

IN THE SHADOW OF MUNICH

British Policy towards Czechoslovakia
from the Endorsement to the Renunciation
of the Munich Agreement
(1938-1942)

VÍT SMETANA

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INTRODUCTION

Aims and methodology

To these days very few topics in Czech history remain as sensitive as the events of September 1938. This book focuses on the processes that ensued and were intrinsically connected with Munich. Great Britain played a significant role in them. It can be said that never has the Czech or Czechoslovak history been so much entangled with the British one as in the period between Munich and the end of the Second World War. Indeed, for five years free Czechoslovakia found refuge in Britain. At the same time very few topics in Czech *historiography* have been so systematically distorted by most of the previous writing as British policy towards Czechoslovakia during the period. Numerous myths and stereotypes about British perfidy, built on the British part in Munich and alleged Great Powers' deal on the spheres of influence (in its extreme case reached at the Yalta Conference in February 1945¹), are so deeply rooted that they often serve as an automatic explanation of every single step that the British made and that at the same time did not meet with a complete agreement on the Czechoslovak part. 'Munich policy' and 'spheres of influence' are thus until now the two principal terms labelling British policy during World War II in by no means a negligible part of Czech historiography. Although Western historians dealing with British foreign policy or Great Power diplomacy of the late 1930s and early 1940s are usually free from this sort of prejudices, they often approach the topic with just a limited knowledge of Czechoslovak realities, which again often results in a distorted picture of the relationship between Czechoslovakia on the one hand and Great Britain on the other hand.

1) On this topic see: Smetana, Vít, *Sféry vlivu a Československo: oběť, nebo spoluarchitekt?* [Spheres of influence and Czechoslovakia: victim or co-architect], In: *Československo na rozhraní dvou epoch nesvobody*, eds. Z. Kokošková – J. Kocian – S. Kokoška, Praha, Národní archiv – Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR 2005, pp. 58–65.

I have been researching British primary sources, both archival and edited ones, for more than a decade. First I focused on Anglo-Soviet relations in the period of the Nazi-Soviet co-operation, later on the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship from Munich to the Communist takeover in 1948. This research has only rarely confirmed what I read before about the period in most of the Czech books. Thus, in my historical writing I have so far striven to dispel those frequent legends and stereotyping surrounding this era and have offered alternative explanations of several contentious events and episodes, whether it was the question of the Munich guarantee in 1938–1939, the ‘Czech gold scandal’ in the spring of 1939, the Anglo-German financial negotiations about the Czechoslovak deposits in London in the summer of that year, the repercussions of Munich in foreign policy negotiations during the Second World War, British help for the resistance movement in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war, or, more generally, the mutual relationship between Beneš and the British officials throughout the war.² This book is my first attempt to out-root hitherto prevailing stereotypes and pre-conceived views entirely in a larger text that systematically covers a longer period.

Both the chronological and the thematic span, however, have certain limits. My focus is restricted to the period from Munich to its renunciation by the British government in 1942. The reason is practical: the close and in some respects intimate nature of the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship resulted, amongst other things, in an enormous quantity of

2) Smetana, Vít, Británie a československé zlato. ‘Case study’ britského appeasementu? [Great Britain and the Czechoslovak gold: A case study of British appeasement?], *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history], Prague, Vol. 8, 2001, No. 4, pp. 621–658; Idem, Nevyřízené účty. Problém československých aktiv v britských bankách a snahy britské administrativy o jeho řešení po 15. březnu 1939 [Accounts to be dealt with. The problem of Czechoslovak assets in British banks and British Government’s attempts at its settlement after 15 March 1939], *Český časopis historický* [Czech historical journal], Prague, Vol. 102, 2004, No. 3, pp. 521–551; Idem, Ozvěny Mnichova v zahraničněpolitických jednáních za 2. světové války [The echoes of Munich in foreign policy negotiations during World War II], In: *Mnichovská dohoda. Cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě* [Munich agreement. The way to destruction of democracy in Europe], ed. J. Němeček, Praha, Karolinum 2004, pp. 145–163; Idem, Mise Plukovníka Perkinse v kontextu britské politiky vůči Československu a pomoci jeho odbojovému hnutí na sklonku 2. světové války [Colonel Perkins’ mission in the context of British policy towards Czechoslovakia and help for its resistance movement towards the end of the Second World War], *Historie a vojenství* [History and military], Prague, Vol. 50, 2001, No. 3, pp. 692–736; Idem, Beneš a Britové za druhé světové války [Beneš and the British during the Second World War], In: *Na pozvání Masarykova ústavu* [At the invitation of The Masaryk Institute], Prague, Masarykův ústav AV ČR 2004, pp. 73–86.

documentation on various important affairs. I decided to process and analyse the relevant material carefully and cover just a shorter period of time, rather than to produce a superficial essay based on a fragmentary documentation.

There are also several limitations with respect to the chosen topic. The book centres on political, economic and strategic issues present in the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship. I did not for example follow in detail the ups and downs of the mutual military co-operation, though it also provides an important background. The common thread of the topics to which the book pays attention can be found in the consequences, repercussions and 'undoing' of Munich.

Although my interest lies in the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship, the main focus of the book is on British policy. The reason is connected with the chosen methodology. This is a study in *international history*. Some authors point out – and I agree – that this discipline 'has superseded the old specialisation of diplomatic history by paying far more attention to the non-governmental forces which cross boundaries and in many respects shape the crucial domestic environment of foreign policy'.³ Indeed, as long as 35 years ago John Lewis Gaddis postulated the assumption 'that foreign policy is the product of external and internal influences, as perceived by officials responsible for its formulation'.⁴ To achieve this, it is necessary to examine 'traditional' sources, as well as parliamentary debates and, at least to some degree, also contemporary press. Thus the domestic dimension of foreign policy, the influence of intellectuals and of public opinion, as well as of such phenomena as psychological prejudices or feelings of guilt or injustice (such as Munich in the case of my topic), offers much fuller picture of this subject.

The reason for focusing primarily on British policy is twofold. Firstly, one of the principal points of my interest is the process of change of British foreign policy in 1939 and the way it influenced British dealings with Czechoslovakia. At that time, however, there was no partner on the Czechoslovak side as the exile representation abroad only started to

3) Hill, Christopher, *Cabinet Decisions on Foreign Policy. The British Experience. October 1938 - June 1941*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1991, p. 4. More specifically his study *History and International Relations*, In: Steve Smith (ed.), *International Relations: British and American Perspectives*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell 1985.

4) Gaddis, John Lewis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War 1941-1947*, 2nd edition (first published in 1972), New York, Columbia University Press 2000, Preface from May 1971 – p. xiv.

emerge in late summer of 1939. Secondly, I have not had the ambition to analyse the methods whereby Czechoslovak foreign policy was being enacted in particular stages between 1938 and 1942. It would demand a separate study to cover systematically the process of this dramatic change. However, it is clear that from 1940 onwards Edvard Beneš together with a small bunch of his collaborators dominated the foreign policy field, while the government and the State Council entered it merely occasionally. Nevertheless, the Czechoslovak role is certainly not neglected. On the contrary, I pay attention especially to the resonance of British policy amongst Czechoslovak politicians in exile.

Central to this book is to find out the impact of crucial Czechoslovak events upon important British decisions. More generally: to what extent did Czechoslovakia matter in British foreign policy throughout the period? And was there any 'policy' towards this country at all? According to all the evidence that I have gathered, the answer to the last question is in the affirmative. However, this policy was certainly influenced or even determined by far more important considerations and self-reflections, as was the case in British policy towards *all* minor Allies. Besides the apparently decisive framework of the prospect of war and that of the policy towards the other Great Powers, British foreign policy of the period was generally conditioned by imperial considerations and also by respect towards the position of the Dominions, which influenced the process of British foreign policy decision-making in the specific case of Czechoslovakia to a remarkable extent.

Any historian dealing with British policy towards Central Europe during World War II sooner or later finds out that Czechoslovakia from time to time emerged as a problem for British foreign policy, and then allegedly disappeared, at least from the agenda of top decision-making bodies. It was partly caused by the fact that His Majesty's Government was reactive rather than proactive in its policy towards Czechoslovakia throughout the period. Its policy of no definitive commitments before the end of war, as far as the post-war shape of Central Europe and its frontiers were concerned, naturally clashed with the detailed plans of Czechoslovak exile representatives, with Edvard Beneš at their head. However, the quantity and nature of problems connected with Czechoslovakia differed decisively from those associated with its northern Slavonic neighbour. Therefore the 'Czechoslovak story' serves as comparison with the case of Poles and their government in exile.

Various players dominated British policy towards Czechoslovakia during those 5 years, thus influencing and sometimes even changing the whole course of policy. It was, naturally, the Cabinet that adopted fundamental decisions on foreign policy. But its course was influenced by various governmental bodies, amongst which the Foreign Office (with the key position of its Central Department dealing with the Czechoslovak agenda – apart from eleven other countries including Poland and Germany) played the prominent role. Its officials were running everyday policy *vis-à-vis* Czechoslovakia at the time when no governmental directives were available or were already getting out of date and ministerial attention was focused elsewhere. These officials prepared materials for the Foreign Secretary and Cabinet, thus having crucial upward influence on governmental decisions. It is therefore essential to find out what drove officials to adopt the decisions they did, against what background, tendencies, experience or even prejudices these people operated. Was there not anything like a bureaucratic changelessness that influenced the process and quality of their decision-making? On the other hand, Foreign Office officials often proved to be much more circumspect in their foreign policy expectations than the ‘foreign policy executive’⁵ or other Cabinet ministers. But their ability to imprint their ideas in actual policy varied. From all this is clear that an insight into the Foreign Office workshop was inevitable. Likewise, I assess the influence of the other relevant governmental departments.

My specific focus is set into a broader framework. The most obvious one is the general context of British foreign policy during the period of change from appeasement to participation in the anti-Hitler coalition. I am trying to find out whether there were any threads of continuity in the conduct of British foreign policy during this period. The ‘uneasy relationship between expediency and morality’ in the case of the Baltic States and British policy towards the Soviet Union has already been identified.⁶ Nonetheless, of all relations with the other Great Powers the policy towards the Soviet Union was naturally important with respect to the minor allies in Central and Eastern Europe and it deserves to be treated as such. As I have indicated, a comparison with British policy towards these countries (Poland above all) is indispensable. These as-

5) Foreign policy executive compounds of the Prime Minister and his Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. See Hill, *Cabinet Decisions on Foreign Policy*, p. XVIII.

6) See Child, Victoria, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union 1939–42 with special reference to the Baltic States*, unpublished D.Phil Thesis, Oxford, Trinity Term 1994, p. 3.

pects are at least in some cases compared with the U.S. policy, the other important determinant of British foreign policy.

All this is necessarily described against two main settings. One is the Czechoslovak history of the period, especially the history of the exile representation in London and its activities. Firstly, the British themselves conditioned recognition of the Czechoslovak government in exile by settling internal disputes among various groups, by incorporating Slovak representatives, the Sudeten German ones, etc. Secondly, as time went by, the British merely responded to Beneš's initiatives and demands. The origins of and reasons for these initiatives form a part of this narrative. The interactive approach to the topic has been inevitable, and this is also true for my archival research. The second main setting consists of Czechoslovak relations with other countries, especially with Poland and the Soviet Union. Such a framework provided me with an opportunity to describe the role played by the British in the origins and beginnings of the gradual Czechoslovak drift into the Soviet orbit.

Many Czech historians still approach these topics with preconceptions and prejudices, often finding their 'guilty men'. Indeed, though many decades have passed, it is difficult to look at Munich and the ensuing events entirely neutrally, despite all rationalisations. It has been, of course, my intention to avoid any recriminations, to resist condemning those 'responsible' for the fatal failures of the period, unless such arguments are fully supported by documentary evidence. The principal aim of the book is to reconstruct events as well as it is feasible according to the available sources, and to describe the modalities and causes of their actors' deeds as objectively as possible.

Bibliographical essay

Secondary sources

To start with western historiography, the interest of British and most other historians in Czechoslovak matters usually ends with the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia on 15 March 1939.⁷ From mid-1930s up to

7) Some leading historians are not even very much certain about the date. While Donald Cameron Watt writes about 'March 13, 1939', Anita Prazmowska points out 'the German occupation of Prague on 14 March and the creation of the German protectorate in Slovakia a few days later', which is a remarkable accumulation of mistakes in one single sentence. Cf. Watt, Donald Cameron, *How War Came*, p. 141; Prazmowska, Anita J., *Britain and Poland 1939-1943. The Betrayed Ally*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1995, p. 31.

that date Czechoslovakia enters European history. Then the Czechoslovak story vanishes from books about the Great Powers' diplomacy, usually re-emerging just as an example of the communist perfidy and shrewdness in February 1948. This situation is completely different from that of Poland that represented one of major problems of wartime relations among the Big Three.⁸

There are only a few relevant secondary sources concerning this particular topic. The only scholarly attempt to cover the whole period from Munich to February 1948, written by Mark Cornwall, is just 21 pages long and starts the story of a 'special relationship' as early as in 1930. However, it is a well-thought-out essay contending that by 1939 Czechoslovakia secured 'a unique and sensitive place in evolution of British appeasement' while during the war the British link resumed a special significance for the Czechs and Slovaks. The author concludes that the 'special relationship' between Britain and Czechoslovakia was something of a 'brief encounter', conditioned by the international situation and geographical position of Czechoslovakia.⁹

Another historical work that has so far attempted to cover British policy towards Czechoslovakia is a book written by Martin David Brown.¹⁰ His text is highly readable and comprehensive, but it also suffers from several liabilities. He sets the story of British dealings with the Czechoslovak democrats into the context of western historiography. Yet, I cannot agree with his labeling of many titles as 'Cold War' literature. By the same token, he did not get acquainted with a greater part of relevant Czech literature on the topic (although he included a number of largely irrelevant titles dealing with older periods into his bibliography). The very fact that as archival sources he used merely British documentation (mostly deposited in the Public Record Office – The National Archives) necessarily narrows his perspective. When reading his book at some points I regretted that he did not apply the same

8) See e.g. the otherwise brilliant post-revisionist book by John Lewis Gaddis about the U.S. road to the Cold War where Czechoslovakia is mentioned just twice, in both cases in connection with the February coup, while Poland represents one of the key issues: Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*.

9) Cornwall, Mark, *The Rise and Fall of a 'Special Relationship'?: Britain and Czechoslovakia, 1930-1948*, In: *What difference Did the War Make?*, eds. B. Brivati – H. Jones, Leicester, Leicester University Press 1993, pp. 130-150.

10) Brown, Martin David, *Dealing with Democrats. The British Foreign Office and the Czechoslovak Émigrés in Great Britain, 1939 to 1945*, Frankfurt am Main, Peter Lang 2006.

critical approach to the Czech (published) sources and literature as he did in the case of British sources and historiography. This applies especially to the memoirs by Edvard Beneš. At the same time Brown either ignored or dismissed Czech and Russian sources that shed a peculiar light especially upon Beneš's policy towards the Soviet Union. All this resulted in the author's maximum tolerance and understanding when he writes about Czechoslovak foreign policy and its protagonists, quite in the contrast with some of his overcritical judgments on British foreign policy and the Foreign Office in particular. The relationship between its officials on the one hand and Eden with Churchill on the other hand was more complex and complicated than his often used term 'short-circuiting' seems to suggest. There are numerous factual mistakes in the text and, last but not least, some of Brown's footnotes are 'blind' or in fact do not match with the meaning or location of the actual sources.¹¹ In spite of all this, however, Brown really deserves a tribute for his attempt to cover this difficult and wide-ranging topic, as well as his important contribution to some subtopics, such as the military co-operation and the special operations to Czechoslovakia.

The remarkable book by Detlef Brandes covers British policy towards Poland, Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia in 1939–1943.¹² It tackles only very briefly the period between Munich and the outbreak of war, although the subtitle of its Czech edition states something else.¹³ However, as I have pointed out elsewhere,¹⁴ the book slightly suffers from being overburdened with facts which are not always relevant to its central theme and sometimes appear at the expense of the author's analysis. Brandes has used enormous quantity of archival documents as well as published sources when working on his book. In comparison with the possibilities that Detlef Brandes had in the mid-1980s, we now have access to other important sets of documents, whether it is the SOE files in London, wide spectrum of Russian sources and, of course, archival

11) For further details see my book review in *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history] – forthcoming.

12) Brandes, Detlef, *Großbritannien und seine osteuropäischen Alliierten 1939–1943. Die Regierungen Polens, der Tschechoslowakei und Jugoslawiens im Londoner Exil vom Kriegsausbruch bis zur Konferenz von Teheran*, München, R. Oldenbourg Verlag 1988.

13) *Exil v Londýně 1939–1943. Velká Británie a její spojenci Československo, Polsko a Jugoslávie mezi Mnichovem [sic!] a Teheránem*, Praha, Karolinum 2003.

14) Smetana, Vít, *Kniha, o které se hovoří* [A book which is being discussed], *Dějiny a současnost* [History and present], Vol. 26, 2004, No. 2, p. 57.

sources in Prague. Polish historian Radosław Żurawski vel Grajewski has also recently addressed certain stages of the British policy towards Czechoslovakia during World War II.¹⁵ However, he chose a peculiar method of analysing this policy purely from Czech archival sources and ignored the British ones altogether. I really wonder about the reasons for such an approach, more than a decade after the fall of the communist regimes in East-Central Europe and with wide possibilities for doing research in British archives. It goes without saying that the absence of relevant sources only results in an unbalanced perspective of his articles.

Hana Velecká has dealt with the topic of British assistance to refugees from Czechoslovakia in 1939, as well as with British policy towards Czechoslovakia between March 15 and the outbreak of war.¹⁶ David Blaazer, an Australian researcher, has also written an article about the transfer of the Czechoslovak gold to Germany in 1939.¹⁷ However, the text distinguishes itself by its complete disregard for other than English-written historiography (no matter whether or not English summaries are available on the internet). Thus he has not added anything new to the discussion and his article is in itself an essay in discovering of what has already been discovered.

We can find the account of the slow recognition of the Czechoslovak

15) Żurawski vel Grajewski, Radosław, *Starania dyplomacji czechosłowackiej o cofnięcie uznania rządu brytyjskiego dla umowy monachijskiej (sierpień 1941 – sierpień 1942 r.)* [Efforts of the Czechoslovak diplomacy to undo the British consent with the Munich Agreement (August 1941 – August 1942)], In: *Czechosłowacja w stosunkach międzynarodowych w pierwszej połowie XX wieku* [Czechoslovakia in international relations in the first half of the 20th century], A. M. Brzeziński (ed.), Warszawa, Wydawnictwo Naukowe 2003, pp. 69–128. Żurawski vel Grajewski, Radosław, *Z historii stosunków brytyjsko-czechosłowackich w okresie II wojny światowej (lipiec 1940 – lipiec 1941)* [From the history of British-Czechoslovak relations in the course of World War II (July 1940 – July 1941)], In: *Z polityki zagranicznej Wielkiej Brytanii w I połowie XX wieku* [From British foreign policy in the first half of the 20th century], A. M. Brzeziński (ed.), Łódź, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego 2002, pp. 102–127.

16) Velecká, Hana, *Britská pomoc uprchlíkům z Československa od okupace do vypuknutí války v roce 1939* [British assistance to Czechoslovak refugees, from the German occupation till the outbreak of war in 1939], *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history], Prague, Vol. 8, 2001, No. 4, pp. 659–691; Idem, *Agónie appeasementu. Britská politika a rozbití Československa 15. 3.–31. 8. 1939* [The agony of appeasement. British policy and the break-up of Czechoslovakia 15. 3.–31. 8. 1939], *Český časopis historický* [Czech historical journal], Prague, Vol. 99, 2001, No. 4, pp. 788–822.

17) Blaazer, David, *Finance and the End of Appeasement: The Bank of England, the National Government and the Czech Gold*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 40, 2005, No. 1, pp. 25–39.

government by Britain in three authors' studies, written by Johann Bruegel, Michael Dockrill and Jan Kuklík.¹⁸ Two more academics have dealt with British policy. Slovak historian Edita Ivaničková has outlined several aspects of the Slovak dimension of British policy.¹⁹ Her Czech-American colleague Harry Hanak, known for his studies about Stafford Cripps' mission to Moscow,²⁰ has also written two general essays on British attitudes towards Czechoslovakia.²¹

Alan Brown has analysed the military aspects of the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship. However, in his effort to be as critical as possible both to the British military authorities on the one hand and to Beneš and his instrumental use of the Czechoslovak military forces for his political aspirations on the other hand, it is sometimes impossible to grasp where his argument actually lies. In some cases it even seems that he contradicts himself.²²

18) Bruegel, Johann Wolfgang, *The Recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in London*, *Kosmas – Journal of Czechoslovak and Central European Studies*, Vol. 2, 1983, No. 1, pp. 1-13; Dockrill, Michael, *The Foreign Office, Dr Eduard Benes and the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile, 1939-41*, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 6, 1995, No. 3, pp. 701-718; Kuklík, Jan, *The Recognition of Czechoslovak Government in Exile and its International Status 1939-1941*, *Prague Papers on History of International Relations*, Vol. 1, 1997, pp. 173-205.

19) Ivaničková, Edita, *Československo-maďarské vzťahy v stredoeurópskej politike Veľkej Británie (1938-1945)* [Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations and the 1938-1945 policy of Great Britain towards Central Europe], *Historický časopis* [Historical journal], Bratislava, Vol. 46, 1998, No. 2, pp. 250-260; Idem, *Slovensko-český vzťah v mocenskom zápase v ČSR 1945-1948 z pohľadu britskej diplomacie* [Slovak-Czech relations in the 1945-48 power struggle as seen by the British Foreign Office], *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history], Prague, Vol. 5, 1998, No. 2-3, pp. 274-280; Idem, *Zahraničnopolitická orientácia Slovenska v dokumentoch britskej Foreign Office (1939-1941)* [Foreign policy orientation of Slovakia in documents of the British Foreign Office (1939-1941)], *Historický časopis*, Vol. 44, 1996, No. 2, pp. 207-220.

20) Hanak, Harry, *Sir Stafford Cripps as British Ambassador in Moscow, May 1940 to June 1941*, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 94, 1979, pp. 48-70; Idem, Hanak, Harry, *Sir Stafford Cripps as British Ambassador in Moscow, June 1941 to January 1942*, *English Historical Review*, Vol. 97, 1982, pp. 332-344.

21) Idem, *Great Britain and Czechoslovakia, 1918-1948. An Outline of their Relations*, In: *Czechoslovakia Past and Present*, Vol. I., ed. M. Rechcigl, The Hague, Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America – Mouton 1968, pp. 770-800; Idem, *Prezident Beneš, Britové a budúcnosť Československa* [President Beneš, the British and the future of Czechoslovakia], *Historie a vojenství*, Vol. 44, 1995, No. 1, pp. 13-39.

22) Brown, Alan, *The Czechoslovak Armed Forces in Britain, 1940-1945*, In: *Europe in Exile. European Exile Communities in Britain 1940-45*, eds. M. Conway and J. Gotowitch, New York – Oxford, Berghahn Books 2001. It is not for example clear which of the following statements is valid – either that both 'the War Office and the Air Ministry held the

The Sudeten German issue is in itself a topic of the greatest importance and also significance in Czech historiography since 1989. Indeed, it already has its own historiography.²³ Two excellent books, written by Detlef Brandes and Francis Dostál Raška, have been devoted to the Sudeten German question in exile.²⁴ It is not my ambition to add much to the discussion on either the origins of the transfer of the Sudeten Germans or the position of the Sudeten German refugees and their political leaders in exile. The reason is simple: Although from the Czech perspective it looks like the central topic even in the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship, this opinion was hardly held by the British foreign-policy-makers of the time.²⁵

Much more attention than to the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship has been paid to the analogous Polish topic. Besides Brandes, Anita Prażmowska has written an interesting and highly readable book setting Poland's place in British foreign policy. Despite the rather emotive title (*The Betrayed Ally*) she is also ready to see how over-ambitious the program of the Polish government in exile was, as well as the intrigues and quarrels amongst both the exile politicians, and the officers of the Polish exile army.²⁶ However, books about Poland between East and West started to appear as early as in 1947/1948 with the memoirs of Jan Ciechanowski, Stanisław Mikołajczyk, and Edward Raczyński,²⁷ and the flow of publica-

Czechoslovak soldier and airman in high regard' (p. 175), or whether 'all of the history of British-Czechoslovak military relations seems to be nothing but a catalogue of distrust and contempt' (p. 178) and 'the overall impression of the exiled Czechoslovak armed forces was, in the eyes of some senior British officers at least, one of a deeply flawed force riddled with intrigue, insubordination, dissatisfaction and dangerous politics' (p. 110).

23) Kopeček, Michal – Kunštát, Miroslav, „Sudetoněmecká otázka“ v české akademické debatě po roce 1989 [‘The Sudeten German issue’ in Czech academic discussion after 1989], *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history], Prague, Vol. 10, 2003, No. 3, pp. 293–318.

24) Brandes, Detlef, *Der Weg zur Vertreibung 1938–1945. Pläne und Entscheidungen zum ‘Transfer’ der Deutschen aus der Tschechoslowakei und aus Polen*, München, R. Oldenbourg 2000; Czech edition: *Cesta k vyhnání 1938–1945. Plány a rozhodnutí o „transferu“ Němců z Československa a z Polska*, Praha, Prostor 2002; Raška, Francis Dostál, *The Czechoslovak Exile Government in London and the Sudeten German Issue*, Prague, The Karolinum Press 2002.

25) See esp. Chapter 6.

26) See Prażmowska, *Britain and Poland 1939–1943*, pp. ix, 10, 12 and elsewhere.

27) Ciechanowski, Jan, *Defeat in Victory*, London, Gollancz 1947; Mikołajczyk, Stanisław, *The Rape of Poland: Pattern of Soviet Aggression*, New York, Whittlesey House 1948; Raczyński's revealing diary-memoirs were published in 1962: Raczynski, Edward, *In Allied London. The Wartime Diaries of the Polish Ambassador*, London, Weidenfeld

tions has continued ever since.²⁸ Indeed, the Polish question, unlike the Czechoslovak one, cannot escape attention of any historian interested in the Great Powers' diplomacy during World War II and the origins of the Cold War. Prażmowska, like her Polish colleague Anna Cienciala, and Simon Newman, all dealt in monographs specifically with the question of the British guarantee to Poland that had eventually brought Britain into the war.²⁹ This topic forms a part of virtually every book about the origins of the Second World War.

When writing about British foreign policy during and after World War II, one cannot escape from dealing with the vast literature on appeasement. This applies also to my topic that starts in the months after Munich. As N. J. Crowson puts it, the topic of appeasement 'has generated its own scholastic mini-industry'.³⁰ Thus the original 'guilty men' literature³¹ was later replaced by books stressing economic and military weaknesses, as well as British public opinion, in assessments of British foreign policy under Chamberlain.³² In 1993 R. A. C. Parker challenged

and Nicolson 1962.

28) I venture to mention just some of them: Lipski, Józef – Raczyński, Edward – Stroński, Stanisław, *Trzy podróże gen. Sikorskiego do Ameryki* [Three journeys of gen. Sikorski to America], London 1949; Polonsky, Anthony, *The Great Powers and the Polish Question, 1941–1945. A Documentary Study in Cold War Origins*, London, LSE 1976; Lukas, Richard C., *The Strange Allies. The United States and Poland, 1941–1945*, Knoxville, University of Tennessee Press 1978; Kaciewicz, George V., *Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the Polish Government in Exile (1939–1945)*, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff 1979; Terry, Sarah M., *Poland's Place in Europe. General Sikorski and the Origin of the Oder-Neisse Line, 1939–1943*, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1983.

29) Prażmowska, Anita J., *Britain, Poland and the Eastern Front 1939*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1987; Cienciala, Anna M., *Poland and the Western Powers 1938–1939. A Study in the Interdependence of Eastern and Western Europe*, London 1968; Newman, Simon, *March 1939. The Making of the British Guarantee to Poland*, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1976. See also Strang, Bruce, Once More unto the Breach. Britain's Guarantee to Poland, March 1939, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 31, 1996, pp. 721–752.

30) Crowson, N. J., *Facing Fascism. The Conservative Party and the European Dictators 1935–1940*, London and New York, Routledge 1997, p. 2.

31) 'Cato', *Guilty Men*, London, Gollancz 1940. In a more academic form: Wheeler-Bennett, Sir John, *Munich, Prologue to Tragedy*, London, Macmillan 1948; Gilbert, Martin – Gott, Richard, *The Appeasers*, London, Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1962.

32) See e.g.: Medlicott, W. N., *Contemporary England, 1914–1964*, London 1967; Kennedy, Paul, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy*, London, Fontana 1981, chapters 5 and 6. To a lesser degree the fundamental book on the origins of World War II written by D. C. Watt can also be considered as 'revisionist': Watt, Donald Cameron, *How War Came, the Immediate Origins of the Second World War, 1938–1939*, London, Heinemann 1989.

this school of thought in his persuasive 'counter-revisionist' analysis. He argues that in reality the Prime Minister and his colleagues made choices among alternative policies. The one that they followed before and after Munich, however, rested upon a wrong interpretation of the way the Third Reich worked. The conduct of this policy strengthened rather than weakened Hitler's ambitions and his domestic authority. After the occupation of Prague, Chamberlain did his best to hinder any effort to create an effective deterrent through an alliance with the Soviet Union.³³ However, if Chamberlain was cautious, Stalin was even more cautious. It is very unlikely, according to the available information, that the latter was willing to build Soviet security upon any co-operation with western powers as late as in the spring of 1939.³⁴

As regards sources on the general conduct of British foreign policy during World War II, the official history in five volumes written by Sir Llewellyn Woodward is still indispensable.³⁵ It provides a lot of details and citations from the Foreign Office files, although it has also become a target of criticism.³⁶ Among other secondary sources for studies in British foreign policy, I am inclined to praise highly Churchill's official

33) Parker, R. A. C., *Chamberlain and Appeasement. British Policy and the Coming of the Second World War*, London, Macmillan Press 1993, esp. pp. 346-347. See also his other book on the topic: Parker, R. A. C., *Churchill and Appeasement*, Basingstoke and Oxford, Macmillan Press 2000.

34) There are, however, conflicting views on this topic. Most recently see the book by Geoffrey Roberts and the critical book-review by Jonathan Haslam. Roberts, Geoffrey, *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War: Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933-1941*, New York, St. Martin's 1995; Haslam, Jonathan, *Soviet-German Relations and the Origins of the Second World War: The Jury Is Still Out*, *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, 1997, No. 4, pp. 785-797. I was myself most sceptical in my account of Soviet policy in 1939, arguing that it was in fact Stalin with Molotov who did their best to break the negotiations with the British and French by escalating their conditions, though they may have been driven by perfectly understandable realist reasons. Smetana, Vít, *Enigma zahalená tajemstvím. Britská politika a Sovětský svaz v roce 1939* [Enigma Wrapped in a Mystery. British Policy and the Soviet Union in the Year 1939], Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Prague, Charles University 1997.

35) Woodward, Sir Llewellyn, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War*, 5 Vols., H.M.S.O., London 1970-76.

36) See e.g. the comments by Warren Kimball in: *Churchill and Roosevelt, the Complete Correspondence*, 3 Vols., ed. W. F. Kimball, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press 1984, p. XXIX: 'Woodward is carefully uncritical of British policy...'; Ross, Graham, *Foreign Office Attitudes to the Soviet Union 1941-1945*, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 16, 1981, pp. 512-540, here p. 521: 'But limitations of space meant that he had to concentrate on the substance of British policy rather than thinking behind it and he tends in any case to be discreet about differences of view and emphasis between individuals.'

biography by Martin Gilbert.³⁷ Though the author failed to come up with any fascinating new theories or historical conceptions denying all conclusions undertaken so far,³⁸ he provided us with abundance of facts, this time relevant for his topic. This is an admirable piece of academic work together with the companion volumes and Churchill's war papers, though unfortunately so far available only up to Vol. III (1941).³⁹

Much has been written about the British foreign policy 'axis', the relationship with the Soviet Union. Two contradictory scholarly accounts of the initial phase (1939-1942) of the strange relationship were written in the 1980s.⁴⁰ While Steven Meritt Miner contends that the search for British co-operation with the USSR was doomed to failure because of their differing worldviews, Gabriel Gorodetsky offers a revisionist view. He says that it was possible for the British to co-operate with the Soviet Union even before Barbarossa, but the Churchill government did not sincerely explore this chance. Graham Ross argues quite convincingly that throughout the war, and even as late as at the end of 1944, the Foreign Office was setting much store on developing co-operation with Russia, while having little faith in the United States as a post-war collaborator in Europe.⁴¹ It could be argued that it was the Cabinet that played the key role in conducting the policy. However, in the war years the Cabinet's attention was often directed elsewhere, thus the actual foreign policy course was an inconsistent product of interplay between the Foreign Office and the Cabinet.⁴² Martin Kitchen tended to see the war-time

37) Gilbert, Martin, *Prophet of Truth. Winston S. Churchill 1922-1939*, London, Heinemann 1976; Idem, *Finest Hour. Winston S. Churchill 1939-1941*, London, Heinemann 1983; Idem, *Road to Victory. Winston S. Churchill 1941-1945*, London, Heinemann 1986.

38) As an example of such an attempt see e.g.: Charmley, John, *Churchill: The End of Glory*, London, Hodder and Stoughton 1993.

39) *Winston Churchill, Companion Vol. V., The Coming of War, 1936-1939*, ed. M. Gilbert, London, Heinemann 1975; *The Churchill War Papers, Vol. I., At the Admiralty, September 1939 - May 1940*, Vol. II., *Never Surrender, May 1940 - December 1940*, Vol. III., *The Ever Widening War, 1941*, ed. M. Gilbert, London, Heinemann 1993, 1994, 2000.

40) Gorodetsky, Gabriel, *Stafford Cripps' Mission to Moscow*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1984; Miner, Steven Meritt, *Between Churchill and Stalin. The Soviet Union, Great Britain and the Origins of the Grand Alliance*, North Carolina, The North Carolina Press 1988.

41) Ross, Foreign Office Attitudes to the Soviet Union 1941-1945, p. 532. See also his important documentary edition: *The Foreign Office and the Kremlin. British Documents on Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1941-1945*, ed. G. Ross, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1984.

42) Cf. Child, *British Policy towards the Soviet Union 1939-42*, p. 26.

history of British-Soviet relations quite fatalistically, arguing that the alliance was in fact enabled only by the common enemy, and that even then there was merely a minimal degree of co-operation between the two Allies. This peculiar friendship was bound to end once Germany was defeated.⁴³ Dealing with Soviet foreign policy during World War II and afterwards, no historian should overlook an important book written by Vojtěch Mastný.⁴⁴ We now also know much more about the specific Soviet policy towards Czechoslovakia in the war years, above all thanks to the numerous studies and articles written by Valentina Vladimirovna Mar'ina, based on her extensive research in the Russian archives.⁴⁵

Finally, I would like to add just a few words about the Czech and Slovak historical writing on the topic of Czechoslovak exile in Britain. The quantity of books and articles written about Edvard Beneš's second exile or, broadly speaking, about Czechoslovak history 1938-1945 is enormous. However, their quality varies. The secondary sources worth mentioning might be divided into three groups: those published in the late 1960s when Czechoslovak historiography achieved a certain level of uncensored openness and hence also quality, those published in the

43) Kitchen Martin, *British Policy Towards the Soviet Union During the Second World War*, London, Macmillan 1986, p. 270; see also Idem, Winston Churchill and the Soviet Union during the Second World War, *Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, 1987, No. 2, pp. 415-436.

44) Mastný, Vojtech, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945*, New York, Columbia University Press 1975.

45) Marjina, Valentina V., Brána na Balkán. Slovensko v geopolitických plánech SSSR a Německa v letech 1939-1941 [The gate to the Balkans. Slovakia in the geopolitical plans of the USSR and Germany], *Soudobé dějiny* [Contemporary history], Prague, Vol. 1, 1993/1994, No. 6, pp. 827-846; Idem, K historii sovětsko-československých vztahů v letech 1938-1941. Nad deníkem Ivana M. Majského [Towards the history of the Soviet-Czechoslovak relations, 1938-1941. Reading the diary of Ivan M. Maisky], *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 6, 1999, No. 4, pp. 514-533; Idem, Nejen o Podkarpatské Rusi. Jednání Beneš-Molotov v Moskvě v březnu 1945 [Not only about the Sub-Carpathian Russia. The negotiations Beneš-Molotov in Moscow in March 1945], *Dějiny a současnost* [History and present], Prague, 1996, No. 4, pp. 48-51; Idem, Od důvěry k podezíravosti. Sovětská a československá komunisté v letech 1945-1948 [From trust to suspicion. The Soviet and Czechoslovak communists, 1945-1948], *Soudobé dějiny*, Vol. 4, 1997, No. 3-4, pp. 451-467; Idem, Politika SSSR po czechoslovackomu voprosu nakanune Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (sentjabr' 1940 - ijun' 1941 g.), *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia i strany Centralnoi i Yugo-Vostochnoi Evropy*, Moskva, Institut slavianovedenia i balkanistiki 1989, pp. 117-129; Idem, Sovetsko-germanskij pakt o nenapadenii i nachalo vtoroi mirovoi voiny v ocenke czeshskoi obshchestvennosti, In: *Politicheskii krizis 1939g. i strany Centralnoi i Yugo-Vostochnoi Evropy*, Moskva, Institut slavianovedenia i balkanistiki 1989, pp. 117-129; Idem, SSSR i czechoslovackii vopros. 1939 god, In: *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia i strany Centralnoi i Yugo-Vostochnoi Evropy*, Moskva, Institut slavianovedenia i balkanistiki 1990, pp. 95-128.

exile, and the post-1989 writing. Amongst those from the first category two books on the Czechoslovak resistance abroad 1938–1940 by Jan Křen and another one on the history of Czechoslovak military units in the West by Toman Brod with Eduard Čejka are quite important and at least in some aspects still usable.⁴⁶

Relevant books published in Czech in exile have mostly been re-published during the 1990s in Prague. Some fairly influential books were written in English, in particular those by Eduard Táborský and Josef Kalvoda.⁴⁷ The former worked as Beneš's private secretary during the war. However, he based his book not only on his private archive, but also on archival material from several countries including Britain. His outstanding book can be considered as academic work, despite the author's background. Rather surprisingly, he managed to be fairly critical of Beneš's diplomacy as well as of Beneš himself. Kalvoda is even more critical of the former President. The author worked extensively with U.S. archival documents, but also relied on other, hardly reliable sources, thus sometimes distorting the whole picture.

Amongst publications from the 1990s, those of Jan Kuklík, who also used British sources, deal with the initial phase of Beneš's exile in London.⁴⁸ Together with Jan Němeček they wrote two excellent books dealing with

46) Unlike many other historians, Křen was 'lucky' enough to have an access to archival sources in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. Křen, Jan, *Do emigrace. Buržoazní zahraniční odboj 1938–1939* [Into the exile. The bourgeois resistance abroad 1938–1939], Praha, Naše vojsko 1963. However, Křen rewrote his book in the time of the Prague spring and it was published in 2nd edition with a changed title: *Do emigrace. Západní zahraniční odboj 1938–1939* [Into the exile. The western resistance abroad 1938–1939], Praha, Naše vojsko 1969; Idem, *V emigraci. Západní zahraniční odboj 1939–1940* [In the exile. The western resistance abroad 1939–1940], Praha, Naše vojsko 1969; Brod, Toman – Čejka, Eduard, *Na západní frontě. Historie československých vojenských jednotek na Západě v letech druhé světové války* [At the Western front. History of the Czechoslovak military units in the West in the years of the Second World War], Praha, Naše vojsko 1965.

47) Táborský, Eduard, *President E. Beneš Between East and West 1938–1948*, Stanford, Hoover Institution Press 1981; in the Czech version as: *Prezident Beneš mezi Západem a Východem*, Praha, Mladá fronta 1993; Kalvoda, Josef, *Czechoslovakia's Role in Soviet Strategy*, University Press of America 1978 (Czech edition: *Role Československa v sovětské strategii*, Kladno, Dilo 1999).

48) Kuklík, Jan, *Londýnský exil a obnova československého státu za druhé světové války* [The exile in London and the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak state during World War II], Praha, Karolinum 1998; Idem, *Vznik Československého národního výboru a prozatímního státního zřízení ČSR v emigraci* [The creation of the Czechoslovak National Committee and the provisional state regime of the Czechoslovak Republic in Exile], Praha, Karolinum 1996.

the principal political conflicts in exile. The latter one contains also an important chapter on British attitudes towards the Czechoslovak anti-Beneš opposition in London.⁴⁹ Politically and legally the most fascinating issue – launching the resistance action in exile – attracted several Czech historians' attention.⁵⁰ Other authors conducted research concentrating on the Soviet dimension of the Czechoslovak foreign policy.⁵¹ The recent book by Jan Němeček about Czechoslovak-Polish relations, setting this relationship into a broader international perspec-

49) Kuklík, Jan – Němeček, Jan, *Hodža versus Beneš*, Praha, Karolinum 1999; Idem, *Proti Benešovi! Česká a slovenská protibenešovská opozice v Londýně 1939–1945* [Against Beneš! The Czech and Slovak anti-Beneš opposition in London 1939–1945], Praha, Karolinum 2004.

50) See e.g.: Jožák, Jiří, K historii čs. zahraniční akce v USA (15. 3.–1. 9. 1939) [Towards the history of the Czechoslovak exile action in the USA (15 March – 1 September 1939)], *Historie a vojenství* [History and military], Prague, Vol. 40, 1991, No. 5, pp. 43–77; Klímek, Antonín, Edvard Beneš od abdikace z funkce presidenta ČSR (5. října 1938) do zkázy Československa (15. března 1939) [Edvard Beneš from his resignation the presidency of the Czechoslovak Republic (5th October 1938) to the destruction of Czechoslovakia (15th March 1939)], In: *Z druhé republiky. Sborník prací Historického ústavu armády České republiky* [Inside the Second Republic. Collection of studies, published by the Historical Institute of the Czech Army], Praha 1993, pp. 155–241; Hauner, Milan, Čekání na velkou válku 1939 /I.–II./ Edvard Beneš mezi Mnichovem, 15. březnem a porážkou Polska [Waiting for a great war. Edvard Beneš between Munich, March 15 and the defeat of Poland], *Dějiny a současnost* [History and present], Prague, Vol. 21, No. 4, pp. 12–15, No. 5, pp. 36–39; Kuklík, Jan – Němeček, Jan, K počátkům druhého exilu E. Beneše 1938–1939 [Towards the origins of E. Beneš's second exile, 1938–1939], *Český časopis historický* [Czech historical journal], Prague, Vol. 96, 1998, No. 4, pp. 803–823.

51) See e.g.: Brod, Toman, *Osudný omyl Edvarda Beneše* [Edvard Beneš's fateful mistake], Praha, Academia 2002; Němeček, Jan, Československá diplomatická mise v Moskvě (březen–prosinec 1939) [The Czechoslovak diplomatic legation in Moscow (March–December 1939)], *Moderní dějiny* [Modern history], Prague, Vol. 4, 1996, pp. 221–275; Idem, Edvard Beneš a Sovětský svaz 1939–1945 [Edvard Beneš and the Soviet Union], *Slovanský přehled* [Slavic survey], Prague, Vol. 87, 2001, No. 3, pp. 313–343; Idem, Československý zahraniční odboj a sovětsko-finská válka 1939–1940 [The Czechoslovak resistance abroad and the Soviet-Finnish war], *Moderní dějiny*, Vol. 3, 1995, pp. 139–157; Idem, Němeček, Jan, Edvard Beneš a Sovětský svaz 1939–1940 [Edvard Beneš and the Soviet Union 1939–1940], *Slovanské historické studie* [Slavonic historical studies], Prague, Vol. 23, 1997, pp. 179–193; Janáček, František, Pakt, válka a KSČ. První týdny po 23. srpnu a 1. září 1939 [The Pact, the war and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. First weeks after 23rd August and 1st September 1939] *Historie a vojenství* [History and military], Prague, 1969, pp. 425–457; Janáček, František – Němeček, Jan, Reality a iluze Benešovy 'ruské' politiky 1939–1945 [Realities and illusions of Beneš's 'Russian' policy, 1939–1945], In: *Edvard Beneš, československý a evropský politik* [Edvard Beneš, Czechoslovak and European politician], Praha 1994, pp. 71–95.

tive of the Second World War diplomacy, is certainly a remarkable achievement.⁵²

Primary sources

Several diaries are indispensable for understanding the conduct of British foreign policy in the war years as well as the way the Foreign Office worked. This applies above all to the diaries of the Permanent Under-Secretary of State Sir Alexander Cadogan.⁵³ It is a fascinating reading written by a skillful Machiavellian diplomat, who changed his opinions lightheartedly, both on foreign policy matters and on the people inside that specific world. Professionally edited by David Dilks, this book is a 'must' read. The diaries of Oliver Harvey, the Private Secretary of Lord Halifax and Anthony Eden, also provide interesting insights into the Foreign Office and foreign policy conduct.⁵⁴ Amongst other diaries I should point out those of two more people connected with Czechoslovak matters - Harold Nicolson and Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart.⁵⁵ The former, a prominent journalist and also M.P., belonged to the 'Eden group' of opponents of appeasement in 1938-1939 and also had numerous Czech and Slovak friends. The latter spent much time in Prague during the inter-war period, was appointed a liaison officer to the Czechoslovak National Committee in 1939, and then in 1940-1941 served as the British representative to the Provisional Czechoslovak government. As such he really played principal role in the Anglo-Czechoslovak encounter of that time. From the diaries recorded by the Czechoslovak politicians and officials, those by Jan Opočenský, the President's archivist throughout the war, published in an excellent edition, are most revealing on various themes including the perceptions of Britain and her policy by the Czechoslovak exiles.⁵⁶ However, when dealing with diaries

52) Němeček, Jan, *Od spojení k roztržce* [From alliance to quarrel], Praha, Academia 2003.

53) *The Diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938-1945*, ed. D. Dilks, New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons 1972.

54) *The Diplomatic Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1937-1940*, ed. J. Harvey, New York, St. Martin's Press 1970; *The War Diaries of Oliver Harvey 1941-1945*, ed. J. Harvey, London, Collins 1978.

55) Nicolson, Sir Harold George, *Diaries and Letters*, Vol. I, 1930-1939, Vol. II, 1939-1945, Vol. III, 1945-1962, ed. N. Nicolson, London, Collins 1966, 1967, 1971; *The Diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart*, Vol. I, 1915-1938, Vol. II, 1939-1965, ed. K. Young, London, Macmillan 1973, 1980.

56) *Válečné deníky Jana Opočenského* [Jan Opočenský's war-time diaries], eds. J. Čechurová - J. Kuklík - J. Čechura - J. Němeček, Praha, Karolinum 2001; see also Táborský,

one should also bear in mind that these editions are usually selective and some important passages are often left out of the original diaries.⁵⁷

I should also say a few words about perhaps the most problematic 'primary' source – the memoirs. Prominent British and American diplomats usually mention Czechoslovakia only occasionally.⁵⁸ Nonetheless, even these utterances have certain value, although one should be always cautious in taking them for granted, word for word. There were, however, several diplomats who had to deal with Czechoslovakia, but the quality of their memoirs varies. *Comes the Reckoning* by Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart, also translated into Czech soon after the war, is most informative about Czechoslovak matters, though the loyal Beneš's and Jan Masaryk's friend hardly offered a critical appraisal of Czechoslovak policy during the war.⁵⁹ The memoirs of the Soviet Ambassador in London Ivan Maisky on the contrary, though dealing quite extensively with the British and Czechoslovak affairs, belong to those recollections which one cannot really take fully seriously.⁶⁰

Anthony Eden's memoirs contain several comments about the proposed Czechoslovak confederation with the Poles and the Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty.⁶¹ The memoirs by Sir Frank K. Roberts, the key official in the Central Department of the Foreign Office during the war, can – besides numerous inaccuracies – in many cases serve as an example of projecting later thoughts into previous events.⁶² Autobiographies of many British politicians are entered in the bibliography; all of them com-

Eduard, *Pravda zvítězila. Deník druhého zahraničního odboje*, [The truth has triumphed. The diary of the second resistance movement abroad], Praha, Fr. Borový 1947.

57) Out of the books I have mentioned, this applies especially to Lockhart's diaries and also Cadogan's diaries.

58) See e.g.: Kirkpatrick, Ivone, *The Inner Circle. Memoirs*, London, Macmillan 1959; Strang, William, *Home & Abroad*, London, A. Deutsch 1956; Bohlen, Charles E., *Witness to History 1929–1969*, New York, Norton & Company 1973; Harriman, W. Averell, and Abel, Eli, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin 1941–1946*, London, Hutchinson 1976; Hull, Cordell, *The Memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 2 Vols., London, Hodder and Stoughton 1951; Kennan, George F., *Memoirs 1925–1950*, Boston-Toronto, Little, Brown and Company 1967.

59) Lockhart, Sir Robert Bruce, *Comes the Reckoning*, London, Putnam Comp. 1947; Czech edition: *Přichází zúčtování*, Praha, Fr. Borový 1948.

60) Maisky, Ivan, *Memoirs of a Soviet Ambassador, The War 1939–1943*, London, Hutchinson 1967.

61) Eden, Anthony (Lord Avon), *The Reckoning*, London, Cassell 1965, p. 533.

62) Roberts, Frank, *Dealing with Dictators. The Destruction and Revival of Europe 1930–1970*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson 1991. It was the name of Roberts' memoirs that Martin D. Brown paraphrased for the title of his own book.

menting on the course of British foreign policy during World War II. They bear several common signs: the authors usually stress their critical attitude towards the policy of appeasement and their worries and later regrets concerning the Sovietisation of Eastern Europe. Now, when so many archival documents uncovering British foreign policy in the 1930s and 1940s are accessible to research, memoirs are more useful for remembered 'tone', for understanding interpersonal or even interdepartmental relations – something where the official documents usually remain silent – than for descriptive accounts of policy.

Many Czechoslovak (ex)politicians put on the paper their recollections of the war years and sometimes also the post-war period. The general limitations, which I have outlined in the previous two paragraphs about memoirs of British politicians, apply here as well, and there are additional shortcomings. These naturally concern the autobiographies published in Czechoslovakia after 1948⁶³ but also those published in the exile. The urge to find the 'guilty men' who had marked the fate of the country, seemingly for the good, was sometimes irresistible. Beneš's memoirs are not very reliable, offering a big quantity of half-truths, and this applies even more to both volumes of Zdeněk Fierlinger's memoirs.⁶⁴ The voluminous memoirs by Prokop Drtina, Beneš's assistant in London, and later Minister of Justice, were smuggled out of communist Czechoslovakia and published in Canada in 1982.⁶⁵ The most revealing memoirs of Karel Ladislav Feierabend, the Minister of Finance in the Czechoslovak government in exile, were first published in the sixties in Washington and caused a real turmoil amongst Czechoslovak emigrants.⁶⁶ Wenzel

63) See e.g. Laštovička, Bohuslav, *V Londýně za války* [In London during the war], 3rd edition, Praha, Svoboda 1978.

64) Beneš, Edvard, *Paměti. Od Mnichova k nové válce a k novému vítězství*, Praha, Orbis 1947 (English edition: *Memoirs of Dr. Eduard Beneš. From Munich to a New War and a New Victory*, Boston, 1954); Fierlinger, Zdeněk, *Ve službách ČSR. Paměti z druhého zahraničního odboje* [In the services of the Czechoslovak Republic. Memoirs of the second resistance abroad], 2 Vols., Praha, Svoboda 1947 and 1951. Fierlinger served as Czechoslovak Minister to Moscow and then became the first post-war Czechoslovak Prime Minister. However, his relations with the Kremlin were far stronger than just diplomatic...

65) Drtina, Prokop, *Československo můj osud: kniha života českého demokrata 20. století* [Czechoslovakia – my fate: A book of life of a Czechoslovak democrat of the 20th century], 2 Vols., 2nd edition, Praha, Melantrich 1991-1992 (first published in Toronto, Sixty Eight Publishers, Corp. 1982).

66) Feierabend, Ladislav Karel, *Politické vzpomínky* [Political memoirs], 3 Vols., Brno, Atlantis 1994, 1996 (first published in 4 Volumes in Washington, D.C., at the author's own expense, in 1965-67).

Jaksch, the leader of the Sudeten German Social Democrats, published his memoirs – which can be also labeled as an anti-Beneš essay – 13 years after the war.⁶⁷

The Czechoslovak exile representation, as well as the democratic Sudeten Germans or anti-Beneš Slovaks, produced innumerable pieces of propaganda, such as edited speeches, various pamphlets, etc. Some of them are entered in the bibliography. Several western intellectuals were also productive in this sense.⁶⁸

The most important published primary sources are undoubtedly documentary editions. The official series of *Documents on British Foreign Policy* unfortunately end with the date of British entry into the Second World War.⁶⁹ But the more recent documents from the Foreign Office confidential print have compensated this disadvantage substantially; *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* represent perhaps the most important printed source for anyone dealing with the British foreign policy during the Second World War.⁷⁰ Warren Kimball's edition of the complete correspondence between Churchill and Roosevelt represents another important source, although Czechoslovakia is mentioned just once, and then only in connection with Poland.⁷¹ But this is naturally not Kimball's fault, the fact rather reflects the importance or comparatively unproblematic nature of Czechoslovak affairs. I also drew extensively upon the *Hansards*, the verbatim records of parliamentary debates, a crucial source to research interconnections between foreign and domestic policies.⁷²

67) Jaksch, Wenzel, *Europas Weg nach Potsdam. Schuld und Schicksal im Donauraum*, Stuttgart, Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt 1958 (English edition: *Europe's Road to Potsdam*, London, Thames and Hudson 1963; Czech edition: *Cesta Evropy do Postupimi*, Praha, ISE 2000).

68) See e.g.: Grant Duff, Shiela, *A German Protectorate. The Czechs under Nazi Rule*, London, Macmillan 1942; Wright, Quincy, *The Munich Settlement and International Law*, *American Journal of International Law*, 1939, No. 33.

69) *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, 1919–1939, 3rd series, 1938–1939, 9 Vols., London, H.M.S.O. 1949–57 (hereafter *DBFP*).

70) Most important for my particular topic are the following series: *British Documents on Foreign Affairs – reports and papers from the Foreign Office confidential print* (hereafter *BDFA*), Part III, *From 1940 through 1945*, Series A, *The Soviet Union and Finland*, 5 Vols., Bethesda (MD), University Publications of America 1998; *Ibid.*, *From 1940 through 1945*, Series F, *Europe*, 26 Vols., Bethesda (MD), University Publications of America 1997.

71) *Churchill and Roosevelt, the Complete Correspondence*, Vol. II, Doc. No. C-533.

72) *Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons*, London, H.M.S.O., 5th Series, 1938–1942 (hereafter *H. C. Deb.*); *Parliamentary Debates, House of Lords*, London, H.M.S.O., 5th Series, 1938–1942 (hereafter *H. L. Deb.*).

On the Czech part, the edition based on papers of Beneš's chancellor Dr. Jaromír Smutný is still indispensable.⁷³ However, during the last 15 years the most substantial and remarkable research has been done on documentary editions. Some of them are now absolutely necessary for anybody who wants to tackle the problem of Czechoslovakia's place in Europe during World War II and after.⁷⁴ Although an edition focusing on Anglo-Czechoslovak relations has not been published, some of the cited editions reflect this theme too, though usually including only Czech archival sources.

This book is, however, based primarily on archival material. I have done most of my research in the *Public Record Office* in London (in 2003 it was renamed to *The National Archives*, but I rather decided to stick to its original and traditional name under which I did most of my research and which is less bound to be confused with the National Archives in Washington, D.C.), especially on the Foreign Office files, Cabinet papers, Premier series, War Office files and SOE files (HS). Especially the detailed nature of the Foreign Office records, including the 'minutes'

73) *Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939–1943* [Documents from the history of Czechoslovak politics 1939–1943], eds. L. Otáhalová a M. Červinková, Praha, Academia 1966 (hereafter *DHČSP*).

74) *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. Československá zahraniční politika v roce 1938. Svazek II (1. červenec – 5. říjen 1938)* [Documents on Czechoslovak Foreign Policy. Czechoslovak Foreign Policy in 1938, Volume II (1 July – 5 October 1938)], Praha, ÚMV – UK – Karolinum – HÚ AV ČR 2001 (hereafter *DČSZP 1938*); *Dokumenty československé zahraniční politiky. Od rozpadu Česko-Slovenska do uznání československé prozatímní vlády 1939–1940 (16. březen 1939 – 16. červen 1940)* [From the break-up of Czecho-Slovakia until the recognition of the Czechoslovak provisional government (16 March 1939 – 16 June 1940)], Praha, ÚMV – UK – Karolinum – HÚ AV ČR 2002 (hereafter *DČSZP 1939–1940*); *Československo-sovětské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1939–1945. Dokumenty 1–2* [Czechoslovak-Soviet relations in diplomatic negotiations 1939–1945. Documents I–II], Praha, Státní ústřední archiv v Praze [State Central Archive in Prague] 1998–1999 (hereafter *Dokumenty ČSR-SSSR*); *Czechoslovak-Polish Negotiations of the Establishment of Confederation and Alliance 1939–1944*, Prague, Publishing House Karolinum and the Institute of History, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic 1995; *Češi a sudetoněmecká otázka 1939–1945. Dokumenty* [The Czechs and the Sudeten German question. Documents], ed. J. Vondrová, Praha, Ústav mezinárodních vztahů 1994; *Edvard Beneš v USA v roce 1943. Dokumenty* [Edvard Beneš in the United States in 1943], eds. J. Němeček, H. Nováčková, I. Štoviček, *Sborník archivních prací* [Reports of archival works], Prague, Vol. 49, 1999, No. 2, pp. 469–564; *Edvard Beneš: Vzkazy do vlasti* [Edvard Beneš: Messages home], ed. J. Šolc, Praha, Naše vojsko 1996; *Československo-francouzské vztahy v diplomatických jednáních 1940–1945* [Czechoslovak-French relations in diplomatic negotiations 1940–1945], eds. J. Němeček – H. Nováčková – I. Štoviček – J. Kuklík, Praha, HÚ AV ČR – SÚA – UK – Karolinum 2005.

- comments written by particular officials upon every single diplomatic affair - provides the researcher with an amazing opportunity to trace the process of consensus-building inside the key governmental office dealing with foreign policy. It should be stressed that this habit of 'minuting' was something unique amongst other foreign ministries - including the U.S., Russian, French and Czechoslovak ones.⁷⁵

I could supplement these public records with the private papers and diaries of numerous British politicians and diplomats, deposited in London, Cambridge, Oxford and Birmingham. Here I would like to point out at least the 'Czechoslovak' files in the *Bank of England Archive* and also the diaries of Sir Robert Bruce Lockhart located in the *House of Lords Record Office*. These include the hitherto unexplored 'Czechoslovak diary' of 1941 which was also entirely neglected by the editor of the published version of Lockhart's diaries and which throws an interesting light on how British policy towards Czechoslovakia was enacted.

As I have hinted before, the interactive approach is necessary. Therefore my research in the Czech archives, especially the *Foreign Ministry Archive* and the *National Archive* in Prague provided me with valuable material from the 'other side'. Thanks to Hana Velecká I could also make use of the fruits of her own research in the so-called 'Beneš Archive' at the *Archive of the T. G. Masaryk Institute*. Crucial for my topic were also collections of several Czechoslovak émigrés (Eduard Táborský, Ladislav Karel Feierabend, Ivo Ducháček) as well as a few Bruce Lockhart files deposited in the *Hoover Institution Archives* at Stanford University. My research in the *Archiv vneshnei politiki* (Foreign Policy Archive) in Moscow and in the *National Archives* in Washington, D.C., enabled me to view certain aspects of British foreign policy in comparison with the policies of the other two Great Powers.

Structure of the book

Any historian, when thinking about the structure of his text, has to make a decision whether to follow the sequence of events, or whether to divide the whole issue into particular subtopics and only within them follow the time-line. Each of the two approaches has its obvious disad-

75) Quite typically, Martin Brown who worked only in the British archives, and thus did not have the opportunity to compare the nature of the archival material produced by the Foreign Office with any other one, tends to stress only the weaknesses of the Foreign Office minutes and memoranda. See Brown, *Dealing with Democrats*, pp. 34-40, esp. p. 37.

vantages. Roughly they may be described as the danger of unclearness due to abundance of facts relating to numerous unrelated topics versus an incoherent picture caused by following particular topics singled out of global picture. Therefore I decided to combine the two approaches: Generally, the text is structured along the time-line, but each chapter is divided into sub-chapters according to particular topics that I regard as most significant for the Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship in a given period. Nevertheless, several times I had to return back to the past to provide the historical background for explaining the problems which dominated the relationship only later. Certain overlaps were thus unavoidable (or at least I was unable to escape them).

Chapter 1 (*British foreign policy and Czechoslovakia before Munich 1938*) provides a historical introduction to the topic. It reveals British strategic doctrine and priorities and it assesses the origins, nature and course of the British engagement in the 'Sudeten crisis'.

Chapter 2 (*Britain and the crumbling of Czechoslovakia*) deals with the complex diplomacy of September 1938 to March 1939. It examines the ambiguities of the September 1938 Agreement and its impact on British politics. It reveals the lack of political will on the part of Chamberlain's cabinet to honour its hated guarantee of the Czechoslovak boundaries, which was undertaken in Munich. On the other hand, the financial support to the crippled state and its refugees was thought to assuage the growing feeling of guilt over the Munich settlement. The chapter further reveals that British intelligence failed to predict German intentions until very recently before the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia and that British politicians agreed with the French that they should not interfere in the new crisis.

Chapter 3 (*Towards the outbreak of war*) covers British policy towards Czechoslovakia between 15 March and the outbreak of the war. It analyses the immediate reaction in Britain to the German destruction of Czechoslovakia and the impact of this event upon the whole course of British foreign policy. It further deals with the residual issues connected with Czechoslovakia, some of which virtually stirred British political scene, while others just testified to lack of political control, during the spring and summer of 1939, in what was considered as minor political issues.

Chapter 4 (*British attitudes towards the development of Czechoslovak political representation in exile*) analyses British policy towards Czechoslovak exiles

after the destruction of Czechoslovakia and in the initial phase of World War II. It briefly describes overall British assistance to Czechoslovak refugees, before focusing on the attitude to most prominent Czechoslovak politicians who left Czechoslovakia. It examines varying British attitudes to Edvard Beneš and to his attempts to establish a government in exile. It explains why in the autumn of 1939 his efforts fruited in recognition of a mere 'Czechoslovak National Committee'. It further suggests that British policy suddenly changed only after the fall of France and Churchill's accession to power.

Chapter 5 (*The other life of Munich and the 'unbearable lightness' of provisional status*) displays the increasingly important role that Munich played in Anglo-Czechoslovak relationship and the way it influenced the policy of Edvard Beneš and his collaborators on the one hand and Churchill, Eden and the officials at the Foreign Office on the other hand. It further accounts for several achievements of the Provisional government, before focusing on the difficult path to the full *de jure* recognition. It points out the crucial role of external factors in these negotiations, namely the influence of the Dominions upon British policy, and then the Soviet Union with its sudden foreign policy shift after 22 June 1941.

Chapter 6 (*Planning for the future while looking to the past*) shows how the experience of the inter-war years influenced the political planning of Britain and Czechoslovakia. The British clearly favoured federative solution of the problem of Central and South-Eastern Europe. Correspondingly, the Czechoslovak government earned much of its reputation by its advanced negotiations with their Polish counterparts on the establishment of a Confederation. Far more vigorously, however, the protagonists of Czechoslovak foreign policy strove to secure their major aims - reconstitution of Czechoslovakia in her pre-Munich borders and solution of the Sudeten German problem. By mid-1942 they reached the limits of what they could extract from the British, entrenched in their principle of non-commitment. This undoubtedly had its impact on further foreign policy orientation of Czechoslovakia, since Edvard Beneš and his collaborators could far more easily secure their principal aims by the way of close co-operation with the Soviets.

A few terminological comments are perhaps necessary at the end of this introduction: British politicians and officials often used 'the Czechs' when in the politically correct language there should be 'the Czechoslovaks' or rather 'the Czechs and Slovaks' or perhaps even 'the people