

POSUDEK BAKALÁŘSKÉ PRÁCE

Jméno a příjmení studenta: Adam Hemr
Název bakalářské práce: Britain's Relations with Germany in the 1930s
Vedoucí bakalářské práce: Mgr. Renata Janktova, M.A., Ph.D.
Oponent bakalářské práce: PhDr. Christopher Erwin Koy, M.A., Ph.D.

- I. Cíl práce a jeho naplnění: 1. Cíl práce byl stanoven a naplněn v souladu s tématem
- II. Struktura práce: 1. Logická, jasná a přehledná
- III. Práce s literaturou: 1. Výborná: zvoleny a použity vhodné prameny v patřičném rozsahu
- IV. Formální stránka: 1. Odpovídá všem stanoveným požadavkům
- VI. Jazyková úroveň práce: 1. Výborná
- VII. Náročnost zpracování tématu: 1. Velmi vysoká

Vyjádření oponenta bakalářské práce:

This Czech thesis, we may term it an "anti-appeasement" thesis, has had current as well as deep traditional roots in this country dating as far back as the Beneš Administration, so that it was interesting for me to read if there was anything new or if recent revelations have come out or if anything original can be written by Mr. Hemr. Historiographically understood, this topic is a rare part of history in which communists (i.e., applicants of the Marxist-Leninist dialectical materialism) as well as non-materialist historians agree on: the Munich Accords, leading to the dismantling of Czechoslovakia as an independent state in 1938-39, was a betrayal of the notions of national sovereignty and freedom, and it was caused by spineless British political fear of another war in Europe because of the injustices of Versailles. Moreover, this topic is timely, as Russia prepares to invade Ukraine after Vl. Putin has been demanding, Hitler-like, concessions from NATO. Mr. Hemr has chosen a fine topic and has handled it well, though I read nothing new in this thesis.

After the greatest appeasing concession was made (Sudetenland) in 1938 by Chamberlain, Hitler, under coordinated planning with the Soviet Red Army, co-invaded Poland in September 1939 (Germany taking Western and Soviet Union taking Eastern Poland), making (at least to this American) the Soviet Union co-responsible for the start of WWII for committing the very same military act of aggression against the same country. (Communist historians have always excluded any blame of the Soviet Union for starting WWII and from what I have seen from my three children attending Czech schools recently, this neglect has

not been altered up to now.) Left unmentioned in this thesis, the Soviets also invaded Finland in the next month (Oct. 1939), and about half a year later, the Baltic States were annexed to the Soviet Union, and all this occurred without any major condemnation on the part of the British, as appeasement continued toward the other totalitarian regime. These continuing appeasement policies by Chamberlain are missing in Mr. Hemr's thesis (while in contrast the pre-Chamberlain British diplomatic appeasement of Mussolini's misadventures in Africa are presented in some detail).

Mr. Hemr does show PM Chamberlain as motivated and acting for peace which was extremely popular, not only in the UK but in USA as well. Memories of the sufferings of WWI soldiers was fresh in the mind of the public. The charismatic Charles Lindbergh led the powerful American peace movement in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This kind of pressure was also extended to FDR even after war had broken out in Europe.

I strongly disagree with Mr. Hemr on p. 2 that PM Lloyd George was "forced" to sign the Versailles Treaty. The Americans did not sign on the dotted line and did not conclude peace with Germany officially until 1922 with a separate treaty. Sometimes it appears in this thesis that all British PMs were indecisive and easily manipulated weaklings in the 1920-30s. Another point I might challenge is the notion Mr. Hemr makes (bottom p. 3) that the reparation issue "poisoned" the democracies of Germany and France. The economies of many European countries were poor at this time. Mussolini turned Italy fascist, and so did Franco in Spain: both of these major countries as it were completely divorced from this reparation issue, managed to lose their democracies. Hungary, Portugal, Austria and Poland were pseudo-fascist countries as well; hardly any country on the continent was really a thriving democracy. Under Masaryk, Czechoslovakia was a wonderful democratic exception, but this was not the common trend (except for Scandinavia). I would claim that Germany and France might well have lost their democracies without a reparation problem, just as many other European countries had.

While Mr. Hemr neglects trade issues, appropriate space is dedicated to military disarmament diplomacy (and later armament) though this appears directed mostly at relations between France & Germany rather than UK & Germany. Mr. Hemr shows how a UK ambassador and a disarmament delegate both had warned British officials of the dire danger of Hitler's policies, so that Mr. Hemr indicates how articulate some members of the British diplomatic corps were against appeasement. Anthony Eden caved in to Hitler's demand for an Air Force without Eden demanding simultaneously that Germany return to the League of Nations. Hitler only "did not rule out" rejoining (p. 13), and I would like to have read Mr. Hemr designate this diplomatic neglect as the first major act of British appeasement to Hitler, starting repeated British appeasement policy. Mr. Hemr's critique of the Front of Stresa is excellent, though it should be noted that Hitler was then by no means friendly to Italy. In *Mein Kampf* he declares Italy an enemy after it annexed Südtirol, so it was expected, unlike Mr. Hemr's suggestion (p. 17), that Hitler gladly supported the League of Nations' sanctions against Italy.

Mr. Hemr shows the attempted appeasement of Mussolini with the Hoare-Laval Plan properly to have had the opposite intending effect: Mussolini distanced himself from the UK and endeared himself to Hitler, i.e., a complete diplomatic British failure from which they learned nothing! Mr. Hemr wonderfully diagnoses the historical consequences of inaction to the remilitarization of the Rhineland in 1936, giving the German military greater confidence in Hitler's leadership and enormously increasing Hitler's domestic popularity (this last point might have been underscored by Mr. Hemr) while France and England once again floundered diplomatically.

Mr. Hemr should mention that many other royals besides Edward VIII were Nazi sympathizers, and conservative politicians, including Churchill himself, had praised Hitler in the early to mid-1930s (see Christopher Hitchens on Churchill). This problem in the UK really should have been dealt with thoroughly (along with the aforementioned failure of democracy throughout much of Europe) to give more historical background and context. A book with a different take on this period from Mr. Hemr's is Patrick Buchanan's *Churchill, Hitler and the Unnecessary War: How Britain Lost Its Empire and the West Lost the World* (2008). Among other things, Buchanan argues that along with the Versailles Treaty, Britain, France, Italy, and Czechoslovakia all indirectly assisted Hitler's rise to power in 1933. Dr. Roman Míčka (in the Dept. of Social Sciences PedF JU) wrote a book in Czech on Patrick Buchanan in 2014, so this man is obviously well-known in the Czech Republic, and this book concerns his topic. Mr. Hemr does not reveal conflicting views, interpretations or opinions on his topic, or how the perception of Chamberlain might be different in other countries (such as USA, Russia, France, or even today's German historians who have written so much in depth about Hitler and the history leading up to WWII).

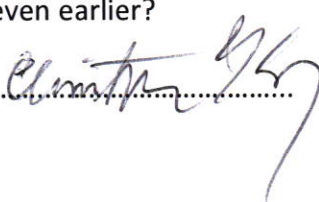
Mr. Hemr interprets Chamberlain coming to power with enormous handicaps but he nevertheless proactively sought peace by appeasing Hitler way after he should have known better. Mr. Hemr's English has a few flaws but these are very minor and accordingly not worth mentioning in specifics.

Práce splňuje základní požadavky kladené na tento typ prací, a proto ji doporučuji k ústní obhajobě.

Navrhovaná známka: výborně (1)

Otázky k obhajobě:

1. Unlike Poland, President Edvard Beneš (degrees from the Sorbonne in Paris and a law degree from Dijon & fluent in French) failed to get an iron-clad agreement with France (or England) for Czechoslovakia's sovereignty and freedom, so these two countries handed a huge defeat to your country (and a huge victory for Germany). Do you at all fault Beneš for the awful result of the Munich accords, or only fault the British appeasers? After all, President Beneš himself did not protest the „Anschluss“ or annexing of Austria by Germany in 1938 (just before an Austrian referendum) ?
2. Thirty years after the Velvet Revolution, still Czech historians largely do not blame the Soviet Union for co-starting the Second World War, just like history was taught here under communism. You do not assess this understanding in the thesis, restricted by the topic of German-English relations, but how much responsibility do you see the Soviet Union having for the start of WWII in 1939?
3. With the hindsight that we have today, when would you assess the best time might have been for WWII to begin (when the UK should have militarily confronted German acts of aggression) – and hence do you believe only when the freedom of your country was on the line, or even earlier?

Podpis oponenta bakalářské práce: 

Datum: 26-1-2022

*nehodící se škrtněte