in the second Czech-Slovak republic, there was no longer even the pretence of democratic choice. In autonomous Slovakia, the Communist, left-wing and Jewish parties were outlawed and the remaining Slovak parties merged into a single ‘Hlinka Slovak People’s Party – the Party of Slovak National Unity’ (hereafter referred to as ‘Slovak National Unity’). Slovakia was left with three token political parties but no actual political choice: Fr Jozef Tiso’s Slovak National Unity party was the only permitted political party for Slovak speakers; the *Deutsche Partei* (German Party) the only permitted party for German speakers; and *Egyesült Magyar Párt* (the United Hungarian Party) the only permitted party for Hungarian speakers. Slovakia’s Ruthenian, Jewish and Roma minorities, who had no ‘mother country’ to lobby for them, were left without even nominal political representation.

The merging of all centrist and right-wing Slovak parties into a single bloc supposed to represent the Slovak ‘nation’ (in the Central European sense of a people, usually an ethno-linguistic group, rather than a territory or a polity) corresponded well to the fascistic outlook of its

new leadership. As was by then the fashion throughout Central Europe, politics as a means of resolving conflict through compromise was disdained. The state was seen as the vehicle through which the united ‘will’ of the ‘nation’ (as defined principally by maternal language, but in the case of Jews also by religion) could be expressed and implemented, not debated. Slovak National Unity, which claimed to defend ‘Christian’ (as opposed to ‘Judeo-Bolshevik’) values, set up its own version of the *Hitler Jugend*, known as ‘Hlinka Youth’, to press for ever-more radical ‘reforms’. It also established the paramilitary organization known as the ‘Hlinka Guard’ whose brief was to help Slovak National Unity maintain ‘public order’ and ‘public security’ and defend ‘the state’.³² This pre-military ‘corps’, one of whose duties was to send ‘appropriate reports and proposals’ to the Party, took on the voluntary task, for example, of monitoring who shopped in ‘Jewish stores’.³³

On 12 December 1938, arrangements were made to removed nine thousand Czechs from Slovakia so that their jobs could be taken over by Slovaks. On 23 January 1939, the autonomous Slovak government set up a parliamentary subcommittee to look into a range of possible ‘solutions’ to the ‘Jewish Question’ in Slovakia. It was announced, in advance of the committee’s findings, that Jews in Slovakia would be entitled only to those ‘rights’ that were ‘appropriate’ to a people who held a ‘disproportionate’ share of the country’s wealth.³⁴ It would further, Tiso maintained, demonstrate the ‘maturity’ of the Slovak nation that it would take what it called a ‘legal approach’ to the Jewish ‘problem’ and find a Christian (in other words, a confessional rather than a racial) ‘solution’ distinct from that being taken by Germany.

Meanwhile, radio broadcasts from Vienna sought to up the ante by ending its regular Slovak broadcasts with the catchphrases ‘A new Slovakia without the Jews’ and ‘Slovaks do not forget the Jew was, is, and will be the greatest enemy of the Slovak nation and of the Slovak state.’³⁵

Later, during the Second World War, Slovakia tried for as long as possible not only to cling to its own, distinctly Slovak definition of who was or was not a Jew; but also to ensure that the profits

from dispossessing and deporting Jews, normally to Nazi-run camps, went to the Slovak state rather than to Germany.³⁶

The central Czecho-Slovak government did not lag far behind the regions. On 15 December 1938, the central parliament in Prague passed a special Enabling Act, reminiscent of Hitler's, which entitled the central government to amend constitutional laws and, in case of 'emergency', to rule by decree. Because the central government needed the support of the ministers in Slovakia to pass the act in the National Assembly, it agreed that all members of the autonomous Slovak government would automatically also become members of the state-wide Czecho-Slovak Council of Ministers. According to the amendment that had established Slovak autonomy, elections to the first Slovak diet or parliament (*Snem*) had to be held according to the same procedures that had prevailed in the First Czechoslovak Republic. In order to circumvent this complication, Slovak Prime Minister Tiso invited candidates wishing to stand for election in the usual way: except that he gave such short notice, that only those he had forewarned were able to register in time to stand in the elections.³⁷ On 18 December 1938, the farce of Slovak 'elections' to the autonomous Slovak *Snem* took place. Voters were presented with a single sheet of candidates approved in advance by the leadership of Slovak National Unity. All candidates on the list were deemed to have been elected if the voter assented to the proposition that they supported 'a free, new Slovakia'. At the polling booths, manned by uniformed Hlinka Guards, voters were theoretically free to reply that they did not want 'a free, new Slovakia' and to reject the entire list of candidates; but they were hardly likely to do so, as they were discouraged from pulling the curtain for privacy while they voted and asked to hand over their ballot papers directly to the officiating officer. As a result of these tactics, the Hlinka People's Party – the Party of Slovak National Unity won 97.5 per cent of the Slovak vote.³⁸ It also set a precedent, later used by the Communists, as to how to fix elections.

The central Czecho-Slovak government, which was anxious not to jeopardise British and

other foreign loans, tried not to make its undoubted shift towards state-sponsored anti-Semitism too overt.³⁹ It was left the Czech National Unity's youth wing *Mladá Národní jednota* (Young National Unity), which had its own uniformed paramilitary force, to issue a pamphlet explaining that Jews, a 'foreign' minority, would soon have their legal position 'regulated' so that they could be 'removed' from state employment and prevented from 'influencing education' and 'dominating' in such fields as medicine and law 'out of proportion to their numbers'.⁴⁰ On 27 January 1939, Czecho-Slovak Decrees 14 and 15 announced that any persons who had been naturalised as Czechoslovak citizens at any point between 1918 and 1938, unless they could be readily identified as 'Czech', 'Slovak' or 'Carpatho-Rusyn', would have their citizenship removed and be deported from Czecho-Slovakia.⁴¹ Although the law did not specify who would be affected, it was obvious in the general climate, as the British Minister in Prague had no difficulty in understanding, that it was designed to be 'against the Jews'.⁴² By late February 1939, there were increasingly insistent calls from the government-approved right-wing Czech press for the political system in Bohemia and Moravia to be 'further simplified'. Czech National Unity recommended the 'reorganisation' of 'public life' in accordance with the 'corporate' (fascist) model.⁴³ It can only have been a matter of weeks before the central Czecho-Slovak government followed the example of the regions and went all the way to one-party rule.

The familiar story of Munich notwithstanding, it was not Hitler, but rather the Czecho-Slovak central government, which inadvertently precipitated the crisis that brought the Second Czecho-Slovak Republic to an end. By late February 1939, regional tensions within Czecho-Slovakia were almost at breaking point. A French correspondent, having experienced the tense and gloomy atmosphere of post-Munich Prague, was astonished to find in Slovakia an atmosphere of 'juvenile exuberance and total jauntiness'.⁴⁴ In the new regional capital of Khust in Ruthenia (Užhorod having by then been taken by Hungary), as well as in Bratislava in Slovakia, there were public demonstrations against both Czechs and Jews. To Prague's

considerable annoyance, anti-Czech rallies and propaganda were in effect being subsidised by Prague, which was where the autonomous regions' money came from. In early March 1939, amid further requests from Slovakia for more funding for Hlinka Guard and Slovak generals, and the first public statement by a Slovak Minister that 'We want and will get our independent Slovak state',⁴⁵ tensions were mounting and Vienna reported that 'rumours are flying and fortune-tellers are lately in great demand in Prague'.⁴⁶ The Prague government, which had just about had enough, demanded that the Slovak autonomous government proclaim its loyalty to the Czecho-Slovak state. The autonomous Slovak administration and leadership of the Hlinka Guard, sensing a sudden change of mood in Prague, judged that a plot to reassert Czech dominance over Slovakia was being hatched. They flew to Berlin for consultations, and began to hint that they could always secede from Czechoslovakia altogether.⁴⁷ Veiled threats further inflamed already strained nerves in Prague, and on 6 March 1939, in order to calm the situation, the Slovak cabinet gave a formal assurance that, whatever happened, Slovakia would, as had been declared at Žilina on 6 October 1938, remain 'within the framework' of a Czechoslovak state. Since Slovak National Unity's daily newspaper *Slovák* continued nevertheless to write about building a 'new independent home in a free Slovakia', Prague began to suspect Slovak National Unity of planning to replace the central Czechoslovak government with a Czech diet or *Snem*, so that Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians/Ukrainians would be represented in mathematically exact proportions.⁴⁸ Rather than wait for Slovakia and Ruthenia to insist that the Czechoslovak central government be replaced by a Czech diet, or regional parliament, the authorities in Prague decided to strike first.

On 6 March 1939, President Hácha dismissed the Ukrainian-oriented members of the autonomous government in Ruthenia. The leadership of the Slovak National Unity party, shocked that government in Prague could so blithely disregard its own law on Ruthenian autonomy, concluded that the only realistic long-term option for Slovakia was to become fully

independent. The next step, from autonomy to independence, however, would need to wait until Slovakia had the personnel and financial backing to go it alone. In the meantime, local Nazi authorities in Vienna, who were quicker than those in Berlin to see the potential benefits to the Third Reich of playing off the Czechs against the Slovaks, began to urge the Slovak government to follow the urgings of its own radicals within Slovak National Unity and take the full leap to independence.

When, three days after Prague had sacked the autonomous government in Ruthenia, there was still no reaction from Berlin, the central government in Prague decided to strike again, this time in Slovakia. On 9 March 1939, President Háchá dismissed all members of the autonomous Slovak government, with one exception; announced a new government led by Jozef Sivák, and declared martial law.⁴⁹ When Prime Minister Tiso protested at being deprived of his office, he was locked up in a monastery – albeit briefly. (This was the same fate that had befallen Fr Andrej Hlinka, the founder of the Slovak People's Party, when he tried to undermine Beneš at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919). About 250 Slovaks from the radical wing of Slovak National Unity, who were known to favour the cause of Slovak independence, were arrested and sent to prison in Moravia. The Slovak deputy prime minister and the head of the Hlinka Guard, who had managed to evade capture by the Czech authorities, fled to Vienna where, in cooperation with local Nazis, they continued broadcasting anti-Czech and pro-Slovak independence propaganda to Slovakia.⁵⁰ It was Sivák, in Rome, who put a spanner in the works of the would-be Prague coup by refusing to accept the post of Slovak prime minister. Another Slovak government was named, this time led by Karol Sidor, leaving rival Slovak nationalist groups in Bratislava and Vienna to argue over the airwaves over which of them was the real ‘traitor’ to the ‘Slovak nation’. Behind the scenes, meanwhile, rival German groups in Berlin and Vienna debated over whether or not to support the Slovak separatists.⁵¹ In Slovakia itself, the *Deutsche Partei* urged a ‘common front of Slovaks and Germans’ to defend what it referred to as a ‘free Slovak state’.

The constitutional crisis that the central government in Prague provoked in March 1939, breaking its own laws on the formal autonomy of Ruthenia and Slovakia, gave the Third Reich its first pretext - since the manufactured Sudeten German crisis leading up to Munich - openly to intervene in Czech-Slovak affairs. On 10 March, Ferdinand Ďurčanský took to Radio Vienna to condemn the ‘illegal’ action of the Prague government, ‘wait for further instructions’ and suggest that the Hlinka Guard ‘gradually take over power’ where it was not already ‘in reliable Slovak hands.’⁵² Neville Henderson, the British ambassador to Germany, who could see that Prague was ‘playing Hitler’s game for him’ remembered how, on 11 March 1939, it was suddenly announced in Berlin that Tiso (not Sidor, who had just been named head of the Slovak autonomous government) had appealed to the German government for protection. The German press, which had up to that point devoted ‘little space’ to the Czech-Slovak constitutional dispute, suddenly adopted a ‘violently pro-Slovak attitude’.⁵³ By the next morning, 12 March, it was full of ‘wild tales of Czech atrocities’ and of ‘Germans flying for refuge’. On the same day, 12 March 1939, Hitler phoned Dóme Sztójay, the Hungarian minister to Germany, to inform him that he had decided to withdraw his protection from Czechoslovakia and to recognise the independence of Slovakia. Out of ‘friendship’ to Hungary, as he put it, he would ‘hold up for 24 hours the decision whether to grant similar recognition to Ruthenia’.⁵⁴ Hitler then invited Tiso, who had just suffered the twin shocks of being deposed as autonomous leader of Slovakia and imprisoned, to meet with him in Berlin.

Tiso, who had just lost his position as prime minister to his rival Sidor, and who might just as easily have ended up on trial for treason in a Prague courtroom, was naturally delighted to find, upon his arrival to Berlin on 13 March 1939, that he was accorded all the honours usually reserved for a head of state. Accounts of the famous meeting that followed between Tiso and Hitler differ as to whether the leader of Slovak National Unity was bullied or tempted into declaring Slovak independence. Even Tiso later told two versions of the story: in one, the *Führer* had generously warned him that the Slovaks would have to act quickly if they wished to decide

their own destiny; in the other, Slovakia would not have opted for independence had it not been for the pressure under which it was placed at that critical moment.⁵⁵ It is true that Hitler could indeed have dispensed with Slovakia as carelessly as he had just disposed of Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Carpatho-Ukraine). On the other hand, Prague had just forced Tiso to face the fact that Slovakia was not yet in a position to finance a separate state. This made the prospect of German support at once attractive and risky, since Slovakia – should it be granted German backing for independence - would not be allowed to maintain a separate defence or foreign policy from that of Hitler’s. At the end of the meeting, which lasted 35 minutes, Tiso assured Hitler that ‘the Slovak nation’ would give him ‘no cause’ to regret what he had done on its behalf. At about midnight the same night, 13-14 March, the leader of autonomous Ruthenian sent a request to Hitler – a request which was never answered - that its own territory be taken under German protection.

At the end of his meeting with Hitler, Tiso went directly to the Czecho-Slovak delegation in Berlin. He used the phone to speak to Sidor, who he asked to request an emergency session of the Slovak *Snem* for the next day. Sidor passed on the request to Czecho-Slovak President Háchá, who in turn consulted Prime Minister Beran, the leader of Czech National Unity. Permission was granted. Sidor then put a call out on Slovak radio for all Slovak deputies to turn up for an ‘historic’ session of the Slovak National Assembly the following day. On the morning of 14 March 1939, the Slovak diet went into emergency session, with Tiso in attendance. When the first news bulletin appeared, at lunchtime, it was to announce that the Slovak Parliament had unanimously voted to bring into being an independent Slovak state. ‘Slovaks of the entire world listen!’ announced the Slovak broadcast from Vienna at 1:10 pm. ‘Today at twelve o’clock noon the independent Slovak state was proclaimed’. At 2 pm, a second announcement came: ‘Ring Slovak bells! Announce the joyous news of the birth of the Slovak state’.⁵⁶ Tiso was restored as Prime Minister and Sidor made Minister of Interior. After a decent interval of a few weeks, Sidor

was sent to Rome as envoy to the Vatican, leaving Tiso as the unchallenged dictator of independent, clerical-fascist Slovakia. Later, following the *Führer* principle, Tiso was to take on the role of President as well as Prime Minister, and formally declare himself *Vôdce* (Leader).

The autonomous Carpatho-Ukrainian government in Khust, the capital of Ruthenia, found out about the declaration of Slovak independence from the one o'clock news. Having still received no reply to its telegram to Hitler, the Council of Ministers went into an emergency session for the rest of the afternoon. At about 6:30 pm, a slightly reshuffled cabinet – in which the pro-Ukrainian priest Fr Voloshyn remained leader – emerged from Government House. A Proclamation of Carpatho-Ukrainian Independence was read out to the small crowd that had gathered outside the building to see what was going on. The next morning, the blue and yellow flag was flying from Government House and the regime's own uniformed paramilitary *Sich* guards, just released from prison, were marching through town, terrorizing Jews and warning Czechs to pack up their things and leave the newly independent country at once.⁵⁷

Czecho-Slovak President Hácha, whose country was breaking into separate fascist pieces, was immediately granted the audience he requested with Hitler in Berlin. Contrary to the impression given in most accounts, that the meeting was arranged solely to belittle and humiliate Hácha (as if he had been a second Beneš rather than an already compliant ally of Germany), the Czecho-Slovak president was received with full honours. Even Hácha's daughter, who accompanied him on the trip, was welcomed with a bouquet of flowers from Ribbentrop and a box of chocolates from Hitler.⁵⁸ They nevertheless then had to endure hours of suspense while Hitler and his entourage watched a film. This sort of unorthodox behaviour was fully in keeping with the German dictator's high-handed disregard for protocol.

The Czecho-Slovak delegation was finally admitted into Hitler's presence at about midnight. According to anecdotal accounts of the meeting, Hitler – who later claimed to have been taken aback by Hácha's submissiveness – pressed his advantage, announcing that within six

hours German forces would enter Czecho-Slovakia from three sides and ruthlessly crush any attempt at resistance. Göring, according to the same sources, backed up Hitler's threats with the insistence that the German air force would reduce Prague to rubble if the slightest resistance were shown. Dr Morrell, Hitler's private physician, is then supposed to have given the Czecho-Slovak president an injection to prevent him from fainting. Hitler later enjoyed telling his inner circle how, had Hácha called his bluff he would have lost face completely, since 'at the hour mentioned fog was so thick over our airfields that none of our aircraft could have made its sortie'.⁵⁹ The anecdote, which has the false ring of one of Hitler's boasts, is likely to have been further exaggerated through many retellings before being set down in 1942 for Hitler's *Table Talk*.

Whether or not he did so out of weakness or *realpolitik*, by 3:00 am on the night of 14-15 March, Hácha had signed a declaration stating that the Czecho-Slovak president 'confidently placed the fate of the Czech people and country in the hands of the *Führer* of the German Reich' in order to guarantee the Czechs 'autonomous development of their ethnic life as suited to their character'.⁶⁰ Legally speaking, this was not a breach of the terms of the Munich Agreement, since – on paper at least – the government in Prague had *requested* intervention from Germany, one of the Agreement's signatories, after its own regions had begun to desert the very state that the Munich Agreement was supposed to protect. The Munich myth notwithstanding, there would have been no legal justification for France or Britain to intervene in Czecho-Slovak affairs. The post-Munich state was not destroyed because Nazi Germany invaded. The country fell apart after Prague tried to take back devolution, causing so dramatic a backlash from its own regions that it was left with little option but to go to Germany, the regional superpower, for help.

At 4:30 am on 15 March 1939, Radio Prague announced that German troops would begin to occupy the country at 6:00 am. At 5:00 am, Berlin radio broadcast a special announcement from Goebbels, who read out Hitler's 'Proclamation to the German People', justifying the impending occupation on the grounds of Slovakia's secession the day before; Czech maltreatment

of minorities; and the Lands of the Bohemian Crown having belonged to the ‘Reich’ for over a thousand years. From 6:00 am, Hácha’s declaration, entrusting the Czech people to German rule, was added to the broadcast as a further justification.⁶¹ Despite a number of hitches on the German side, including problems with vehicles and the issuing of placards in the correct language, troops began arriving in Prague at about 9:00 am, just as most people were on their way to work, following their government’s instructions to go about their ordinary business. The whole country was occupied by afternoon, the source of some bitterly self-deprecating Czech jokes. On the same day, 15 March 1939, Hungarian troops captured Khust, putting an end to the independent republic of Carpatho-Ukraine, which had lasted only twenty-four hours.

The image of a single Czech leader, upon whom the entire nation’s future depends, weak and humiliated, was first crystallised first in the person of President Edvard Beneš the day after Munich, when he refused to mobilize. It returned, five and a half months later, in the shape of Beneš’s immediate successor, President Emil Hácha, when he went to Berlin to beg Hitler’s protection for what remained of his state. Once again, in February 1948, President Edvard Beneš, under organised pressure from a popular domestic Communist movement, accepted rather than rejected the resignations of a group of anti-Communist ministers, thus enabling the Czechoslovak Communist Party to win a controlling monopoly in the Cabinet.⁶² The next Munich moment came in 1968, when the Dubček leadership, returned safely to Czechoslovakia from Moscow, began themselves to reverse the Prague Spring reforms, thus ushering in the bleak era afterwards known as ‘Normalization’.

At each of these moments of political humiliation, pity is evoked – usually through references to tears, illness and other reminders of human frailty - to tug at the heartstrings. When the terrible terms of the Munich agreement were confirmed, in the small hours of 30 September 1938, we are told that Vojtěch Mastný, one of two Czechoslovak ‘observers’ at the Munich Conference, dissolved into tears.⁶³ Czech-Slovak president Hácha, when he met Hitler in Berlin

on 14 March 1939, is described as ‘a desperately sick man who had to be given several injections to keep him conscious’ before he ‘finally signed the infamous paper’.⁶⁴ Beneš, alone to face the pressure of Communist populism, day after stressful day in February 1948, is described as gravely ill, an old man, broken by Munich.⁶⁵ In his published memoirs, Dubček stated that, during negotiations with the Soviets in Moscow, Josef Smrkovský, Chairman of the Federal Assembly ‘brought up the parallel to 1939, when President Hácha returned to Berlin.’⁶⁶ Zdeněk Mlynář, the main author of the political reforms known collectively as Socialism with a Human Face, similarly recalled how ‘one unexpected consequence’ of the Moscow negotiations was ‘coming to understand Emil Hácha’ since ‘we had no choice but simply to sign the Soviet ultimatum’.⁶⁷ Josef Korbel, a member of Beneš’s entourage until he fled Communist Czechoslovakia and one of the most important promoters of the Munich Complex in the English-speaking world – not least because he fathered one US Secretary of State (Madeleine Albright) and was PhD supervisor to another (Condoleezza Rice), claims that in Moscow ‘the Czechoslovaks were presented with a document of capitulation’, over which ‘most of them wept at one time or another, some fell ill, and Dubček suffered recurring heart trouble’.⁶⁸

Through a combination of pity and compassion, we are repeatedly invited to see Czechoslovakia as a martyred nation, an essentially virtuous victim to whom bad things happen. This common Central European nationalist trope - to have suffered much, and thus to be justified in all one does – serves more than one purpose. Empathy, understanding and pity, although important and necessary to historical understanding, can also obscure, or appear to make irrelevant, such cold facts as constitutional clauses, internationally ratified agreements and legal statutes, even when these include provisions for excluding, deporting or imprisoning rival ethnic, religious, economic or linguistic groups. By focussing attention on tragic victimhood, national misfortunes come to seem inevitable, unavoidable: the moments when Beneš, or Hácha, or Dubček, might have made different choices, leading to different outcomes, are all too easily forgotten.

There is of course nothing unique to Czechoslovakia, or for that matter, Central Europe, in viewing its history in a selective and self-serving way. This is what states, what nations, tend to do. The particular danger for Czechoslovakia's successor states, the Czech and Slovak republics, however, lies in the potential consequences – both for its relations with its Central European neighbours and especially for its few remaining minorities - of misremembering the past and forgetting that Czechs and Slovaks, too, had agency and Czechs and Slovaks, too, committed atrocities. It is not enough to dismiss the hateful xenophobic policies and authoritarian tendencies of the Second Czecho-Slovak as a 'disorientation' brought about Munich.⁶⁹ The dangers to which all democracies are vulnerable were also present in interwar Czechoslovakia, where individual human beings were as responsible for their actions as they are anywhere else.

Czechoslovakia is remembered as the last democracy in Central Europe and a bastion of decent, humane values. Taking a closer look at the widely neglected Second Czecho-Slovak Republic suggests that the Czechoslovakia was not, in fact, so quite so different from its Central European neighbours, not such an exception to the authoritarian, xenophobic and extreme nationalist trends of its time and place. According to Jan Tesař, post-Munich Czech collaboration with the Nazis was the real failure that led the nation to cloak its shame in the 'pseudo-problem' of the Munich Complex. Later humanitarian failures, most notably the post-war German and Hungarian expulsions, Czech and Slovak anti-Semitic legislation, complicity with the Stalinist purges, tacit support for the post-1968 Normalization regime, and discrimination against the Roma, continue to make the 'pseudo-problem' of Munich nearly as salient and resonant for Czechs and Slovaks today as it was in 1938.

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¹ See, for example, the headline in the evening edition of *České Slovo* on 2 October 1938.

<https://aukro.cz/ceske-slovo-1-10-a-30-9-1938-mnichovska-zrada-orig-noviny-2-kusy-6934307573.10>.

² The motto ‘nothing about us, without us’ is a political slogan with extensive Central European, especially Polish and Hungarian, roots. The 1505 Polish constitution which first transferred governing authority from the monarch to parliament, given in Latin as ‘*nihil novi nisi commune consensu*’, and colloquially known as ‘nothing about us without us’, is probably the most direct allusion. The expression is still widely used in Czech, 80 years after Munich. See, for example, <https://tn.nova.cz/clanek/sobota-o-nas-bez-nas-pripomina-si-80-let-od-mnichovske-dohody.html>.

³ František Halas, ‘*Zpěv úzkosti*’.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Munich_Agreement;

https://cs.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mnichovsk%C3%A1_dohoda;

https://sk.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mnichovsk%C3%A1_dohoda

⁵ Jiří Rak, Ivana Čornejová, Vít Vlnas, et al., *Co kdyby to dopadlo jinak? Křižovatky českých dějin* (Prague: Dokořán, 2007). The relevant episode of the Czech Television series ‘Kdyby...’ (What if...), directed by Michal Najbrt, itself part of the larger series *Osudové osmičky v našich dějinách*, was first broadcast on České televize 2 in 2008 and subsequently replayed on anniversaries of Munich, including on the centenary, 30 September 2018. <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10169695354-kdyby/408235100021009/>.

⁶ <https://www.ceskatelevize.cz/porady/10362011008-ceske-stoleti/21251212007-den-po-mnichovu-1938/>

⁷ Brackett Lewis, *Facts about Democracy in Czechoslovakia* (Prague: American Institute in Czechoslovakia/Orbis publishing company, 1938), p. 7.

⁸ See, for example, the oral history exhibition *Paměť národa* on Letná hill in Prague, which seeks to take a more inclusive, balanced look at the nation’s past, but has some clear omissions. See <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/cs> and <https://stalin.pametnaroda.cz/english.html>.

⁹ See especially Jan Lániček, *Arnošt Frischer and the Jewish Politics of the Jewish Politics of Early Twentieth-Century Europe* (Bloomsbury, 2017).

¹⁰ Edvard Beneš, *Šest let exilu a druhé světové války: Řeči, projevy a dokumenty z r. 1938-45* (Prague: Orbis, 1946), pp. 39-43; Andrea Orzoff, *The Battle for the Castle*, p. 198.

¹¹ Karel Bartošek, ‘Could We Have Fought? The “Munich Complex” in Czech Policies and Czech Thinking’, in N. Stone and E. Strouhal, eds., *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1928-88*. Hounds mills, Basingstoke: The Macmillan Press, 1989, p. 104.

¹² See, for example, Robert Kvaček’s recently republished, *Poslední den. Mnichov-Praha*, 1938 (Prague: 2011, 2018).

¹³ ‘Ztracení v Mnichově’, directed by Petr Zelenka. Barrandov studios and Česká televize, Prague: Lucky Man Films, 2015.

¹⁴ Jan Tesař, *Mnichovský komplex. Jeho příčiny a důsledky*. (Prague: Prostor 2014 edn [originally published 2000]), p. 11.

¹⁵ Jan Tesař, *Mnichovský komplex. Jeho příčiny a důsledky*. (Prague: Prostor 2014 edn [originally published 2000]), pp. 107-8.

¹⁶ Tesař, *Mnichovský komplex* (2014; 2000), pp. 107; 119.

¹⁷ See e.g. Eduard Bass, ‘Věc velmoci a věc naše’, *Lidové noviny* (30 September 1938), p. 2.

¹⁸ This speech is reproduced, in the original Czech with some Slovak sections, as ‘Rozhlasová řeč prezidenta Beneše’ in Edvard Beneš, *Mnichovské dny. Paměti* (Prague: Svoboda, 1968), pp. 484-491.

¹⁹ See ‘Rozhlasová řeč prezidenta Beneše’ in Edvard Beneš, *Mnichovské dny. Paměti* (Prague: Svoboda, 1968), pp. 484-491.

²⁰ Geoffrey Brown, ‘The Czechoslovak Orient: Carpathian Ruthenia as an Imagined Colonial Space’ (PhD dissertation, Victorian University of Wellington, New Zealand, 2017).

²¹ Z. Zeman and A. Klímek, *The Life of Edvard Beneš 1884-1948. Czechoslovakia in Peace and War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.126.

²² Anon., ‘Postupný převod území. Návrh britské vlády, přijatý s výhradami vládou naší’, *Lidové noviny* (30 September 1938), p. 3.

²³ ‘Českoslovenští poradci v Mnichově’, *Lidové noviny* (30 September 1938), p. 3.

²⁴ See for example, Bertram deColonna, *Czecho-Slovakia Within* (1938) or the collection of *Daily Mail* articles brought together in Lord Rothermere's *My Campaign for Hungary* (1939). Both were viciously anti-Czech.

²⁵ 'Manifest slovenského národa (6. októbra 1938)' *Dokumenty slovenskej národnej identity a štátnosti* ii (Bratislava: Národné literárne centrum, 1998), pp. 179-183.

²⁶ Paul Magocsi, *The Shaping of a National Identity: Subcarpathian Rus' 1848-1948* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 237.

²⁷ George Kennan, Excerpts from a personal letter (8 December 1938), as reproduced in G. Kennan, *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940*, (Princeton, N.J., 1968), p. 9.

²⁸ G. Kennan, *From Prague after Munich: Diplomatic Papers 1938-1940*, (Princeton, N.J., 1968), pp. 7; 9.

²⁹ Míla Lvová, *Mnichov a Edvard Beneš* (Prague, 1968), p. 180.

³⁰ B.C. Newton to Lord Halifax, 'Annual report for 1938' (14 January 1939), as reproduced in B. Vago, *Shadow of the Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936-1939* (London: Institute of Jewish Affairs, 1975), p. 368.

³¹ *Kronika Českých zemí* (Prague: Fortuna, 1999), p. 695.

³² See Laws 220 and 311, *Sbírka zákonů* (Prague, 1939).

³³ H. Delfiner, *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938-1939. A Case Study in Subversion* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, Boulder distributed by Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 88.

³⁴ J. Tiso, *Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe: Obhajobná reč pred tzv. Národným súdom v Bratislave, dňa 17. a 18. marca 1947* (Passaic, N.J.: Slovak Catholic Sokol, 1952), pp. 315-17.

³⁵ František Vnuk, 'Slovakia's Six Eventful Months October 1938-March 1939', *Slovak Studies* vol. 4 (1964), p. 96..

³⁶ *Slovenský* (3 February 1939) and speeches (27 January and 22 February 1939) as cited in Jozef Tiso, *Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe: Obhajobná reč pred tzv. Národným súdom v Bratislave, dňa 17. a 18. marca 1947* (Passaic, N.J.: Slovak Catholic Sokol, 1952), pp. 315-17. See also 'Report on Conditions in Slovakia, written in January 1939' in George Kennan, *From Prague after Munich* pp. 23-4.

³⁷ J. Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia* (London: Atlantic Press, 1956), p. 119.

³⁸ Y. Jelinek, *The Parish Republic: Hlinka's Slovak People's Party 1939-1945* (Boulder, Co.: East European Quarterly, 1976), p. 25.

³⁹ Foreign Office memorandum (by J.K. Roberts) Concerning the Position of Jews in Czechoslovakia since Munich' (4 January 1939), as reproduced in B. Vago, *Shadow of the Swastika*, pp. 350, 374.

⁴⁰ Foreign Office memorandum (by J.K. Roberts) Concerning the Position of Jews in Czechoslovakia since Munich' (4 January 1939), in Vago, *Shadow of the Swastika*, pp. 350, 374.

⁴¹ Decree 14 'Vládní nařízení ze dne 27. ledna 1939, jímž se doplňují předpisy o pobytu cizinců, pokud jsou emigranti' and Decree 15 'Vládní nařízení. ze dne 27. ledna 1939 o přezkoumání česko-slovenského státního občanství některých osob', *Sbírky zákonů a nařízení státu česko-slovenského* (Prague, 1939), pp. 39-42.

⁴² J.M. Troutbeck to Lord Halifax (9 February 1939), in Vago, pp. 387-88.

⁴³ T. Procházka, *The Second Republic: The Disintegration of Post-Munich Czechoslovakia (October 1938-March 1939)* (Boulder, Co.: East European Monographs, 1981), p. 59.

⁴⁴ G. Luciani, 'La Tchécoslovaquie après Munich', *Le Temps* (2 March 1939), as cited in Procházka, *The Second Republic*, p. 63.

⁴⁵ *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938-1939. A Case Study in Subversion* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, Boulder distributed by Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 106.

⁴⁶ H. Delfiner, *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938-1939. A Case Study in Subversion* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, Boulder distributed by Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 108.

⁴⁷ G. Kennan, 'Excerpts from Despatch of March 9, 1939, from Minister Carr to the Department of State, on Czech-Slovak Relations' (portion drafted by George Kennan); 'Despatch on Slovak-Czech Relations (9 March 1939) and 'Report on Conditions in Ruthenia' in Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, pp. 75 and

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- ⁶⁹ F. Vnuk, ‘Slovakia’s Six Eventful Months (October 1938–March 1939’, *Slovak Studies* 4 (Rome and Bratislava, 1964), p. 106.
- ⁴⁸ Despatch on Slovak-Czech relations’ as cited in Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, pp. 78–9; Hubert Ripka, *Munich: Before and After*, tr. I. Šindelková and E. Young (London: Victor Gollancz, 1939), pp. 363–4.
- ⁴⁹ G. Kennan, ‘Personal Notes, dated 21 March 1939, on the March Crisis and the Final Occupation of Prague by the Germans’ in Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, pp. 81–2.
- ⁵⁰ See H. Delfiner, ‘Radio Wars’, *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938–1939. A Case Study in Subversion* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, Boulder distributed by Columbia University Press, 1974), pp. 114–131.
- ⁵¹ Bartl et al., *Slovak History*, p. 138; Lettrich, *History of Modern Slovakia*, pp. 124–26; Ripka, *Munich*, pp. 368–69.
- ⁵² H. Delfiner, *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938–1939* (1974), pp. 114; 117.
- ⁵³ N. Henderson, *Failure of a Mission: Berlin 1937–1939* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1941), p. 202; Kennan, ‘Personal Notes (21 March 1939)’ in Kennan, *From Prague after Munich*, p. 81; Mastny, *Czechs under Nazi Rule: The Failure of National Resistance, 1939–1942* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), pp. 35–6.
- ⁵⁴ Vnuk, ‘Slovakia’s Six Eventful Months’, p. 115.
- ⁵⁵ J. Tiso, *Dr. Jozef Tiso o sebe: Obhajobná reč pred tzv. Národným súdom v Bratislave, dňa 17. a 18. marca 1947* (Passaic, N.J.: Slovak Catholic Sokol, 1952), pp. p. 186; J. Tiso, ‘Dr Tiso’s report to the Slovak Parliament’, as reproduced in C. Murin, *Remembrances and Testimony*, tr. V. Cincík (Montreal: RealTIme publishing, 1992), pp. 233–39.
- ⁵⁶ As reported in H. Delfiner, *Vienna Broadcasts to Slovakia 1938–1939. A Case Study in Subversion* (New York and London: East European Quarterly, Boulder distributed by Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 128.
- ⁵⁷ M. Winch, *Republic for a Day: An Eye-Witness Account of the Carpatho-Ukraine Incident* (London: Robert Hale, 1939), pp. 280–3.
- ⁵⁸ Henderson, *Failure of a Mission*, pp. 207–8.
- ⁵⁹ Adolf Hitler, 13 January 1942, as reported in *Hitler’s Table Talk, 1941–1944*, tr. N. Cameron and R.H. Stevens, ed. H. Trevor-Roper (London, 2000 [1953]), p. 204; Mastny, *Czechs under Nazi Rule*, p. 51.
- ⁶⁰ *Lidové noviny* vol. 47, no. 137 (16 March 1939), morning edition, p. 1.
- ⁶¹ Mastny, *Czechs under Nazi Rule*, p. 41.
- ⁶² Josef Korbel, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia: The Meanings of Its History* (New York: Columbia, 1977), pp. 248–9. Condaleeza Rice’s PhD was published as C. Rice, *The Soviet Union and the Czechoslovak Army, 1948–1983* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984). Madeleine Albright refers to her father Josef Korbel’s influence on her thinking in her published memoirs *Madam Secretary and Prague Winter*.
- ⁶³ Z. Zeman and A. Klímek, *The Life of Beneš 1884–1948: Czechoslovakia in Peace and War* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 54.
- ⁶⁴ Josef Korbel, *Twentieth-Century Czechoslovakia* (New York, 1977), p. 156.
- ⁶⁵ Maria Dowling, for example, asserts that ‘one fatal event determined the greater part of the Czechoslovak electorate to vote Communist, namely, Munich’. She further comments that ‘both Benes [sic] and Jan Masaryk’, neither of whom stood up against the Communist Party, ‘were seriously ill during the various crises of 1947–48’. M. Dowling, *Czechoslovakia* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp. 83–84.
- ⁶⁶ Alexander Dubček, *Hope Dies Last: The Autobiography of Alexander Dubček*, ed. and tr. J. Hochman (New York, Tokyo and London: Kodansha International, 1993), pp. 211–213.
- ⁶⁷ Zdeněk Mlynář, *Night Frost in Prague: The End of Humane Socialism* tr. P. Wilson (London: C. Hurst & co. 1980), p. 229. The original was published in German as *Nachfrost* (Cologne: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1978).
- ⁶⁸ Korbel, *Czechoslovakia: The Meanings of its History* (New York, 1977), p. 308.
- ⁶⁹ Jan Rataj, *O autoritativní národní stát* (Prague, Karolinum, 1997).