

**WORLD WAR II AND ITS AFTERMATH**

**Viewpoints**

In September 1938, Neville Chamberlain, Britain’s prime minister, met with the leaders of Germany, Italy, and France. He wanted to find a peaceful compromise with Hitler. The resulting document, the Munich Agreement, gave Hitler everything he asked for. While Chamberlain felt he had achieved “peace for our time,” some people, like future prime minister Winston Churchill, were unhappy with the agreement. ♦ *As you read the speeches, keep in mind each man’s response to the thought of war with Germany. Then, on a separate sheet of paper, answer the questions that follow.*

**Can Hitler Be Trusted?**

**From a Speech  
by Neville Chamberlain**

The real triumph [of the Munich Conference] is that it has shown that [the] four great Powers can . . . agree on a way of carrying out a difficult and delicate operation by discussion instead of by force of arms, and thereby they have averted a catastrophe which would have ended civilisation. . . .

After everything that has been said about the German Chancellor [Hitler] today and in the past, I do feel that the House [of Commons] ought to recognise the difficulty for a man in that position to take back such emphatic declarations as he had already made amidst the enthusiastic cheers of his supporters, and to recognise that in consenting . . . to discuss with the representatives of other Powers those things which he had declared he had already decided . . . was a real and a substantial contribution on his part.

In my view the strongest force of all . . . was that unmistakable sense . . . among the peoples of the world that war must somehow be averted . . . and I believe that that, and not threats, made possible the concessions. . . .

**From a Speech  
by Winston Churchill**

I will begin by saying what everybody would like to ignore or forget but which must nevertheless be stated, namely, that we have sustained a total and unmitigated defeat. . . .

We are in the presence of a disaster . . . which has befallen Great Britain and France.

Do not let us blind ourselves to that. It must now be accepted that all the countries of Central and Eastern Europe will make the best terms they can with the triumphant Nazi Power. . . .

I do not grudge our loyal, brave people . . . the . . . outburst of joy and relief when they learned that the hard ordeal would no longer be required of them at the moment; but they should know the truth. . . . [T]hey should know that we have sustained a defeat without a war,

the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road. . . .

And do not suppose that this is the end. This is only the beginning of the reckoning. . . .



**Churchill (l.) and Chamberlain, about 1939**

Sources: (1) *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, vol. 339 (October 3, 1938); (2) *Churchill’s Wartime Speeches*, The Churchill Society, London.

**Questions to Think About**

1. What do you think the other leaders hoped to accomplish by giving in to Hitler?
2. Why does Winston Churchill consider this decision a disaster?
3. **Analyze Information** Which man do you feel made the stronger argument? Explain.