

and property, thus further decimating the old Polish elite. They understood that this insurrection was intended to liberate the capital by the national resistance movement rather than by the Soviet forces, who might then be received as guests rather than as conquerors. Hence their readiness to see it snuffed out.

Though in hindsight this process of the destruction of the anti-German and anti-Communist Polish national resistance movement is often described as though its outcome was foreordained, it was anything but smooth. Indeed, despite the overwhelming and decisive Soviet presence, Poland was wracked by a real civil war, lasting well into 1947 at least, in which the Soviet-backed Communist forces, the surviving national resistance cells, and Ukrainian partisans fought one another with great ferocity and desperation.

As World War II approached its close in Europe and again shortly after its conclusion, the Big Three leaders of the Allies confirmed the political fate of Poland at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences of February 4 to 11 and July 17 to August 2, 1945. Stalin's claims concerning the Polish-Soviet frontier were now ratified by the Western Big Two. Poland was compensated for its lost eastern lands by the acquisition of the German territories up to the Oder-Neisse Line and southern East Prussia. To make room for the Polish population that would be extruded from the eastern lands, the German population was to be moved westward out of the newly acquired Polish western region. The Soviet-sponsored Provisional Government of Poland was endorsed by the British and the Americans—who thus sacrificed their faithful, if somewhat stubborn, Polish allies in exile—on condition that it incorporate a few "London" Poles as individuals and that it nominally commit itself to early and free elections in Poland—a provision that would mean whatever Stalin might choose to have it mean. Thus a war that had begun to preserve Poland's authentic independence from Nazi Germany ended with its being doubly dependent on Soviet Russia: Poland was to be governed by a cadre determined to match its social, economic, and political life to the Soviet model; Poland's international security was to be entirely dependent on Soviet protection of its new western frontier against future German revanchism.

3

The wartime behavior and experiences of the Czechoslovaks was in several ways the direct opposite of the Poles' patterns, yet their fate since

World War II is similar. Whereas the Poles fought the Germans in 1939 despite catastrophically unfavorable odds, the Czechoslovak regime capitulated in 1938, though its odds were not as poor. Whereas the Poles then resisted the occupation and suffered enormous human and material losses during the war, the Czechs were largely quiescent and benefited from the German industrial plants being moved into their land and thus out of the reach of the British and American bombings. Not that the Czechs were enthusiastic collaborators with the Nazis, whom they indeed resented. They simply kept a pragmatically low profile and avoided the risks of resistance and reprisals. By and large, only Czech Jews and intellectuals suffered persecution. Whereas the Polish government-in-exile provoked Stalin's wrath by opposing—perhaps imprudently but certainly bravely—his territorial and political demands, its Czechoslovak counterpart, also based in London, toadled to him. To no avail. Czechoslovakia was ultimately integrated into the Soviet security, political, and socioeconomic systems at least as firmly as was Poland, though with slightly later timing.

Czechoslovakia entered the pre-Munich crisis in the summer of 1938 with some strong domestic cards, but its leaders never played them. Constitutionally and politically, the government was solidly anchored in a democratically elected parliament and in Czech public support. Admittedly, the leaders of the Sudeten German minority were by then openly seditious and the loyalty of many Slovak leaders was dubious, but there is no doubt that the Czech nation—the country's dominant majority—faced the critical summer of 1938 resolute and confident. Moreover, the military establishment was thoroughly competent and professional. Indeed, during World War II, Hitler once noted that during the 1930s only two European states, his own Reich and Czechoslovakia, had really seriously prepared for war, and at the postwar Nümburg war-crimes trials, Field Marshals Wilhelm Keitel and Erich von Manstein testified that in 1938 the Czechoslovak fortifications could have offered formidable resistance to the *Wehrmacht*. Given its naturally defensible and well-fortified frontiers, its technologically advanced armaments industry, and its disciplined and literate population, Czechoslovakia's potential military position in September 1938 was not as apparently hopeless as Poland's after the German-Soviet Pact a year later. Hence the capitulation of President Edvard Beneš to Munich, for which he never accepted responsibility but blamed the Great Powers exclusively, was not a rational calculation of military and political odds, but a profound failure of political and psychological nerves. The point

is that there are certain ultimate leadership decisions that determine the moral, even more than the material, fate of future generations, decisions that the leaders of even small states cannot "rationally" or "logically" abdicate to their Great Power patrons without compromising their own integrity.

In the aftermath of the Munich conference, Czechoslovakia suffered huge losses of territory and resources to Germany, Hungary, and Poland; but these losses were reversed at the end of World War II. Less remediable than the material damage was the psychological one, which would ultimately benefit the Soviet Union and the domestic Communists. The public's confidence in the prewar international system and in its own leaders was sapped; the elite's morale, broken. Even the shattering defeat at White Mountain in 1620, when battle had been accepted by the Czechs, was less demoralizing than this humiliating acquiescence to Munich in 1938. The last, but scarcely the least, of this episode's many hard lessons is that the sacrifice of Czechoslovakia did not save the peace.

Beneš resigned the presidency on October 5 and left his country on October 22, 1938. As the French government, unable to forgive the man whom it had betrayed, refused him any contacts, Beneš went on to exile in Britain, where the government also kept him at arm's length until well into World War II. His formal successor at home was the elderly and apolitical jurist Emil Hácha. Slovakia was granted extensive autonomy on October 6, as was Ruthenia, the country's easternmost province, two days later. The state's name was hyphenated to Czechoslovakia. The surviving political leaders drew the logical inference from Munich that, their rump state (also known as "the second republic") being henceforth utterly dependent on Hitler's benevolence, they had best offer him their willing collaboration. Accordingly, the constitution of 1920 was nullified, the Czech party system suspended, the Communists banned, the remaining German minority given privileged status, the Jews restricted, censorship extended, and democracy vilified in public propaganda. An extraterritorial road connecting Silesia and Austria was put at Germany's disposal, and the remaining heavy armaments were transferred to it. Finally, the new Czechoslovak foreign minister, František Chvalkovský, beseechingly promised full policy compliance with, and reliance on, Germany "if Germany will allow this."

For a brief period, it appeared that this obsequiousness might work. In the autumn arbitration proceedings concerning the new frontier with Hungary, for example, the German delegation was less vindictively hos-

tile to the Czechoslovak case than was the Italian. The Germans had also initially backed that relatively moderate wing of the Slovak People's party that was prepared to accept autonomy within what was left of the general state, rather than the radicals who craved total Slovak independence. Indeed, since the Czechoslovak rump state was a true satellite and entirely dependent on the Reich, it would appear to have been in Berlin's interest to stabilize and sustain it.

Hitler, however, acting for reasons and from motives that remain somewhat unclear, chose otherwise. In mid-March 1939, he took advantage of an internal crisis between the Prague central government and the Slovak autonomous one to impose the Slovak radicals on the moderates and thus to elicit a declaration of full Slovak independence under German protection (*de facto vis-à-vis* Hungary). Simultaneously, he utilized Hácha's suppliant visit to Berlin to browbeat the old man into accepting German military occupation of, and a politico-administrative German Protectorate over, the rump Czech lands of Bohemia and Moravia. Operationally, the military occupation was a mere police action, since all effective Czech defenses had been surrendered after Munich and any (unlikely) urge to offer quixotic resistance at this point had just been allayed by Hácha's capitulation. Hungary, meanwhile, on being denied Slovakia, consoled itself by reannexing Ruthenia.

On balance, these frenzied actions of March 13 to 16, 1939, were a blunder on Hitler's part. Politically, he gained no greater control over the territories now under his formal protection than he had in fact enjoyed since Munich, while internationally, he finally aroused even the hitherto complacent British government from its illusions of appeasement. The German occupation of the Czech rump state on March 15, 1939, thus led directly to the British guarantee of March 31 to Poland, with consequences fateful for the world and fatal to Hitler and his Third Reich.

Unlike the *Generalgouvernement* for his Polish conquest, Hitler preserved the legal fiction of Czech autonomy in his Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. The Hácha puppet government was formally maintained, a small militia authorized, and a single mass political organization called the National Solidarity Movement tolerated. But the real locus of power was, of course, the office and apparatus of the supervisory Reich Protector, staffed by Germans.

Apart from its universal aim of exterminating the Jews, German policy toward the Protectorate's Czechs was to brutalize the intellectual and professional classes—from among whom came most of the 36,000 to 55,000 Czechs who were executed directly or who died in concen-

tation camps during the war—and to coddle the workers, peasants, and artisans with full employment, ample rations, high wages, and steady purchases at good prices.⁵ By and large, this policy of “bribery through the stomach” succeeded in rendering the Protectorate one of the most quiescent and productive parts of Axis-occupied Europe. Apart from the rather spectacular ambushing of the Acting Reich Protector, Reinhard Heydrich, on May 27, 1942 (he died of his wounds on June 4)—and even in this case, it is noteworthy that the escaped assassins, who had been sent from Britain, were later betrayed to the Gestapo by their Czech co-nationals—and the ostentatious but operationally insignificant uprising of Prague, on May 5 to 9, 1945, when the European war was virtually over and the Nazi regime had disintegrated (and which left the city virtually unscathed), the Czech resistance was rather minimal throughout the war and never enjoyed the sympathy, let alone the participation, of the lower classes. One stance on which the otherwise rivalrous Hácha puppet government inside the Protectorate and the government-in-exile that Beneš formed after the fall of France could agree was to avoid risks and damages while waiting for the ultimate fate of the country to be settled by the exertions of the Great Powers. Perhaps it is precisely because of this relative paucity of Czech resistance and suffering that the moral and psychological wounds of the occupation years have cut so deep.

Interestingly, active resistance was more vigorous in the nominally sovereign Slovak puppet state than in the Protectorate. Hoping to capitalize on the fact that Slovak nationalism was anti-Czech and anti-Hungarian but not anti-German, the Nazis initially aimed to make Slovakia into a showcase displaying to all Europe the rewards of collaborating with them. Then, once the war was on, Slovakia became an exemplar of a more general wartime policy of Nazi Germany—reluctantly sacrificing the more sympathetic but unmythical Radical Rightists for the sake of political stability and economic productivity, which in Slovakia was maintained by a regime of clerico-authoritarian conservatives. The bargain between the Slovak conservatives and the hegemonic Germans appeared to be mutually profitable: Slovakia’s administrative and political autonomy was maintained, and its economy was expanded and modernized; in return, it supplied food, raw materials, and semiprocessed goods for the German war effort. Slovakia also collaborated in the roundup and hence the extermination of Jews. But as early as September 1939, there had been some mutinous behavior in protest against the regime’s collaboration with the German invasion of Poland, a nation toward which

Slovaks feel affinity, and by 1943 the bargain was souring somewhat in Slovak eyes as laborers were drafted to work in Reich industries and troops to fight on the eastern and Italian fronts.

After many sporadic yet small-scale acts of sabotage, desertion, shirking, hoarding, and evasion, the resistance—incorporating Communist as well as non-Communist elements—organized itself under a common political leadership and program in November 1943, but for symbolic effect called its decisions of that month the Christmas Program. It organized the Slovak National Council, called for the reestablishment of a common state with the Czechs, but this time with more equality to the Slovaks as a distinct nation, and invited this future, egalitarian Czechoslovakia to learn in foreign policy on the Soviet Union “as the protector of the freedom and universal progress of small nations in general and of Slav nations in particular.”⁶ Simultaneously, the Slovak National Council was in contact with disaffected officers in the puppet government’s own army, with a view to arranging for a Slovak leap out of the Axis and into the Allied camp at an opportune moment.

The choosing of such a supposedly opportune moment for a volte-face was, of course, a highly delicate matter. No Slovak wished to repeat the unhappy experiences of Italy and Hungary. The first had surrendered prematurely to the Allies in September 1943, and the second was suspected by Hitler of intending to do so in March 1944, both were promptly invaded and subdued by vigorous German counterstrokes. In the event, the Slovaks’ timing was forced by Romania’s switch of sides on August 23 to 25, 1944 (see section 6), which elicited a preemptive German occupation of Slovakia on August 29, thereby sparking a Slovak uprising under the formal leadership of the relatively new Slovak National Council but commanded and partly manned by the officers and units of the puppet government’s own army together with the council’s guerrillas. The uprising managed to survive for two months in central Slovakia until it was finally overcome by the *Wehrmacht* in heavy fighting that lasted until October 28. It received only slightly more Soviet assistance than did the nearly simultaneous insurrection in Warsaw. Only in the first quarter of 1945, after the defeat of the rebels, did the Soviet army clear Slovakia of the Germans. Yet, in contrast to its Polish analogue, the Slovak uprising did achieve an important political success. Its tenacity and heroism forced the reluctant Beneš government-in-exile to assent to greater autonomy and equality for postwar Slovakia within Czechoslovakia than it had had in the interwar republic. It is to the vicissitudes and maneuverings of Beneš that we now turn.

As mentioned earlier, the self-exiled Beneš was initially treated as a pariah by the governments of Britain and France, which hoped that they had purchased peace at Czechoslovakia's expense at Munich in September 1938. Even after the outbreak of the war a year later, Beneš and his fellow Czechoslovak public figures in exile received British and French recognition only as a national committee, not a government. But after the fall of France and the ascent of the anti-appeasers Churchill and Anthony Eden to power in Britain, that country extended recognition to the exiles as the Provisional Czechoslovak Government. The adjective *provisional* rankled, as it placed the Czechoslovaks on a lower juridical plane than the other governments-in-exile from the German-occupied European countries, and was dropped after Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union, when Churchill and Stalin simultaneously extended full de jure recognition to Beneš's government on July 18, 1941. Finally, after tenacious lobbying by Beneš, the British government was persuaded to repudiate the Munich agreement on August 5, 1942, to be followed in this gesture by De Gaulle's Free France movement on September 29—four years to the day after the infamous conference.

Beneš's juridical self-presentation then stood as follows: (1) the Czechoslovak Republic, founded in 1918, continued to exist uninterruptedly in the legal personality of his exile government; (2) his resignation from the presidency after Munich was legally invalid, and he never ceased to be the president of Czechoslovakia; (3) neither the Protectorate nor the Slovak secessionist state had legal validity; (4) the Munich agreement was invalid from the beginning, and not merely after the Germans violated it by occupying the rump Czech state in March 1939; (5) the territorial losses to Germany, Hungary, and Poland that were imposed on Czechoslovakia immediately after Munich were therefore also invalid.

The preceding paragraphs give some indication of Beneš's prodigious talents as a negotiator and a casuist. These traits of intellectual self-assurance, of persistence, of high confidence in his ability to spin legal and rhetorical formulas to paper over political issues were also revealed in his wartime behavior toward his fellow exiles and toward the Big Three leaders. Within his own Czechoslovak government-in-exile, Beneš systematically destroyed every person of independent judgment, until he was accountable to no one and controlled all organs and policies. He suppressed the exile representations of those Czech and Slovak parties that he deemed to have been contaminated by Munich. The handful of Sudeten

German democratic politicians who, at great risk and with much courage, had defied the Nazis were treated shabbily. Toward Stalin, on the contrary, Beneš's behavior was simultaneously politically fawning and intellectually condescending. By the summer of 1943, with the British and American armies still bogged down in Italy and the Soviet ones relentlessly advancing, Beneš astutely anticipated that East Central Europe would be liberated by the Soviets and accordingly decided to ingratiate himself with Stalin and to tutor him on the true Soviet interest in the region. He quickly distanced himself from the neighboring London Poles, with whom a year earlier he had anticipated forming a postwar coalition, but who had become anathema to Moscow after the exposure of the Katyń forest massacre, and he invited the Communists into his government-in-exile. Then he requested the special Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Aid, and Postwar Cooperation with the Soviet Union (the first one between a small Allied state and that Great Power) and, against the advice of his British hosts, flew to Moscow in December 1943 to sign it. On this occasion, Beneš saw fit to advise Stalin and Molotov that they should extirpate "feudalism" in Poland and Hungary and to denigrate the Romanians and Yugoslavs.⁷ A year later, he succumbed supinely to a demand by Stalin that he cede to the Soviet Union the easternmost Ruthenian province of interwar Czechoslovakia (also termed the Carpatho-Ukraine). Though very poor, it is strategically important because it controls several Carpathian mountain passes giving access from Ukraine into the Hungarian plain.

Beneš even had the intellectual conceit to elaborate a pseudo-profound, semiosociological "theory" to rationalize his pragmatic calculation that only through such a posture of flattery of and submission to the Soviet rulers would he be enabled to establish his own government in Czechoslovakia at war's end and would he be spared Communist criticism as a "Munich poltroon." This theory had it that the Western and the Soviet societies were on convergent tracks, with the former progressing from *laissez-faire* capitalism toward welfare-state Socialism, and the latter evolving from totalitarianism toward social democracy. Czechoslovakia under Beneš's government should facilitate this pair of healthy sociopolitical trends by serving as a postwar bridge between the British and Americans and the Soviets.⁸ Though he was indeed permitted—unlike the "London" Poles—to bring his government-in-exile home at war's close (albeit with much expanded Communist participation), Beneš was not destined to be spared the Soviet-sponsored Communist subversion of his authority three years later.

Though the Hungarians are probably the most Anglophilic nation of East Central Europe, they served in World War II as one of Hitler's calculating satellites. The reason for this seeming anomaly was their passionate irredentism. Interwar Hungary was the main loser from the Paris treaties system that closed World War I, being truncated to only one-third of its historic territory, two-fifths of its total prewar population, and two-thirds of its Magyar people. The accompanying loss of natural and economic resources was also staggering. Zealous revisionism, directed against Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia—the leading beneficiaries of the mutilation inflicted on Hungary—was the general, well-nigh universal, response of interwar Hungarian society to these harsh terms. By the eve of World War II, Hitler and Mussolini were available as Great Power champions for Hungary's grievances, and under their patronage it soon achieved partial but substantial satisfaction in four installments: (1) in the aftermath of Munich, Hungary recovered a strip of southern Slovakia and southwestern Ruthenia; (2) when Hitler imposed his Protectorate on Bohemia and Moravia and midwifed the formal independence of Slovakia, he also permitted Hungary to reannex the rest of Ruthenia; (3) in August 1940, he forced Romania to return to Hungary northern and eastern Transylvania; (4) when he and Mussolini smashed and partitioned interwar Yugoslavia in April 1941, Hungary was enabled to reacquire a part of its earlier territorial loss to that country. Thus, thanks to its association with the Axis, interwar Hungary doubled in size between 1938 and 1941 (which, however, still left it far smaller than its historic extent). Again thanks to its association with the Axis, Hungary would eventually be obliged to relinquish all these territorial gains at the close of World War II.

Supping with the devil proverbially requires a long spoon, and the spoon of the Anglophilic, whiggish, old-fashioned, liberal-conservative Hungarian ruling classes was not long enough to avoid paying a price for Hitler's patronage of their territorial expansions, though they maneuvered resourcefully to try to hold that price down. For starters, the lower classes were substantially weaned away from traditional Magyar Anglophilia, not only by Nazi Germany's sponsorship of Hungary's wartime territorial expansion, but also by its even earlier bulk purchases of Hungary's otherwise unmarketable agricultural produce and absorption of Hungary's surplus manpower as seasonal labor in the Reich. This genuine popularity of Nazi Germany among Hungary's lower

classes was grist for the Radical Right mill of "ingratiation through imitation"—that is, the recommendation that Hungary ensure itself continuing and extended Nazi support for the full array of its territorial, political, and economic ambitions in the Carpatho-Danubian basin by coordinating its internal political institutions and processes (as well as foreign policy) ever more closely with those of Hitler's Germany.

Though the fastidious, conservative ruling classes resisted the Radical Right prescription, they were trapped in the logic of their own decision to assign such a high priority to territorial revisionism that association with Hitler to achieve it was deemed acceptable. Their hope of exploiting German power to restore Hungary's historic frontiers while avoiding identification in Allied eyes as Germany's partner was quite unrealistic: it overestimated their own dexterity, underestimated German alertness, and trivialized the wartime seriousness of the Anglo-American-Soviet alliance. It also lacked integrity. The Germans readily capitalized on this flaw in Hungarian policy by letting it be known that their partition of Transylvania in August 1940 between Hungary and Romania was but provisional and that they would be inclined to award that entire province at war's end to the satellite partner that made the bigger contribution to the Axis war effort. This led to the bizarre and tragic result that Hungary contributed an army corps to Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941—though it had no tangible war aims there—lest it be outclassed by Romania in the competition for Hitler's favor over Transylvania. Toward the end of that year, Britain gave Hungary an ultimatum to withdraw from the Russian campaign and declared war when it was ignored; a few days later, Hungary declared war on the United States, which did not reciprocate for six months.

Yet, until 1944, Hungary's war—especially against the Western Allies—was rather formal and stylized. At the beginning of 1943, the Hungarian army in Russia was decimated by the Soviet army at Voronezh and then virtually abandoned by its *Wehrmacht* ally during the retreat from Stalingrad. This provided the Hungarian government with a pretext to withdraw the remnants into Hungary by April 1943, after which date only a few rear-area garrisons remained in the Soviet Union and the bulk of the Hungarian army was manning the Carpathian passes against the ostensible Romanian ally as well as the Soviet foe. Just as Hungary and Romania had competed for Hitler's favor when the Axis tide was running strong, so after that tide turned to ebb, they competed by shirking their obligations to him, with each rationalizing the thinning of its military contribution on the eastern front by arguing that its