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The Making of Neville Chamberlain's Political Reputation in British Print Culture, 1937-60'.

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Gary Love

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Abstract.

This thesis offers an in-depth investigation into the formation of Neville Chamberlain's political reputation within British print culture between 1937 and 1960. Despite being a pivotal figure in the pre-war era, the understanding of the underlying factors to the formation of Chamberlain's reputation remains incomplete, often overshadowed by the narrative surrounding Winston Churchill's leadership. This study is meant to be a thoroughly researched but ultimately modest contribution to thinking more about how Chamberlain has been seen in life and death through the British media and print cultures, potentially offering fresh insight into Chamberlain's standing during and after his political tenure.

The research draws from an extensive array of primary and secondary sources including notable newspapers such as *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Observer*, and *The Manchester Guardian*, as well as influential books of the era. Employing a comprehensive analysis of this source material, the study provides a nuanced understanding of Chamberlain's reputation in the eyes of the public and his contemporaries.

The findings reveal significant variations in the representation of Chamberlain across different newspapers and books, ranging from outright support to severe critique, all of which played a part in shaping his public identity. The study also sheds light on the dwindling public interest in Chamberlain following his death, while the fascination with Winston Churchill persisted, potentially influencing the historical assessments of their respective legacies. Moreover, the study exposes that Winston Churchill, through his writing and portrayal of history, played a significant role in the formation of Chamberlain's legacy. This effect is particularly evident in later representations, picturing Chamberlain as weak in contrast to Churchill's heroic depiction.

The thesis offers a valuable contribution to the field of reputational studies, by enhancing the understanding of how Chamberlain's political reputation was shaped in the British media and print culture. This work further offers a broader assessment on the political climate of the time, and the enduring influence of media portrayals on historical narratives. The insights presented in this study can be used as a justification for further exploration into the making of other historical figures' reputations and the role of print culture in the process.

Samandrag.

Denne masteroppgåva er ei grundig undersøking av korleis det politiske omdømet til Neville Chamberlain innanfor britisk presse og litteratur mellom 1937 og 1960 vart forma. Til tross for å vere ein sentral politiskar i førkrigstida, held forståinga av Chamberlain sitt omdøme fram med å vere avgrensa, ofte overskygga av eposet kring Winston Churchills si leing. Målet til studien er å vere eit grundig utforska, men alt i alt eit lite bidrag, til korleis vi kan tenkje meir over korleis Chamberlain har blitt sett på i 'livet og døden'. Gjennom innsikt frå britiske aviser og bøker, kan studien potensielt bidra med ny innsikt til korleis han vert sett på gjennom perspektivet til vanlege folk, og skribentar.

Forskinga baserer seg på eit omfattande utval av primær- og sekundærkjelder, inkludert iaugefallande aviser som *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Observer*, og *The Manchester Guardian*, samt autoritative bøker frå denne tidsperioden. Ved å gjennomføre ein omfattande analyse av dette kjeldematerialet, legg studien fram ein nyansert analyse av utviklinga til Chamberlain sitt omdøme.

Funna viser at det er betydelege variasjonar i framstillinga av Chamberlain i ulike aviser og bøker, som viser alt frå tydeleg støtte, til streng kritikk. Studien viser òg at det var ei minkande offentleg interesse for Chamberlain etter at han døyde, medan fascinasjonen for Winston Churchill heldt fram. Noko som potensielt kan ha påverka dei historiske vurderingane som seinare historikarar har gjort i deira nedskrivning av historia. I tillegg avdekkjer studien at Winston Churchill, gjennom si skriving og framstilling av historia, spelte ein betydeleg rolle i skapinga av Chamberlain sitt ettermæle.

Avhandlinga gjev eit bidrag til feltet for studiet av omdøme, ved å forbetre forståinga av korleis Chamberlain sitt politiske omdøme vart forma, gjennom britisk media og bøker. Dette arbeidet gjev òg eit breiare perspektiv på det politiske klimaet i samtida til Chamberlain, og den viser den varige innverknaden som framstillingar i media har på historiske narrativ. Funna som er presentert i studien oppfordrar til vidare forskning innanfor omdømebygging av andre historiske personar, og rolla media har i denne prosessen.

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Five years at NTNU are coming to an end, and in one month I hopefully will be able to address myself as lector. My time as a student at Dragvoll has been like a journey, which has created unforgettable memories and the making of good friends, but it has also offered challenging periods. However, I am proud to have finished my studies and to have challenged myself both academically and personally, in accepting my own limitations and strengths.

I would like to thank my counsellor, Gary Love, who has been indispensable to the writing of my thesis. I will remember our conversations, where we have discussed the development of the thesis, and made important choices along the way, but also our talks concerning everything else than the topic on hand. Thanks to Gary it has felt like a project of cooperation, rather than 'me, myself and I', in a solo ride towards understanding the Chamberlain reputation.

Furthermore, my girlfriend, Victoria, also deserves thanks. She's been supportive and cheered me up along the way. In the crucial last weeks before the hand in, she has taken on the role of a charming study buddy, ensuring me that I will be able to finish my thesis, and given me vital mental breaks amid all the writing.

Last, but not least, my mother deserves immense recognition, for her care, counselling, and support, throughout my whole childhood, but also in my time as a student at NTNU Trondheim. My love for history, politics and English is much thanks to my mother, who I have spent countless of hours together with watching documentaries and discussing politics. I can also thank her for my easy entry to the world of English, as I got to spend time at Heworth Primary School, due to her studies at the University of York. The circle is now complete, as I am starting to teach English at secondary school, and she closes in on well-deserved time as a pensioner.

List of contents

INTRODUCTION	6
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND HISTORIOGRAPHY	7
APPROACH, METHODS, AND SOURCES	11
<i>The Newspaper Archives</i>	11
<i>British Newspapers on Chamberlain</i>	13
<i>Methodology</i>	15
CHAPTER STRUCTURE	16
CHAPTER 1: CHAMBERLAIN IN THE BRITISH PRESS, 1937-1940	17
<i>THE DAILY EXPRESS</i>	17
<i>THE DAILY MIRROR</i>	22
<i>THE OBSERVER</i>	26
<i>THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN</i>	29
CHAPTER 2: CHAMBERLAIN IN BRITISH PRINT CULTURE, 1940-1960	32
<i>THE DAILY EXPRESS</i>	33
<i>THE DAILY MIRROR</i>	35
<i>THE OBSERVER</i>	37
<i>THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN</i>	38
THE COLLECTIVE IMPACT OF SELECTED BOOKS	40
CONCLUSION - “I SHOULD NOT FEAR THE HISTORIAN’S VERDICT”.	50
LITERATURE AND REFERENCE LIST	53
PRIMARY SOURCES:.....	53
<i>The Daily Express</i> :.....	54
<i>The Daily Mirror</i> :	55
<i>The Manchester Guardian</i> :.....	56
<i>The Observer</i> :	57
SECONDARY SOURCES:	57
STATEMENT OF RELEVANCE FOR THE MLSPRÅK PROGRAMME:.....	63

Introduction

The political life and legacy of Neville Chamberlain is intrinsically linked to his appeasement of the Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler before the outbreak of the Second World War. A good example of this is the recent film *'Munich – at the edge of war'*, which focusses entirely on a re-examination of Chamberlain's negotiation of the Munich Agreement with Hitler in 1938. Famously, on his return to London, Chamberlain claimed to have achieved 'peace in our time'. But this was only a temporary measure because Hitler soon invaded what remained of Czechoslovakia and then Poland, which led to Britain's declaration of war against Germany on 3 September 1939. This important moment in British history continues to fascinate the British media and the general public and it is unlikely to change anytime soon.

In fact, Chamberlain's policy of appeasement remains an important subject on the English school curriculum because it relates to the study of challenges for Britain, Europe, and the wider world from 1901 to the present day. British school children continue to explore the history of the inter-war years, including the Great Depression and the rise of the dictators, and the Second World War, albeit with a specific focus on the wartime leadership of Winston Churchill.¹ Interestingly, the National Archives even provide source material for a specific school lesson on 'Chamberlain and Hitler 1938' - listing a potential activity as 'students research the term "policy of appeasement" in the 1930s as linked to Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain before the outbreak of the Second World War'.² This exemplifies how 'Churchillian' views of Chamberlain and appeasement continue to shape public perceptions of the period, even if historians have tried to re-asses Chamberlain's leadership and fiercely debated his political reputation or legacy in recent years.

The policy of appeasement is what Neville Chamberlain is the most known for, and many historians have argued that his political strategy was a failure because it did not prevent the outbreak of the second world war. Hitler's continued aggression, despite the concessions granted to him in the Munich Agreement, demonstrated that the appeasement approach did not stop Nazi Germany's drive for expansion.

¹ Department for Education, 2013.

² The National Archives, 2008.

The subject of British appeasement and political leadership is a vast topic, and it has already generated a large body of secondary literature, but this thesis seeks to add a new perspective to debates about Chamberlain's political reputation by asking one key research question: what was Neville Chamberlain's political reputation in British print culture between 1937 and 1960? Therefore, the thesis explores how Chamberlain was portrayed across a range of British newspapers and books in this period. The research findings shall be compared to and contrasted with the key lines of argument in the current historiography on Chamberlain, in order to determine how far and in what ways his political reputation has been modified by historians. The main objective here is to systematically research different portrayals of Chamberlain in more detail so that we can start to measure the potential importance of these print cultures in the making of Chamberlain's political reputation in this period. In doing so, the thesis also draws attention to the potential of the British media, and publishing industry in helping to shape Chamberlain's reputation.

Historical background and Historiography

Neville Chamberlain was a British politician hailing from the influential Chamberlain family. His father, Joseph Chamberlain,³ was a prominent British statesman and an ardent sympathizer for German cooperation, even advocating for an Anglo-German alliance during his tenure as Secretary of state for the colonies.⁴ Joseph, linked with the British Empire's actions in the Boer war, was considered Britain's Empire-builder-in-chief.⁵

Neville's brother, Austen Chamberlain, also played key roles in politics, serving twice as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary. During his time as Foreign Secretary, Europe was in a state of political tension due to the ramifications of the Treaty of Versailles on Germany. Austen worked towards a system of collective security, aimed at preventing war through diplomatic negotiations, a key example of which is the Locarno treaty of 1925.⁶ Richard Grayson suggests a lineage of German appeasement in the Chamberlain family.⁷

³ The British Medical Journal, 1914, pp. 85-86.

⁴ Kennedy, 1973, p. 613.

⁵ Rintala, 1988, p.127.

⁶ Rathbun, 2014, p. 118.

⁷ Johnson, 2003, pp. 480-484.

While Austen is remembered as a Nobel Peace Prize winner and advocate for peace, Neville's legacy is often tied to his policy of appeasement towards Adolf Hitler. On the UK Parliament's homepage, he is summarised in the following way:

As Prime Minister, Chamberlain is remembered for his support for the policy of appeasement towards Adolf Hitler over the annexation of Czechoslovakia and the signing Munich Agreement on 29 September 1938. Returning from Munich, Chamberlain delivered his "Peace with Honour - Peace for Our Time" speech. Less than a year after Chamberlain delivered this speech Britain had entered the war following the invasion of Poland by German forces.⁸

As Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain supported the policy of appeasement towards Adolf Hitler over the annexation of Czechoslovakia and the signing of the Munich Agreement on 29 September 1938.⁹ This policy, aimed at pacifying a discontented country through negotiation to avert war, ultimately did not prevent the outbreak of World War II.¹⁰ The reputation of Neville Chamberlain remains a subject of debate.¹¹ Recently, his grandson, James Lloyd, launched a campaign to restore the reputation of the wartime Prime Minister.¹² He attributes much of Neville's negative reputation to Winston Churchill, who is argued to have influenced perceptions about the past with his historical narratives and publications.¹³

The impact of Churchill, a celebrated politician, statesman, and Nobel laureate writer,¹⁴ on the legacy of Chamberlain cannot be understated. His memoirs, *The Gathering Storm*, published just three years after the end of the Second World War, is an invaluable source in understanding the political dynamics during Neville Chamberlain's time. In his memoirs, Churchill often cast a shadow over Chamberlain, contributing to the current public perception of the latter. This introduces questions about Churchill's characterizations of Chamberlain and the shaping of common perceptions about the past.

In terms of Neville Chamberlain's background, he started as a city councillor in 1911 and became Lord Mayor of Birmingham in 1915.¹⁵ His political career took off in 1916 when

⁸ UK parliament, Neville Chamberlain.

⁹ Kleine-Ahlbrandt, 1970, pp. 52-60.

¹⁰ Kleine-Ahlbrandt, 1970, pp. 17-18.

¹¹ Kleine-Ahlbrandt, 1970, pp. 87-90.

¹² Shute, 2019. The Telegraph.

¹³ Shute, 2019, p. 4. The Telegraph.

¹⁴ NobelPrize.org, Winston Churchill – Facts.

¹⁵ Hadley, 1941, p. 731.

David Lloyd George appointed him Director General of the Department of National Service, though he resigned within a year due to private differences. Then, elected Conservative MP for Ladywood in 1918, Chamberlain rejected to serve under Lloyd George's coalition government.¹⁶ He advanced rapidly, becoming Postmaster General under Andrew Bonar Law in 1922, and within a year was Minister of Health and Chancellor of the Exchequer under Baldwin, all within five years of entering Parliament.¹⁷

Chamberlain made significant contributions during his tenure, most notably his Local Government Act of 1929, which reformed the Poor Law and set the groundwork for the welfare state.¹⁸ As Chancellor in Ramsay MacDonald's national government, and later under Stanley Baldwin, he navigated the economic crisis and realized his father's protectionist vision with the Import Duties Bill of 1932.¹⁹ In May 1937, he rose to the pinnacle of his career as Prime Minister, also elected as Conservative leader, marking his profound journey from estate management in the Bahamas to leading the British government.²⁰

Sources which can be used to understand him and his legacy, are amongst others, a mixture of his own words, the press' reporting on him, and books written about him during his life and after his demise. The opinions on Chamberlain can roughly be split in two camps, in support- or against 'the Chamberlain narrative'. Notably, in the book *When there is no peace* by Hamilton Armstrong, an American diplomat and editor, showed how in 1939 there were already strong feelings on Chamberlain, in the negative sense. "How were Chamberlain and Daladier able in effect to run up a white flag over Verdun and the Chemin des Dames...?"²¹

Furthermore, the writing of Winston Churchill is understood as anti-Chamberlain, as to his critique of Chamberlain's policies, which can be read about in several of Churchill's works, notably *While England Slept*,²² and *The Gathering Storm*.²³ While some scholars have argued that appeasement may have had some merits, such as Nicholas Milton, in his book *Neville Chamberlain's Legacy Hitler, Munich and the Path to War*, who argued that it may have

¹⁶ Hadley, 1941, p. 732.

¹⁷ GOV.UK, 2023.

¹⁸ GOV.UK, 2023.

¹⁹ Hadley, 1941, p. 733.

²⁰ GOV.UK, 2023.

²¹ Armstrong, 1939, pp. 1-2.

²² Churchill & Churchill, 1938.

²³ Churchill, 2002.

provided Britain and its allies with more time to prepare for war and strengthen their military capabilities.²⁴ Additionally, historian Robert Parker supports the case that Chamberlain did the best he could, in relation to the circumstances, and that since the 1960 the judgement on him became more gentle:

The abundant, well-arranged, lucid documentation accumulated by British governments and their advisers in the 1930s has sometimes overwhelmed historians into interpretative surrender... Since the public records became available to historians at the end of the 1960s, judgements of Neville Chamberlain and his associates have become steadily more benign. In the circumstances he found, scholars suggest, he managed public affairs as well as anyone could have done.²⁵

Of course, when assessing the sources for assessing and understanding Chamberlain, it would be a stain to not mention *The Neville Chamberlain Diary Letters*,²⁶ and its companion *Neville Chamberlain: A biography*.²⁷ Altogether, Chamberlain has been described in different ways, but something which seems to stick, is the view that he was a man of strong belief in his personal influence and insight to read someone's character. This can be seen in his diary, as he seemed to think that as soon as Hitler would meet and talk to him in person, at Munich in 1938, it would end his imperial ambitions.²⁸ Furthermore, Chamberlain himself famously believed that 'time would be on his side', in relation to the politics he championed and the actions he made as PM.

"So far as my personal reputation is concerned, I am not in the least disturbed about it. The letters which I am still receiving in such vast quantities so unanimously dwell on the same point, namely without Munich the war would have been lost and the Empire destroyed in 1938... I do not feel the opposite view... has a chance of survival...I should not fear the historian's verdict" (N. Chamberlain to Joseph Ball, 28th of October 1940).²⁹

The literature on hand, combined with the diaries, tell us that the reputation of Chamberlain has been debated since his time in Government, and that even today his name brings with it certain negative connotations. However, the articles and examinations on Chamberlain which are available today do not tell us how his reputation came to be one of neglect, and

²⁴ Milton, 2019.

²⁵ Parker, 1993, p. 343.

²⁶ Self, 2005.

²⁷ Self, 2016.

²⁸ Self, 2005, pp. 348-349.

²⁹ Self, 2005, p. 48.

subservience to Hitler. Therefore, this thesis aims to add knowledge to the understanding of how it all came to be, through examining newspapers and books from Chamberlain's time.

Approach, Methods, and Sources

The Newspaper Archives

Researching newspapers has been fundamental to the insights collected in this thesis. The digitization of newspaper archives, as argued by historian of the popular press Adrian Bingham, has opened up new opportunities and created some challenges for historians.³⁰ The digitization process has made newspapers more easily available and user-friendly for academics, increasing their usefulness in historical studies. Scholars can now use word searches in digital archives to determine the accessibility of source material on a topic, a noteworthy difference from the formerly time-consuming methods of using microfilms or handling delicate paper volumes.³¹

However, Bingham warns that flaws in scanning and character recognition could introduce new uncertainties into the examination process.³² Researchers may believe they have seen all relevant stories, possibly confining the validity of their study. Despite this, Bingham argues that "Historians can be far more confident that content will not elude them and that they will track down obscure and potentially revealing articles."³³ Therefore, despite some downsides, the digitization of archives is mostly a substantial improvement to prior research methods. Moreover, the time saved due to digitization grants for more in-depth analysis and context for the results.³⁴ However, one imaginable side effect of this enlarged accessibility could be that highly available sources such as *The Times* becoming disproportionately represented, leading researchers to inaccurately assume they represent 'press opinion' in Britain.³⁵ Bingham strongly opposes such conclusions, highlighting the need for cautious interpretation of digitized sources.

In the writing of this thesis, there has been used a variety of sources, but particularly those that reported on Neville Chamberlain and his Government. We all know about how *The Times*

³⁰ Sheffield University, 2023.

³¹ Bingham, 2010, p.227.

³² Bingham, 2010, p.228.

³³ Bingham, 2010, p.228.

³⁴ Bingham, 2010, pp. 229.

³⁵ Bingham, 2010, pp. 229.

fares during the second world war, but what about others such as *The Daily Mirror*, *The Daily Express*, *The Manchester Guardian* and *The Observer*? By bringing in new source material to the study of the British printed press, we can gain new knowledge about how the press reported on Chamberlain and his Government's policy of appeasement. Additionally, desiring to attribute something new to the field of Chamberlain studies, the author of the thesis conducted a field trip to London, where time was spent working at the British Library Newspaper room. The time at the library was used to research the newspaper archive with the aim of finding relevant reporting on Neville Chamberlain, in the time limitation 1937-1960. By doing so, it was possible to achieve greater insight into primary sources, not being limited to just reading books written in the aftermath of the war, which analyse and attach their own interpretation of history.

Understanding the relationship between politicians and the British press is crucial to the study of Neville Chamberlain's era. Publications such as Stephen Koss's *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain* and Richard Cockett's *Twilight of Truth - Chamberlain, Appeasement & the manipulation of the press*, shed light on the intricate dynamics at play during Chamberlain's time. Koss's work reveals the symbiotic relationship between the press and government, highlighting the influence of press barons such as William Maxwell Aitken,³⁶ simply referred to as Beaverbrook.³⁷ Cockett, on the other hand, discusses the existence of an 'incestuous relationship' between the press and Whitehall that he claims exists to the present day.³⁸

The implementation of the Lobby system, an initiative by George Steward, the Press Relations Officer of 10 Downing Street, during the 1930s, changed the press-government dynamic.³⁹ Steward's regular briefings became the primary source of information for political correspondents.⁴⁰ While this system offered the journalists convenience, it also allowed the government to control the information flow and remain unaccountable for their briefings.⁴¹ Ministers, including Chamberlain in his role as Chancellor of the Exchequer, began to see potential in influencing press narratives.⁴² However, Chamberlain wasn't completely content

³⁶ Koss, 1990, p. 936.

³⁷ Koss, 1990, p 18.

³⁸ Cockett, 1989, p. 1.

³⁹ Cockett, 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Cockett, 1989, p. 4-5.

⁴¹ Cockett, 1989, p. 6.

⁴² Cockett, 1989, p. 6.

with the press during his tenure as Prime Minister.⁴³ He countered 'bad press' through Sir Joseph Ball's work with the newspaper *The Truth* as it came to be a 'propaganda' piece for the Conservative party after a Conservative Businessman bought the majority of the shares in the newspaper.⁴⁴

British Newspapers on Chamberlain

British newspapers, with their varied styles and focus, have long served as the pulse of society, casting light on the events that shape our world, regardless of the magnitude of the news story. But it's crucial to remember that not all newspapers are created equal—some are viewed as more 'serious', offering in-depth analyses of occurrences, while others lean towards sensationalism.

For example, consider *The Daily Express*, a British daily national tabloid newspaper founded in 1900 by Sir Arthur Pearson.⁴⁵ Renowned for sensationalist headlines, bold front pages, and coverage of popular culture, entertainment, and human-interest stories, it's a publication with a decidedly conservative political leaning, traditionally endorsing the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom.⁴⁶ Despite criticism for sensationalism and the quality of its reporting, it continues to draw a substantial readership.⁴⁷ Its blend of opinion pieces, news reports, and entertainment-related content appeals to a broad audience. However, like any media outlet, the perspectives and biases of its ownership and editorial staff can significantly impact the content.⁴⁸

In contrast, *The Daily Mirror*, another British tabloid in circulation since 1903, is known for its dramatic headlines and focus on human-interest stories.⁴⁹ Politically, it leans towards the left and has often supported the Labour Party.⁵⁰ It caters to a mass audience with its blend of entertainment and gossip content, alongside reporting on news and current affairs.⁵¹ As a significant voice of the left-wing press during the 1930s, it played a key role not just in

⁴³ Cockett, 1989, p. 7.

⁴⁴ Cockett, 1989, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁵ Koss, 1990, p. 461.

⁴⁶ Koss, 1990, p.461.

⁴⁷ Koss, 1990, p.461.

⁴⁸ Koss, 1990, p.559.

⁴⁹ Koss, 1990, p.439.

⁵⁰ Koss, 1990, p.17.

⁵¹ Koss, 1990, p. 416.

reporting political events but also in shaping public opinion, providing a counterpoint to right-leaning newspapers such as *The Daily Express*.⁵²

Adrian Bingham describes *The Daily Mirror* as a very dominant and influential newspaper, which has "...a good claim to be Britain's most successful and influential newspaper."⁵³

During its heyday in the mid-20th century, it powerfully voiced left-of-centre working-class popular culture in a predominantly conservative, middle-class society. Its coverage style is typically informal and conversational, often focusing on celebrity news, sports, and other popular culture topics, although it does report on politics and other serious issues.⁵⁴

The Observer, however, was progressive, liberal, and 'serious'.⁵⁵ It stands out for its well-researched articles, thoughtful opinion pieces, and comprehensive coverage of its chosen topics. Reflecting its liberal stance, the newspaper has historically supported civil liberties, progressive policies, and social justice.⁵⁶

Finally, *The Manchester Guardian*, was a distinguished newspaper founded in 1821, now internationally recognized as *The Guardian*.⁵⁷ It provides comprehensive and insightful coverage of national and global events, politics, and culture, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to independent reporting and journalistic integrity.⁵⁸ It has played a pivotal role in shaping public discourse, documenting major historical events, and offering critical analysis of world affairs.⁵⁹

Understanding the varying standpoints of these newspapers—whether negative, positive, or supportive—can be subjective and largely semantic. But, in the realm of reputation formation and manipulation, semantics are crucial. The choice of words, tone, and framing can significantly influence public perception, contributing to the creation or tearing down of political reputations. Therefore, it's essential to remain aware of these factors when evaluating media portrayals and their impact on our understanding of events and individuals.

⁵² Koss, 1990, p.17.

⁵³ Bingham, 2019.

⁵⁴ Bingham, 2019.

⁵⁵ Koss, 1990, p.48.

⁵⁶ Koss, 1990, p.51.

⁵⁷ Koss, 1990, p.48.

⁵⁸ Koss, 1990, p.422.

⁵⁹ Koss, 1990, p.539.

Methodology

In this thesis, the systematic approach to writing the overall product that is the final thesis, has been subject to several methods. It can be split into three phases of conduct – researching source material, working on the selected source material, and drawing a conclusion.⁶⁰

First phase & Second phase

Firstly, in the beginning of the writing process, time was spent on gaining considerable insight to general knowledge for the topic of the thesis – the second world war, the life of Neville Chamberlain and what print culture was available or relevant for the topic of the thesis.

In the next phase of the project, I aimed to gain new insight to a specific type of historical sources, namely primary sources. I researched three British newspapers – *The Express*, *The Daily Mirror* and *The Observer*. The forementioned newspapers were chosen as they represent a particular view of history. *The Express* was the biggest mass circulation right-wing newspaper of the age. *The Daily Mirror* was a newspaper of the left-wing political spectrum. And *the Observer* was a progressive, liberal, and ‘serious’ newspaper. In this sense, the research shows reports from different sides of the political spectrum. Why would this be of significance? Well, due to the fact that Neville Chamberlain was a politician of the Conservative party, and his legacy is contested. It is only fair to assume that he would be reported on in different ways in regard to the political view of the newspapers in his day. In the research process in the newspaper archive, I therefore used different search words in the digitized searching system, in order to find reports on Neville Chamberlain. These were ‘Neville Chamberlain’, ‘Chamberlain’, and ‘Prime Minister, with the delimitation of time as another factor.

The third phase

The third phase of the project was in interpreting, comparing, and drawing lines between the knowledge I had gained from the researched source material. This was the phase for the implementation of the hermeneutic method to the project. Meaning, to research the source material on hand, then looking into its context, and then back again to the source material.⁶¹

⁶⁰ Andresen, 2015, p. 125.

⁶¹ Andresen, 2015, p. 121.

This can also be described as the hermeneutic circle, as when one researches a topic you can really only learn by continuously and systematically revising your approach and insight to the topic you are researching. In this process, you establish chronology with stages and phases. You identify precursory relations and causality, derive hypotheses, and test deductions (hypothetical deductive method).⁶² Another important factor in the methodology of historical research, is evaluating the credibility/reliability of one's sources. In a process of information evaluation, it is important to keep the distinction between a report and a remnant.⁶³ When a source is a report you must assess its trustworthiness, and for a remnant you must assess its authenticity.⁶⁴

Chapter Structure

This thesis will examine Neville Chamberlain's portrayal in the British Press from 1937-1960, divided into two chronological chapters. The first scrutinizes Chamberlain's portrayal from 1937-1940, during his lifetime, while the second delves into his posthumous depiction from 1940-1960. The conclusion aims to encapsulate the research findings, highlighting shifts in narratives across these periods.

The chronological structure helps trace the evolution of Chamberlain's legacy. The bifurcation into 'life' and 'death' sections permits the analysis of distinct periods: when Chamberlain could personally influence narratives and posthumously, when his reputation was shaped without his control. Key parameters driving this approach include Chamberlain's personal influence on reporting through the Lobby system, the progress of the war, and the impact of Winston Churchill's tenure.⁶⁵ Chamberlain's appeasement policy until 1939 significantly affected his portrayal. The shift in narrative after his death in 1940, when he could no longer control the narrative, and the ascent of Churchill as Prime Minister, further impacted his legacy.

Churchill, hailed as 'The Man who saved Europe', undoubtedly influenced how history remembers Chamberlain.⁶⁶ Post-war, Churchill's victory shaped public perception, potentially painting Chamberlain as the failed predecessor. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore

⁶² Andresen, 2015, pp. 132-133.

⁶³ Andresen, 2015, pp. 69-70.

⁶⁴ Andresen, 2015, pp. 73-77.

⁶⁵ Cockett, 1989, p 4.

⁶⁶ Wiegrefe, 2010.

Chamberlain's portrayal during his life and after his death when other factors shaped his historical image.

Chapter 1: Chamberlain in the British Press, 1937-1940

This chapter is an analytical exploration of Neville Chamberlain's representation within selected British print media during the key periods of his premiership and beyond, from 1937 to 1940. Given the context of the overarching thesis, "The Making of Neville Chamberlain's Political Reputation in British Print Culture, 1937-60", this examination will primarily focus on understanding and deciphering the ways in which Chamberlain's political reputation was crafted and conveyed in the public sphere through the selected newspapers. In doing so, the chapter will pay particular attention to the pivotal moments of Chamberlain's tenure as the British Prime Minister, specifically his navigation of significant geopolitical events such as the Sudeten Crisis, the Munich Agreement, and the onset of the Second World War. These moments not only shaped Chamberlain's leadership but were also instrumental in moulding the public perception about him.

The methodology consists of providing an overview of the general tone and attitude of the press towards Chamberlain and includes some in-depth analyses of individual articles from different newspapers. The aim is to explore the nuances in the portrayals of Chamberlain's decisions and policies and how these, over time, shaped his political reputation. Also, the historical context, comprising the rising tensions of pre-war Europe and the domestic pressures within Britain, serve as a framework to the assessment of the media portrayal of Chamberlain. Furthermore, the analysis aims to shed light on the media's role in forming Chamberlain's political reputation, thus contributing to the broader understanding of British appeasement policy and Chamberlain's leadership. By understanding the interaction between newspapers and public perception, this chapter seeks to take part in answering the central question of the thesis: what was Neville Chamberlain's political reputation in British print culture between 1937 and 1960?

The Daily Express

As the biggest mass circulation right-wing newspaper of the 1930s *The Daily Express* was an incredibly important source for influencing the views of the British everyday man. Therefore, it can be regarded as a central part of keeping up the popularity of Chamberlain, as it was

supportive of Chamberlain all throughout his Premiership. When compared to the other newspapers examined in this thesis, this specific newspaper exhibits a distinct contrast to the other publications. How so? It can be argued that the publication acted as an ardent supporter of Prime Minister Chamberlain, from the moment he assumed office at 10 Downing Street until his resignation in May 1940, and even until his passing in November 1940. Though, the newspaper did not support the Government's guarantee of Poland, in 1939.

Its depiction of Chamberlain transformed in response to changing political circumstances, with the paper initially casting him as part of a government that was making Britain "strong, free, peaceful" in February of 1937.

...the Government are to be praised for keeping us strong. We shall never use our strength to start trouble on our own account, only to repel it. So let's never allow ourselves to get mixed up in trouble on account of anybody else. Let's stand powerful, free and peaceful in splendid isolation.⁶⁷

However, as the political landscape shifted, so too did the newspaper's portrayal of him evolve. This was evident in May of the same year when the paper in an article announced Chamberlain's move to Downing Street with the headline "New Tenant at No. 10," which indicated a transition of power from Stanley Baldwin and the start of Chamberlain's leadership.⁶⁸ The author, William Barkley, examined the prospects of the Prime Minister to be, and painted a picture of a grey, ordinary man who would aim to do his best for Britain.

He has no oratorical gifts to quell a revolt. His voice is flat, his direction departmentalese. But there is a high quality in Neville Chamberlain which recalls the broadcast words of the new King under whom he is the incoming Prime Minister: "The highest of distinctions is that of service to others. I have dedicated myself...And in the rare moments of relaxation he is one of us over whom he wields power – he catches fish (when he can), he studies nature, he reads Shakespeare, and he takes walks with his wife."⁶⁹

By the 29th of September 1938, the publication's tone regarding Chamberlain had notably shifted. This period was marked by the Munich Agreement, a critical moment in Chamberlain's premiership. *The Daily Express* published an article entitled "Give Him Thanks" to appreciate Chamberlain's efforts to maintain peace.

⁶⁷ The Daily Express, 18.02.1937, p. 10 - The Daily Express opinion "Strong, free, peaceful".

⁶⁸ The Daily Express, 31.05.1937, p.10 - New Tenant at No. 10.

⁶⁹ The Daily Express, 31.05.1937, p.10 - New Tenant at No. 10.

Praise the Prime Minister. Give him your thanks for the relief which he brings to our home and the hope which he renews in our hearts...He is straightforward and honest in statement, balanced and just in his account of events. The man's determination to serve noble aims shines through the plain words in which he expresses himself.⁷⁰

This same sentiment was further emphasised by the newspaper published on the 30th of September that year and was quite the appraisal of the Premier. One of the key features of the coverage from that day is the recognition of Chamberlain's status and public appreciation. This is indicated by the headline, "He may be Sir Neville," which suggests that "Mr Chamberlain was likely to be offered a Knighthood of the Garter."⁷¹ This commendation of his status and service to the nation, hinted at the regard and respect he held at this point.

This was paralleled by public hope and anticipation, as captured by the article titled "Nations hail peace hope – Hero Chamberlain".⁷² This piece highlighted the optimism that was felt at the time, with Chamberlain as a beacon of hope for peace. Further, it wasn't just Britain that felt optimistic. This positivity was echoed throughout the British Empire, as shown by the feature "The Empire cheerful."⁷³ This article reveals the mood across the various territories and dominions, underlining the widespread support and anticipation.

Back in Britain, Chamberlain's popularity was undeniable. The front-page article, "Premier's wife mobbed – rejoicing at the news from Munich," details the public's jubilant reaction to the news from Munich, a clear indication of Chamberlain's domestic popularity at the time.⁷⁴ Moreover, in Europe the admiration for Chamberlain was not confined to Britons, but also by Germans. Further evidence of the international recognition he received comes from the article "Premier is 'heiled,' given roses."⁷⁵ The reaction of the international community to Chamberlain's diplomacy hints at the global appreciation he experienced directly after Munich.

⁷⁰ The Daily Express, 29.09.1938, p. 10 – The Daily Express opinion "Give Him Thanks".

⁷¹ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 1 – He may be Sir Neville.

⁷² The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 8 - Nations hail peace hope – Hero Chamberlain.

⁷³ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 8 - The Empire cheerful.

⁷⁴ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 1 - Premier's wife mobbed – rejoicing at the news from Munich.

⁷⁵ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 5 - Premier is 'heiled'.

Lastly, the sentiments expressed by the media weren't just about Chamberlain himself. The Daily Express, in their piece titled "The Daily Express opinion – Peace", framed the general mood and aspirations of the time.⁷⁶ The focus on peace signifies the public sentiment of the era, and their desire for stability and tranquillity. Chamberlain however, as the executor of appeasement, is crowned as the knight of peace, who has spared the people of Britain from losing their husbands and sons from marching into battle:

Be glad in your hearts. Give thanks to God. The wings of peace settle about us and the peoples of Europe. The prayers of the troubled hearts are answered... If we must have a victor, let us choose Chamberlain. For the Prime Minister's conquests are mighty and enduring – millions of happy homes and hearts relieved of their burden. To him the laurels!⁷⁷

The apex of this positive portrayal came on October 1, 1938, when Chamberlain returned from Munich. His return was met with numerous articles celebrating his achievement in securing peace. Headlines such as "You May Sleep Quietly – It is Peace for Our Time,"⁷⁸ and "Premier 'Knight of Peace'"⁷⁹ lauded Chamberlain's role in averting a potential war. The publication went further in the article "I knew that DER TAG would be Peace Day" where Chamberlain was elevated as a divine 'deliverer' whose contributions should not be wasted.⁸⁰

However, as the situation in Europe deteriorated in 1939, the headlines began to express more concern about war, but Chamberlain's policy of appeasement enjoyed persistent, convincing support by the editorials. Nevertheless, there were headlines which could advocate for a decline in popular support for Chamberlain. After Hitler had invaded and occupied all of Czechoslovakia, the editorial staff published the following headline "Breach of faith."⁸¹ This headline points to Hitler's breach of faith, which ultimately contributed to a decline in public support for Chamberlain's appeasement strategy. Interestingly, the newspaper however remains in support of Chamberlain's political strategy of appeasement, even though the policy had certainly failed. Exemplified by the following excerpt:

⁷⁶ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 10 – The Daily Express opinion "Peace".

⁷⁷ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 10 – The Daily Express opinion "Peace".

⁷⁸ The Daily Express, 01.10.1938, p. 1 - You May Sleep Quietly – It is Peace for Our Time.

⁷⁹ The Daily Express, 01.10.1938, p. 6 - Premier 'Knight of Peace'.

⁸⁰ The Daily Express, 01.10.1938, p. 8 - I knew that DER TAG would be Peace Day.

⁸¹ The Daily Express, 17.03.1939, p.10 – The Daily Express opinion "Breach of faith".

First, let us be clear what has happened. There has been a monstrous breach of faith. Hitler has torn the Munich agreement into shreds and thrown them imprudently in the face of the world. Mr. Chamberlain took a wise decision in making the Munich bargain. He is under no necessity of defending Hitler who has broken the bargain.⁸²

Examples of such headlines include "Nazis warned we will resist threats,"⁸³ and "The Daily Express opinion – no war."⁸⁴ Nevertheless, *The Daily Express* did begin to report a shift in sentiment towards Chamberlain's leadership as time went on. Headlines showed a direct call for Chamberlain's resignation, such as "Amery to Premier: 'Get out!'"⁸⁵ and the reduced majority vote in parliament, which signified a loss of confidence in Chamberlain's government.⁸⁶ While the headlines do not explicitly paint Chamberlain as an unsuccessful leader, they do express a change in public sentiment from initial praise as a peacemaker to increasing criticism and dissatisfaction with his approach to dealing with Hitler and Nazi Germany.

Overall, the triumphant portrayal of Chamberlain lasted till the end of his time in Downing Street 10. However, by May 1940, as Europe was embroiled in war and Chamberlain experienced increasing criticism, *The Daily Express* announced Chamberlain's expected resignation. The headline "Churchill Expected to Be New Premier – Chamberlain to Resign" signalled a turning point in Chamberlain's political career and marked the end of his leadership.⁸⁷ This shift was further echoed in *The Daily Express'* opinion piece titled "Resignation."⁸⁸

Mr. Chamberlain will resign. The political storm which blew up over the failure of the Norwegian expedition will bring down the leader of the Government. Mr. Chamberlain has been a good servant. The Daily Express, which has given him steadfast support through his career in politics, praises him in the hour of his fall. This newspaper found in Mr. Chamberlain qualities which we believe are valuable in our public life: uprightness, balance and resolution.⁸⁹

⁸² The Daily Express, 17.03.1939, p.10 – The Daily Express opinion “Breach of faith”.

⁸³ The Daily Express, 18.03.1939, p. 1 - Nazis warned we will resist threats.

⁸⁴ The Daily Express, 18.07.1939, p. 8 - The Daily Express opinion – “No war”.

⁸⁵ The Daily Express, 08.05.1940, p. 1 - Amery to Premier: “Get out!”

⁸⁶ The Daily Express, 09.05.1940, p. 1 - Sensational vote cuts majority to only 81 – Chamberlain expected to reconstruct government.

⁸⁷ The Daily Express, 10.05.1940, p. 1 - Churchill Expected to Be New Premier – Chamberlain to Resign.

⁸⁸ The Daily Express, 10.05.1940, p. 4 -The Daily Express opinion “Resignation”.

⁸⁹ The Daily Express, 10.05.1940, p. 4 - The Daily Express opinion “Resignation”

These headlines serve as a central historical record of the unwavering support which Chamberlain experienced in *The Daily Express*, in a political landscape and public sentiment where the United Kingdom was leading up war and during the early stages of World War II. They show how Neville Chamberlain's initial efforts to maintain peace through appeasement were widely celebrated, but later on, his effort as Prime Minister was seen as ineffective and ultimately lead to his resignation as Prime Minister. The trend in the headlines from *The Daily Express* appear to follow a positive trajectory which initially portrays Neville Chamberlain positively, emphasizing his good qualities fitting for the job as Prime Minister, and then praising his efforts to avoid war through the policy of appeasement. Even as the threat of war with Germany grows more imminent the newspaper supports what Chamberlain has done, but scorns Hitler for breaking the trust of a great statesman.

Therefore, in summarising the overall gist of the headlines which have been analysed, it is argued that they do not depict Chamberlain's legacy as one of complete fiasco. They do express a change in public sentiment from initial praise to increased reproach and dissatisfaction with his policy of appeasing dictatorial regimes on the continent, but in no way a condemnation of the policy which is intrinsically and for ever is linked to his name.

The Daily Mirror

In contrast to *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror* was far more critical of Neville Chamberlain's leadership. *The Daily Mirror* emerged as a prominent voice challenging Chamberlain's leadership. The period examined shows a fluctuating sentiment towards Chamberlain, reflecting the escalating political situation and the newspaper's critical approach towards him.

To start with, on May 28, 1937, shortly after Chamberlain assumed office, *The Daily Mirror* presented a feature called "Close-up... of the man who is your boss."⁹⁰ This statement signalled a cautious but not overtly critical attitude towards Chamberlain at the start of his tenure. The headline "Close-up... of the man who is your boss," by Augustine Livesey, showed a degree of admiration for the Prime Minister. Livesey noted, "In 1916 they said of Neville Chamberlain: - He has his father's grasp of business, but he is not a politician. He will not be a politician. To all political overtures he has replied, 'I am a business man'." Livesey

⁹⁰ The Daily Mirror, 28.05.1937, p. 12 - Close-up... of the man who is your boss.

further comments on Chamberlain's qualities as a leader: "A strange man. But a good one. Cold, clear and correct with none of the stage artifices that appeal to the mob." At the same time, Livesey added a note of skepticism:

Years ago – it was about 1923 – they called Chamberlain a disciple of the 'Be Kind to Germany Policy,' but I doubt whether any of that affection still lingers, and those who believe in Britain and Germany marching hand in hand across Europe will have difficulty in making him a supporter.⁹¹

The following week, the newspaper, in their editorial opinion piece, provided the headline "Exit the NDC," which similarly offered a positive examination of Chamberlain's judgement:

The Premier, in cancelling this dangerous and difficult measure, has acted wisely and in the best interest of the nation as a whole...The Premier is to be congratulated on his wisdom in reconsidering a measure that has already done harm and would have done considerably more as time went on.⁹²

However, as time went on, a note of scepticism started to edge itself into the paper's tone. By March 17, 1938, the publication was calling for accountability from Chamberlain with an editorial opinion piece titled "A Few Questions for the Prime Minister."⁹³

The turning point came in September 1938, when Chamberlain embarked on his series of meetings with Adolf Hitler in an attempt to avoid war. Upon Chamberlain's return to Britain on September 16, *The Daily Mirror* showed a level of optimism in its headline "Chamberlain Back Today," where *The Daily Mirror's* special correspondent noted that "...Mr Chamberlain and Hitler would meet again."⁹⁴ The effect was electric. There were shouts of 'heil' and two 'hurrahs.'" Yet, a critical perspective started to emerge with the editorial "Back Already."⁹⁵ Despite the somewhat negatively framed headline, the newspaper acknowledged Chamberlain's efforts to secure peace, noting that "to a world moving towards the abyss every delay is a gain."

Moving forward to the September 21st opinion piece "Price of Peace," the article indicates that the editorial staff of the newspaper questions the price which is being paid regarding

⁹¹ The Daily Mirror, 28.05.1937, p. 12 - Close-up... of the man who is your boss.

⁹² The Daily Mirror, 02.06.1937, p. 11 - The Daily Mirror opinion "Exit the NDC".

⁹³ The Daily Mirror, 17.03.1938, p. 13 - A Few Questions for the Prime Minister.

⁹⁴ The Daily Mirror, 16.09.1938, p. 1 - Chamberlain back to-day.

⁹⁵ The Daily Mirror, 16.09.1938, p. 13 – Back already.

Chamberlain's policy towards Germany.⁹⁶ Then, by October 1st, 1938, *The Daily Mirror* expressed a somewhat guarded reprieve with its opinion piece titled "For This Relief."⁹⁷ The piece emphasises how Chamberlain is now regarded as a 'deliverer' by Germans, and that the Prime Minister was saluted by loud cheers upon his return to London, following his trip to Berchtesgaden. However, the text ends with an appeal for Britons to 'stand by; be strong,' study the terms of the agreement on hand and not to put down their guard. Followed two days later by a strong criticism of Chamberlain's approach with its op-ed "Look at this Peace with Honour."⁹⁸ Furthermore, the headline "Honour Demands I Should Resign" demonstrated how the newspaper presented disagreement in the government's own ranks, as Duff Cooper, the First Lord of the Admiralty, resigned from Chamberlain's government.⁹⁹ In the end, the headline "Chamberlain's praise for dictators." also highlighted Chamberlain's approval of the dictators of Europe.¹⁰⁰

However, while the newspaper's editorial opinion pieces showed critique of Chamberlain's appeasement policy, a great deal of the British people were thankful for his actions, as underlined by Britons bowing in prayer of thanks for peace. The headline being "Millions bow in thanks for peace," with the article stating how the churches had not been as crowded since 'the Armistice'.¹⁰¹

The zenith of the newspaper's wavering support for Chamberlain came in May 1940. On May 9, *The Daily Mirror* printed an article that unequivocally called for Chamberlain's resignation: "I Say Get Out!"¹⁰² This signalled a final shift in the paper's portrayal of Chamberlain. The editorial staff even added a comment box which noted: "His article today is the most bitter indictment Mr. Morrison has ever written. We print it because it is YOUR duty to decide on this momentous issue." This was then followed by the paper's editorial opinion piece "Ranks Closed", which reflected on the Prime Minister's call for a unified front in light of the escalating conflict.¹⁰³ Finally, on May 11th, the publication's opinion piece titled "Silence" could be interpreted as a reflection of the solemn mood of the nation in the face of impending

⁹⁶ The Daily Mirror, 21.09.1938, p.13 – The Daily Mirror opinion "Price of peace".

⁹⁷ The Daily Mirror, 01.10.1938, p. 11 – For this Relief...

⁹⁸ The Daily Mirror, 03.10.1938, p. 11 - The Daily Mirror opinion – "Look at this peace with honour".

⁹⁹ The Daily Mirror, 03.10.1938, p. 20 - Honour Demands I Should Resign.

¹⁰⁰ The Daily Mirror, 04.10.1938, p. 6 - Chamberlain's praise for dictators.

¹⁰¹ The Daily Mirror, 03.10.1938, p. 14 - Millions bow in thanks for peace.

¹⁰² The Daily Mirror, 09.05.1940, p. 6 - I Say Get Out.

¹⁰³ The Daily Mirror, 09.05.1940, p. 7 – The Daily Mirror opinion "Ranks closed".

war and Chamberlain's resignation.¹⁰⁴ “Therefore in the moment of his withdrawal, we salute him in silence and say not one word about or against his record as the nation’s leader during the gravest crisis in our history.” While acknowledging his efforts to preserve peace in Europe, the newspaper clearly critiques him, in silence.

In a broader sense, the headlines from *The Daily Mirror* in the period from 1937 to 1940 paint a nuanced picture of Chamberlain's public image during his time as Prime Minister. The paper's fluctuating support for Chamberlain suggests a critical approach that evolved with the escalating political situation, ultimately culminating in a call for Chamberlain's resignation as the threat of war loomed larger. This offers a unique perspective, contrasting with the relatively more supportive stance of right-wing publications, and adds to our understanding of how Chamberlain's reputation was shaped and reshaped in the British print media during this turbulent period.

To put the newspaper's stance in broader context, it is important to note that while *The Daily Mirror* was a left-leaning publication, its coverage of Chamberlain wasn't always in line with a stereotypical left-wing viewpoint. There were moments of support for Chamberlain's peace efforts, reflecting a complexity that cut across traditional political lines. For comparison, the right-leaning publication *The Daily Express* exhibited consistent support for Chamberlain throughout his premiership. Thus, *The Daily Mirror*'s unique position underlines the newspaper's significant role in providing a diverse range of opinions within the British media landscape.

In conclusion, the examination of *The Daily Mirror*'s headlines from 1937 to 1940 offers an insightful view into the changing public perception of Neville Chamberlain during his time as Prime Minister. It illuminates how the press, specifically *The Daily Mirror*, played an integral role in shaping public discourse, altering perceptions and influencing political sentiment. This nuanced understanding is crucial to the thesis as it highlights the dynamic interplay between the media and politics during one of the most critical periods in British history. Further, it also raises important questions for our broader understanding of media in the political realm. Even though *The Daily Mirror* can be categorized as a left-leaning newspaper, its coverage of Chamberlain's tenure as Prime Minister was not one-dimensional. It varied over time,

¹⁰⁴ The Daily Mirror, 11.05.1940, p. 7 - The Daily Mirror opinion “Silence”.

reflecting the unfolding events and the newspaper's continuous judgement of Chamberlain's policies. This is a reminder that the press, regardless of its political leaning, does not operate in a vacuum but is very much a part of the socio-political fabric, responding to and influencing the zeitgeist in complex ways.

The Observer

The comprehensive analysis of various headlines and article content from *The Observer* yields a multifaceted interpretation of the newspaper's stance towards Neville Chamberlain throughout the period of the war. From this nuanced exploration, it becomes apparent that *The Observer* held a rather ambivalent view of Chamberlain's leadership, policies, and actions. While there was a certain level of critique, it would be a reductionist approach to label this attitude as overtly 'negative'. Therefore, this chapter, which navigates this complex interplay of semantics and public opinion, proposes that while *The Observer* exhibited criticism towards Chamberlain's administration, the term 'negative' may not entirely encapsulate its stand. This nuanced understanding of *The Observer's* position adds depth to the discussion and enriches our comprehension of the fluid dynamics between the media and political culture during Chamberlain's tenure.

On May 30, 1937, *The Observer* ran an opinion piece titled "Two Premiers: Looking Back and Ahead."¹⁰⁵ This indicated a contemplative stance, situating Chamberlain within the context of his predecessor and the road ahead. This approach served as a foundation for the subsequent evaluation of Chamberlain's leadership. Fast forward to October 2, 1938, the newspaper published three important articles: "Plans to Honour Mr. Chamberlain", "Parliament and the Premier", and "Mr Duff Cooper Resigns". The pieces shed light on the divergent perspectives on Chamberlain's leadership, indicating both a plan to acknowledge his contributions and reporting on the critical decision to resign from the government taken by Duff Cooper, showcasing the contentious dynamics of Chamberlain's premiership.

A week later, on October 9th 1938, an intriguing perspective appeared in *The Observer* with "A German Looks at Mr. Chamberlain."¹⁰⁶ This article represented a significant effort to

¹⁰⁵ The Observer, 30.05.1937, p. 18 - Two Premiers: Looking Back and Ahead.

¹⁰⁶ The Observer, 09.10.1938, p. 14 - A German Looks at Mr. Chamberlain.

present an international viewpoint on Chamberlain's actions, thus broadening the discursive scope.

Mr. Chamberlain's sudden popularity in Germany makes an essay on the Premier by Count Carl-Erdmann bearing, Pückler (London Correspondent of the "Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung") of special Interest. Among Mr. Chamberlain's positive and concrete political achievements, the writer lists: ...turning away from the League; change-over to a policy of understanding with the authoritarian States, ... a firm stand on the Sudeten issue... To the question, what kind of a man is Neville Chamberlain one always gets the same answer in England: he is a practical man, a realist. Englishmen say that with satisfaction. It is the quality they value in Neville Chamberlain... England has chosen as leader in a time when the world is experiencing the birth pangs of a new era: a sober, practical, business man and administrator for whom one thing in the world appears to be sacred: the testament of his father, the great Imperial politician, Joseph Chamberlain. In a land where men mean more than principles and movements, this personality stamps itself on British policy. Neville Chamberlain will work for the advantage of England wherever he can.¹⁰⁷

The article could possibly have led to further introspection and debate among the readership about his policies. Then, as we move into 1939, on April 30th, The Observer presented a thoughtful piece titled "One Way to Understanding 'Sooner Better Than Later'". This headline implied an analysis of the urgency in the political atmosphere and the importance of pre-emptive action, an aspect central to understanding Chamberlain's leadership approach during this period. The article was a book review by Keith Feiling, on George Glasgow's book "Peace With Gangsters?". Feiling's concludes his assessment:

This book does not believe that democracy is too weak to bear the truth. It's teaching if I do not mistake it, is that only national safety but (what is sometimes put higher) personal or party supremacy will come to the party and the men who at last take the courage to say 'one wrong does not make another right. We have all been wrong: here is right – come, let us do it'.¹⁰⁸

Intriguingly, 7 years after Feiling wrote an assessment of Glasgow's book regarding the Government's policy towards authoritarian regimes, he himself came to be the author behind the biography *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, published in 1946.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ The Observer, 09.10.1938, p. 14. – A German looks at Mr. Chamberlain.

¹⁰⁸ The Observer, 30.04.1939, p. 5 - One Way to Understanding 'Sooner Better Than Later'.

¹⁰⁹ Feiling, 1970.

In the autumn of 1939, on October 15th, *The Observer* carried two noteworthy articles: "‘Mouthpiece of the Nation’: Bernard Shaw on Our Propaganda,"¹¹⁰ and a book review titled "The Prime Minister."¹¹¹ The former provides a critique of the government's messaging strategy while the review engages with Duncan Keith-Shaw's authoritative biography on Chamberlain, reflecting on the author's approach to Chamberlain's legacy.

Events have dealt unkindly with the author of the apologia for Munich since the conclusion of his book was immediately followed by the outbreak of war – making an epilogue necessary to his consideration of the Prime Minister as the preserver of peace. The controversy in which Mr. Keith-Shaw makes an able deployment of the arguments for one side has of course ceased to be of practical interest. When it is revived as a chapter of history, its sales angles will perhaps be different from those he has chiefly considered. It will scarcely be disputed that "Chamberlain dealt at Munich with a situation which was plainly desperate." But it will not improbably be asked whether it need have been desperate if there had been more reality in the rearmament which the British Government had professedly been carrying on for the previous three years.¹¹²

In the following year, on April 7, 1940, an article titled "World: Week by Week – Missed the Bus" was published.¹¹³ This headline suggested a critical evaluation of Chamberlain's policies and decision-making, and the consequential missed opportunities on the global stage. Lastly, on May 12, 1940, *The Observer* featured an article under the headline "The World: Week by Week." This critical narrative, mirrored in other articles around the same period, might have bolstered public dissatisfaction with Chamberlain's handling of the war situation, influencing the broader sentiment towards his leadership and possibly even affecting the eventual transition of power to Churchill. Furthermore, the headline "Mr Churchill as Premier: Crisis and After" followed the same pattern.¹¹⁴

These headlines underscored the turbulent political atmosphere and transition of leadership from Chamberlain to Churchill, offering insights into a critical juncture in British political history. In light of this, it's important to note that public sentiment is not formed in a vacuum, and mass media, including newspapers like *The Observer*, undoubtedly play a critical role in shaping and reflecting public perception.

¹¹⁰ The Observer, 15.10.1939, p. 12 - Mouthpiece of the Nation': Bernard Shaw on Our Propaganda.

¹¹¹ The Observer, 15.10.1939, p. 5 – The Prime Minister.

¹¹² The Observer, 15.10.1939, p. 5. – The Prime Minister.

¹¹³ The Observer, 07.04.1940, p.10 - World: Week by Week – Missed the Bus.

¹¹⁴ The Observer, 12.05.1940, p.6 - "The world: week by week" & "Mr Churchill as Premier crisis and after".

The Manchester Guardian

Neville Chamberlain's political leadership and its representation in the British newspaper *The Manchester Guardian* can be effectively understood by traversing a chronological journey from 1937 to 1940. On May 29, 1937, shortly after Chamberlain assumed office as Prime Minister, *The Manchester Guardian* featured quite an unstimulating piece titled "The New Ministry" in its opinion column.¹¹⁵ This article set the tone for the newspaper's initial outlook towards Chamberlain's government and his early policy choices.

Initially, the newspaper adopts a reasonably neutral stance towards Chamberlain, as evidenced by the 1937-headlines such as "The Manchester Guardian opinion" and "The New Ministry."¹¹⁶ During this early period, Chamberlain receives international praise from countries like Australia and Italy, which is reported in articles like "Australia supports Mr Chamberlain,"¹¹⁷ and "Italian praise of Mr Chamberlain."¹¹⁸

Then, as tensions rise in Europe, *The Manchester Guardian* presents a more complex view of Chamberlain. Showing praise for the Prime Minister in articles like "High praise for our premier,"¹¹⁹ and "Warm welcome in Germany for the Premier,"¹²⁰ is counterbalanced by criticism in pieces such as "British passivity over Spain,"¹²¹ and "Mr Chamberlain's treachery."¹²² This mixed portrayal reflects the now growing uncertainty and division surrounding Chamberlain's approach to the escalating situation in Europe. Subsequently, following the Munich Agreement, the newspaper discusses Chamberlain's popularity, public opinion, and the international situation in articles such as "Letters on the international situation,"¹²³ then another stance with "Manchester Liberals view of the crisis,"¹²⁴ and "Norwegian comparison of the Chamberlains."¹²⁵ This speculation surrounding a possible

¹¹⁵ The Manchester Guardian, 29.05.1937, p. 13 - The New Ministry.

¹¹⁶ The Manchester Guardian, 29.05.1937, pp. 12-13 – "The Manchester Guardian opinion" & "The New Ministry".

¹¹⁷ The Manchester Guardian, 04.03.1938, p. 6 - Australia supports Mr Chamberlain.

¹¹⁸ The Manchester Guardian, 18.04.1938, p. 12 - Italian praise of Mr Chamberlain.

¹¹⁹ The Manchester Guardian, 03.06.1938, p. 6 - High praise for our premier.

¹²⁰ The Manchester Guardian, 16.09.1938, p. 9 - Warm welcome in Germany for the Premier.

¹²¹ The Manchester Guardian, 09.06.1938, p. 13 - British passivity over Spain.

¹²² The Manchester Guardian, 21.09.1938, p. 12 - Mr Chamberlain's treachery.

¹²³ The Manchester Guardian, 23.09.1938, p. 10 - Letters on the international situation.

¹²⁴ The Manchester Guardian, 23.09.1938, p. 11 - Manchester Liberals view of the crisis.

¹²⁵ The Manchester Guardian, 05.10.1938, p. 13 - Norwegian comparison of the Chamberlains.

Nobel Prize for Chamberlain, Benes, Hitler, or Mussolini further highlights the diverse and shifting opinions on Chamberlain's leadership during this time.

As the political landscape grew increasingly tumultuous, and the ominous clouds of war loomed closer, *The Manchester Guardian's* portrayal of Chamberlain began to evolve. On September 21, 1938, a dramatic shift in this perspective was marked with the headline "Mr Chamberlain's Treachery."¹²⁶ This critique pointed towards a growing dissatisfaction with Chamberlain's leadership, stemming primarily from his contentious policy of appeasement towards Nazi Germany. However, it's important to note that the national mood at this time was fraught with anxiety and tension, which may have impacted the newspaper's evolving stance. Moreover, the content published under this headline was far from one-dimensional. It showcased three views on Chamberlain's policies – namely "Welsh Miners' Protest", "Mr. Lansbury states pacifist case", and "Students go to Downing Street." Each of these viewpoints, although distinct, shared a common thread of concern and unease about Chamberlain's diplomatic strategies:

This council condemns the treachery of Neville Chamberlain in negotiating, without consultation without the knowledge of the British people and the Parliament, the disgraceful settlement of the Czecho-Slovakian dispute... Mr. Lansbury states pacifist case. Mr. George Lansbury, speaking in London last night as "an unrepentant, determined 'opponent of all war,'" commented on Chamberlain's "courageous meeting" with Herr Hitler... Students go to Downing Street. With placards bearing the words "For peace, stop Hitler," and "Stand by the Czechs," fifty members of the Universities' Labour Federation marched to Downing Street last night to deliver a letter for No. 10 expressing dismay at the "betrayal of Czecho-Slovakia".¹²⁷

In this context, it should be noted that the newspaper, even in simply reporting on particular speeches, made a choice concerning their overall representation of the Government and the Prime Minister.

In the wake of this mixed review for Chamberlain, *The Manchester Guardian* on September 23rd, 1938, opened up a multifaceted conversation on the prevailing international situation with articles such as "Letters on the International Situation," "Manchester Liberals' View of

¹²⁶ The Manchester Guardian, 21.09.1938, p.12 - Mr. Chamberlain's "treachery".

¹²⁷ The Manchester Guardian, 21.09.1938, p.12 - "Welsh Miners' Protest", "Mr. Lansbury states pacifist case", and "Students go to Downing Street."

the Crisis," and "Public Opinion and the Crisis". Moreover, a story entitled "Mr Chamberlain's Popularity" showed the paper's interest in assessing the Premier's public standing amidst these challenging times.

When Mr. Chamberlain arrived at the hotel Dreesen Herr Hitler was awaiting him in the lobby, and after welcoming him heartily went with him up to the room where their talks opened. In fact, the British Prime Minister is a most popular man in Godesberg. Wherever he appears in the streets shout of "heil" greet him from the waiting crowds. ¹²⁸

Then, continuing this discourse, a noteworthy headline on October 5th, 1938, read "Peace Price: Chamberlain, Benes, Hitler or Mussolini."¹²⁹ This underscored Chamberlain's prominent role on the international stage and his complex position in the unfolding drama of European politics. Later that month, on October 31st, an emerging narrative of internal criticism was indicated by the headline "Tory MP Critic of Premier".¹³⁰

As 1939 dawned, the war broke out and the failure of Chamberlain's appeasement policy was symbolized in the stark headline of September 4th, "Britain at War with Germany". This announcement reflected a significant turning point in global affairs and the pressing challenges that lay ahead for Chamberlain's leadership. Moving into 1940, *The Manchester Guardian*, on April 5th, published a somewhat cryptic headline "Hitler Misses Bus."¹³¹ The headline was taken from a speech by the P.M. which was aimed at critique Hitler's strategies and that Britain was going to come victorious out of the war. Later, as the war continued to rage, the paper, on July 29th, 1940, reported "Mr Chamberlain Repudiates Defeatism."¹³² This headline advocated Chamberlain's attempts to rally public morale amidst the grim situation and counter the rising sentiment of pessimism. Finally, on October 4th, 1940, two significant headlines marked the end of Chamberlain's era: "Mr Chamberlain's Resignation" and "The Guardian Opinion: The New Cabinet."¹³³ These articles assessed Chamberlain's leadership tenure and speculated on the future for Britain under the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. The newspaper's final assessment of Chamberlain as a government official came to

¹²⁸ The Manchester Guardian, 23.09.1938, pp. 10-13 – "Letters on the international situation", "Manchester Liberals view of the crisis," "Public opinion and the crisis" and "Mr Chamberlain's Popularity."

¹²⁹ The Manchester Guardian, 05.10.1938, p. 17 - Peace Price: Chamberlain, Benes, Hitler or Mussolini.

¹³⁰ The Manchester Guardian, 31.10.1938, p. 5 - Tory MP Critic of Premier.

¹³¹ The Manchester Guardian, 05.04.1940, p. 12 - Hitler Misses Bus.

¹³² The Manchester Guardian, 29.07.1940, p. 7 - Mr Chamberlain Repudiates Defeatism.

¹³³ The Manchester Guardian, 04.10.1940, pp. 4-6 - "Mr Chamberlain's Resignation" and "The Guardian Opinion: The New Cabinet."

be honest in critique of his policy, but still acknowledged his work as a statesman for Britain, after Chamberlain stepped down from the government:

Whatever we may think about Mr. Chamberlain's past, his tragic miscalculations of policy, there is no man who has desired more passionately that we shall win this war. And it is only fair that those of us who have so often criticised him in the past should acknowledge his value in counsel since Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister. Mr. Chamberlain was not a deadweight or a timid influence in Mr. Churchill's War Cabinet. Here popular opinion, and still more overseas opinion, badly misjudged the man. But at the same time it is simple truth to recognise that with his going there disappears almost the last trace of the hand of Munich and the appeasers in the Government, for though Sir Kingsley Wood and Lord Halifax remain they were not so thickly tarred.¹³⁴

The Manchester Guardian's portrayal of Neville Chamberlain from 1937 to 1940 presents a nuanced and evolving perspective on his leadership during a critical period in world history. In summary, *The Manchester Guardian's* coverage of Neville Chamberlain's tenure as Prime Minister offers a compelling insight into the complexities of his leadership during one of the most tumultuous periods in British political history. The newspaper's portrayal, shifting from initial neutrality to a more intricate mix of praise and criticism, reflected the deepening crisis of the time, Chamberlain's controversial decisions, and the fracturing public sentiment. Furthermore, the article concerning 'the new cabinet' displays that in 1940 there was already much 'misunderstanding' when it came to the representation of Neville Chamberlain, and this shows that his reputation was already suffering at this point.

Chapter 2: Chamberlain in British Print Culture, 1940-1960

In this chapter, the thesis navigates the complex landscape of Neville Chamberlain's depiction within diverse forms of British print culture over a span of twenty years, subsequent to his prime ministership. The research is marked by a keen interrogation of how Chamberlain's image was constructed and how collective recollections of his leadership were moulded amidst the turmoil of World War II and its ensuing years.

As the chapter delves deeper, a broad array of print media is shown. Newspapers, polemics, and biographies form the tapestry upon which Chamberlain's political manoeuvres, decisions,

¹³⁴ The Manchester Guardian, 04.10.1940, p.4 – The Manchester Guardian opinion “The New Cabinet”

and character traits are intricately woven. The chapter dissects the immediate press response to Chamberlain's resignation, an act that signalled a pivotal moment in British history, and then proceeds to unravel the representation of his legacy in the immediate aftermath of the war. Furthermore, the chapter's examination is punctuated by an incisive analysis of biographical works and wartime memoirs, the authors of which are often as consequential as their subjects. Each offers a unique lens through which Chamberlain's political career is viewed, illuminating the striking divergence in perceptions of his legacy.

The Daily Express

Some of the headlines from the newspaper which are to be highlighted are the following, all of them from the 11th of November 1940: "Chamberlain said goodbye,"¹³⁵ "He proved Hitler's guilt to the world,"¹³⁶ the editorial opinion piece "In silence"¹³⁷ and the more international article by the headline "Chamberlain: As Berlin raves, U.S says he had a legacy of neglect."¹³⁸

When having to choose a representative headline to underline the view of Chamberlain by the newspaper, the opinion piece from the 11th of November 1940 is fitting. It gives a short, but extensive inspection of Neville Chamberlain's role throughout his duration as Britain's Prime Minister. The piece recognises the challenges Chamberlain faced, including the inherited political complications and the burden of an alliance with a weakening France. It identifies that Chamberlain's policy of appeasement ultimately failed but highlights his perseverance, honesty, and integrity.¹³⁹ The piece also stressed the importance of military capabilities, attributing London's successful defence to the Royal Air Force. Therefore, in this sense, a broader context is needed to consider the *Daily Express*'s opinion piece regarding the legacy of Chamberlain. Namely, his active efforts to strengthen Britain's air force. According to Malcom Smith, there is evidence that Chamberlain and his cabinet were concerned about the growing threat from Germany, even though the Chief of the Air Staff (CAS) counselled that Germany was not a threat at the time being:

¹³⁵ The Daily Express, 11.11.1940, p. 1 - Chamberlain said goodbye.

¹³⁶ The Daily Express, 11.11.1940, p. 4 – He proved Hitler's guilt to the world.

¹³⁷ The Daily Express, 11.11.1940, p. 4 - The Daily Express opinion – "In silence".

¹³⁸ The Daily Express, 11.11.1940, p. 6 - Chamberlain: As Berlin raves, U.S says he had a legacy of neglect.

¹³⁹ The Daily Express, 1940, p. 6 – The Daily Express opinion "In silence."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer and most of the cabinet have become rather over-obsessed with the danger from Germany, though warned by the CAS that it would take Germany a long time to become a menace.¹⁴⁰

This quote, taken from Sir Maurice Hankey's diary on August 9, 1934, suggests that Chamberlain's government was aware of potential dangers and was actively working to bolster Britain's defences, particularly the Royal Air Force. Further underlining this is Chamberlain's own reflections as to how to defend London best, exemplified by his diary entry on the 26th of March 1939.¹⁴¹ Hence, *The Daily Express* opinion piece, alongside the historical context provided by Smith,¹⁴² offers a somewhat nuanced understanding of Chamberlain's legacy, at least in the eyes of the newspaper and its readers. The piece expresses that despite the ultimate failure of his appeasement policy, Chamberlain displayed a commitment to safeguarding Britain by investing in its air force.

Another headline, from the 17th of October 1956, shows how appeasement and the choices made by Chamberlain keeps up some relevance in the political dialogues of Britain. In the piece titled "Hitler would have done what Chamberlain did."¹⁴³ In the article, journalist Sefton Delmer, in the wake of the Suez crisis, reflects upon what Hitler would have done, if he were in the shoes of former Premier Chamberlain.

Hitler would have been an appeaser and a Munich-ite if he had been in Neville Chamberlain's shoes. He would have done everything to postpone the showdown with Germany for another two years and give reaming Britain and France time to catch up with Germany in military might.¹⁴⁴

The relevance of Chamberlain shows up again in 1956, as Britain becomes engulfed in what can arguably be described as one of the most important incidents in post-1945 British history. Still, 18 years after the Munich agreement took place, Chamberlain has a legacy of appeasement, which seems to have stuck to his name.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, M. (1977): pp. 162.

¹⁴¹ Self, R. (2005): pp. 395.

¹⁴² Smith, 1977.

¹⁴³ The Daily Express, 17.10.1956, p. 6 - Hitler would have done what Chamberlain did.

¹⁴⁴ The Daily Express, 17.10.1956, p. 6. - Hitler would have done what Chamberlain did

The Daily Mirror

After Chamberlain's resignation and death, *The Daily Mirror* seems to embrace a more balanced view of his time as Prime Minister, acknowledging his efforts to maintain peace while also recognizing the shortcomings of his policies. On July 1st, 1940, *The Daily Mirror* published an opinion piece titled "The Old Voice," which discussed Neville Chamberlain's position in the wartime political landscape.¹⁴⁵ The editorial piece implored that Chamberlain should 'keep silent', and leave the Government, while taking with him Halifax and Hoare out of the Government: "Why must they talk on--they who were always wrong? Why, if they will not go, cannot they keep silent -in God's name?"¹⁴⁶ Four days later, on July 5th, 1940, an article titled "Guilty Men" was published.¹⁴⁷ The article criticised Chamberlain and other politicians for their perceived failures in the handling of Hitler and Nazi Germany, echoing a pamphlet published the same year, that blamed Chamberlain and other 'Guilty Men' for the war.

By November 9th, 1940, the newspaper reported on Chamberlain's declining health in an article titled "Mr Neville Chamberlain gravely ill". The piece covered the serious nature of Chamberlain's illness, which would eventually lead to his death. Two days later, on November 11th, *The Daily Mirror* reported Chamberlain's death with the headline "Peace Premier is dead."¹⁴⁸ On the same day, the editorial opinion piece offered a reflective view on Chamberlain's legacy.¹⁴⁹

CRITICISM of Mr. Neville Chamberlain and his policy is silenced today by his death. We need only say that he sincerely tried to save Europe by appeasement...He was a gentleman with an umbrella facing a gangster with the largest "gat" ever held by one man...He was a peace-time Premier caught in a war which he had thought impossible. He had the wrong temperament for these violent times: but we can all feel sorry for him. He must have suffered intensely at the collapse of his ideals.¹⁵⁰

16 years later, in 1956 on September 13th, an article with the title "Eden has my loyalty" was published.¹⁵¹ This piece, expressed support for then-Prime Minister Anthony Eden, by the

¹⁴⁵ The Daily Mirror, 01.07.1940, p. 5 - The Old Voice.

¹⁴⁶ The Daily Mirror, 01.07.1940, p. 5 - The Old Voice.

¹⁴⁷ The Daily Mirror, 05.07.1940, p. 4 - Guilty Men.

¹⁴⁸ The Daily Mirror, 11.11.1940, p. 2 - Peace Premier is dead.

¹⁴⁹ The Daily Mirror, 11.11.1940, p.5 - The daily mirror opinion "Chamberlain".

¹⁵⁰ The Daily Mirror, 11.11.1940, p.5 - The daily mirror opinion "Chamberlain".

¹⁵¹ The Daily Mirror, 13.09.1956, p. 2 - Eden has my loyalty.

Conservative MP Beverley Baxter. The MP vented as to how he perceived *The Daily Mirror* stance on Eden's handling of the Suez as ignorance, in a comparison to Chamberlain:

How often the "Mirror" in its righteous wrath has denounced in retrospect the spinelessness of Neville Chamberlain for falling to deal with Hitler when he marched into the Rhineland. But when Sir Anthony Eden deals firmly and swiftly with an act of sabotage by Egypt's dictator within the frontiers of Egypt, The Daily Mirror calls for prudence and patience.¹⁵²

Finally, on August 14th, 1956, The Daily Mirror published an article titled "No war over Egypt", which reported on the Suez Crisis. The article discussed Eden's decision to invade Egypt, which was met with controversy both domestically and internationally. Comparisons to Chamberlain's policy of appeasement was again drawn in this piece, as *The Daily Mirror* criticised three newspapers as the ones who had been on the wrong side in the lead up the second world war, and that now were urging the Prime Minister to forceful action.

These are the three newspapers which - openly or by inference - advocated appeasement towards Hitler's Nazi Germany. The Times suppressed the warnings of its own correspondents about Hitler's plot to seize Europe. The Times was eating out of Neville Chamberlain's hand: it out-appeased the Arch Appeaser. The Daily Mail deceived its readers into believing that Hitler's unholy clique were a team of energetic patriots who would honour a deal with Britain. The Daily Express lulled millions of people into apathy by declaring again and again that there would be no war.¹⁵³

Altogether, The Daily Mirror initially criticized Neville Chamberlain in 1940, calling for his removal from government and blaming him for the war due to his appeasement policy towards Nazi Germany. However, upon Chamberlain's death, the paper adopted a more sympathetic view, recognizing his genuine attempt to maintain peace. In the context of the 1956 Suez Crisis, the newspaper argued for prudence and patience, facing criticism for its perceived inconsistency given its previous criticism of Chamberlain's appeasement. Throughout these years, the Daily Mirror's stance on Chamberlain varied, seemingly influenced by the political climate of the time.

¹⁵² The Daily Mirror, 13.09.1956, p. 2 – Eden has my loyalty.

¹⁵³ The Daily Mirror, 14.08.1956, p. 1 – The Daily Mirror's message to Eden: No war over Egypt!

The Observer

In an opinion piece published on November 17, 1940, titled "The World's Week," The Observer examined the global political landscape and the position which Chamberlain had in it. As Chamberlain had died on the 9th of November 1940, the article gave an assessment of the former Prime Minister, which acknowledged his policy of appeasement as a failure, but indeed the failure of a man with a heroic motive.

The ashes of Neville Chamberlain were laid to rest on Thursday in Westminster Abbey. If his heroic struggle was doomed to failure, it was a knightly battle that he fought for one of the greatest causes... What stands forth most strongly in their eyes [his British countrymen] at this moment is that the course he pursued cleared the name of Great Britain of all responsibility for the outbreak of war and invested her with a moral strength which will be no small factor in her ultimate victory.¹⁵⁴

Later, in 1943 on the 2nd of May, The Observer published the article "The Great Illusion," which was a review of two books, which gave critique to the process of making Britain ready for war. The reviewer's main points were regarding rearmament.

Wholesale rearmament here was inhibited for several years by the pacifist wave which swept the country and was strikingly revealed in the Fulham by-election. There was indecision on all fronts. Priceless time was lost for which Neville Chamberlain was in part responsible at the Treasury. At the last hour he won invaluable breathing-space at Munich before the storm broke.¹⁵⁵

However, the piece seems to both give critique to Chamberlain in his time as chancellor of the Exchequer, but also intriguingly gives him praise for his actions related to achieving a settlement in the Munich agreement. Furthermore, the article was a review of the book *Munich: before and after* by W.W Hadley, and the reviewer interestingly tells his readers that "for a more exhaustive treatment [on the topic] we must wait for Keith Feiling's *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*", while giving credit to Hadley for providing "an admirable lucid and impartial narrative of leading events from the rise of Hitler and to the outbreak of war with Germany."¹⁵⁶ Two years later, a similar article is written, now by Viscount Templewood, Chamberlain's old colleague Sam Hoare. He gave his reaction to the publishing of Feiling's biography, and hints to thinking that the biography was written too early after Chamberlain's

¹⁵⁴ The Observer, 17.10.1940, p. 6 - The Observer opinion – "The world's week."

¹⁵⁵ The Observer, 02.05.1943, p. 3. - The great illusion.

¹⁵⁶ The Observer, 14.05.1944, p. 3 – Munich.

death, and critiques the source material, or lack thereof: “Some, therefore, will think that it would have been wiser to postpone the biography until the full story, based on the official documents, could be published and the judgement of history substituted for the arguments of political strife.”¹⁵⁷

Thereafter, in the years from 1946 to 1956, there were only four mentions of Chamberlain in *The Observer*. Namely on the 3rd of November 1948 “Churchill, war and democracy,”¹⁵⁸ an article named “Appeasement” in 1950,¹⁵⁹ and lastly an assessment of appeasement under the headline “The meanings of appeasement”, published in 1956¹⁶⁰ The last article which was found in this thesis’ study, which mentioned Chamberlain, is from 1957. An article which tried to comprehend Anthony Eden’s stance towards Egypt in the Suez crisis. The article mentions a cartoon which was made on Eden, critiquing his moderation in the case of Indo-China, where he had been presented as “another Chamberlain.”¹⁶¹

The Manchester Guardian

On November 11th, 1940, The Manchester Guardian’s view on Neville Chamberlain was the primary focus in their editorial opinion piece "Neville Chamberlain."¹⁶² The piece examined Chamberlain's political legacy and his tenure as Prime Minister.

The war was a crushing blow to hopes he had cherished long after most people could find any basis for his confidence. It marked the collapse of an experiment in diplomacy in which his own initiative and his own judgment had been the driving and governing force. It stamped with failure the policy with which his name would go down to history.¹⁶³

However, even though the editorial piece severely condemns his policy of appeasement, it acknowledges Chamberlain as man with a sincere desire to serve his country.

¹⁵⁷ The Observer, 15.12.1946, p. 4 - Neville Chamberlain – the man and his hopes.

¹⁵⁸ The Observer, 03.10.1948, p.4 - Churchill, war and democracy.

¹⁵⁹ The Observer, 05.03.1950, p. 7 – Appeasement.

¹⁶⁰ The Observer, 15.04.1956, p. 10 - The meanings of appeasement.

¹⁶¹ The Observer, 13.01.1957, p. 6 – How it happened.

¹⁶² The Manchester Guardian, 11.11.1940, p. 4 - The Manchester Guardian opinion “Neville Chamberlain”.

¹⁶³ The Manchester Guardian, 11.11.1940, p. 4 - The Manchester Guardian opinion “Neville Chamberlain”.

Those who would blame most severely the spirit and methods of his policy know well that those were not the words of a man who has merely missed a great prize. They were the words of a man...whose misfortune it was that his imagination did not match his integrity and his courage.¹⁶⁴

Additionally, the newspaper published two articles entitled "Mr Neville Chamberlain – a swift collapse,"¹⁶⁵ and "Mr Chamberlain – his three years as PM."¹⁶⁶ Suggesting a critical analysis of his time in office, including a comment on the abrupt end of his premiership. By November 12th, 1940, The Manchester Guardian had broadened its perspective to include international viewpoints, with an article titled "American press on MR Chamberlain."¹⁶⁷ This piece outlined American media's perspectives on Chamberlain, reflecting on his global impact and reputation.

On the 13th of November, 1940, The Manchester Guardian returned to domestic responses, featuring an opinion piece titled "The Guardian opinion. Mr Churchill's tribute."¹⁶⁸ The article detailed the sentiments expressed by Winston Churchill towards Chamberlain and his legacy. Lastly, the article "Neville Chamberlain buried in the Abbey" mentioned how in the ceremony that "some faces one could see the cares of the outside world already replacing the studied aspect of grief. But there were men who have not always been on Chamberlain's side who looked long and sorrowfully at his grave before they went away."¹⁶⁹ In the end, the report notes how there were two lines by the Dean which 'struck home' to the staff: "There the work of life is tried. By a juster judge than here."¹⁷⁰ Possibly signifying how the staff might have thought Chamberlain had been too harshly judged by his contemporaries, and that in heaven he might find a judge which is more lenient and understanding of his time in power.

While newspapers played an important part in forming public opinion during Chamberlain's tenure, it is essential not to overlook the influence of books published during this period. As a more comprehensive medium, books provided a broader and more detailed exploration of Chamberlain's policies and personality, allowing for more nuanced analyses and perspectives. This shift from immediate reactions and day-to-day commentary, often seen in newspapers, to

¹⁶⁴ The Manchester Guardian, 11.11.1940, p. 4 - The Manchester Guardian opinion "Neville Chamberlain".

¹⁶⁵ The Manchester Guardian, 11.11.1940, p. 5 - Mr Neville Chamberlain – a swift collapse.

¹⁶⁶ The Manchester Guardian, 11.11.1940, p. 6 - Mr Chamberlain – his three years as PM.

¹⁶⁷ The Manchester Guardian, 12.11.1940, p. 8 - American press on MR Chamberlain.

¹⁶⁸ The Manchester Guardian, 13.11.1940, p. 4 - The Guardian opinion "Mr Churchill's tribute".

¹⁶⁹ The Manchester Guardian, 15.11.1940, p. 4 - Neville Chamberlain buried in the Abbey.

¹⁷⁰ The Manchester Guardian, 15.11.1940, p. 4 - Neville Chamberlain buried in the Abbey.

more reflective and comprehensive interpretations, typically found in books, marks a significant transition in the cultural memory of Neville Chamberlain. The following section explores several prominent books from the period between 1940 to 1960, each offering different perspectives and contributing to the evolving narrative around Chamberlain's leadership.

The Collective impact of selected books

Before the chapter further delves into individual works and their impact, it's crucial to understand the broader cultural context that underscores their importance. During the mid-20th century, in a world not yet shaped by the internet or television, books were a dominant medium of mass communication. They were not just containers of facts and narratives, but also influential tools that shaped perceptions, and swayed public opinion. Books functioned as essential channels through which leaders and academics expressed their perspectives and influenced societal understanding of events and personalities.

As such, they played a significant role in the post-war era, shaping public memory of the conflict and its key players, including Neville Chamberlain. A case in point is Winston Churchill's *The Gathering Storm*, which, over seven decades later, still affects our understanding of Neville Chamberlain.¹⁷¹ Therefore, it becomes crucial to scrutinise these books not just as historical documents, but as impactful cultural artifacts that have persistently influenced the image of Chamberlain. While the books which are examined in this chapter may seem assorted, each presenting its unique perspective, they are naturally interconnected by their shared attention to Neville Chamberlain. Together, they form a collective narrative, shaping, reinforcing, or challenging Chamberlain's reputation in the public consciousness.

First off, the book *Guilty men* was published in 1940, under the pseudonym CATO, and was written by Michael Foot, Peter Howard, and Frank Owen, three journalists who were working for newspapers owned by Beaverbrook.¹⁷² The fact that the polemic was written by journalists, serve as a bridge between the world of newspapers into the realm of other forms of British print culture.

¹⁷¹ Churchill, 2002.

¹⁷² Dutton, 2006, p.1.

As one reads 'Guilty men', it is quite clear that Chamberlain and his Government did things that in hindsight would be reviewed as wrong. In the view of making sure Britain was 'ready for war', and to avoid Germany becoming a greater threat than it would become, in the end. However, the book offers quite the demonisation, of the 'guilty men', when it cherry picks certain speeches and policies, in framing its narrative against the Chamberlain 'regime', and builds up the persona and reputation of Winston Churchill. 'Each time' something 'bad' has been done by Chamberlain, a comment from Churchill is brought forward, showing that he was sceptical or argued against the Chamberlain policy. As if Churchill himself was the only opponent. This also, in a sense, argues for the fact that Chamberlain was indeed not alone in his policies, and to a degree followed and continued the 'stream of policy' in his time, and did not simply only go down his own path of appeasement.

It should be noted that the book is of high value as a primary source, offering a unique perspective on the Government's policy at the time, but also as a polemic arguing against Chamberlain and other ministers. CATO brings forward 15 people as the "guilty men" behind the demise of Britain, namely, Neville Chamberlain, Sir John Simon, Sir Samuel Hoare, Ramsay MacDonald, Stanley Baldwin, Lord Halifax, Sir Kingsley Wood, Ernest Brown, David Margesson, Sir Horace Wilson, Sir Thomas Inskip, Leslie Burgin, Earl Stanhope, W. S. Morrison and Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith. The fact that the books take into account 15 names, just shows how the 'downfall' of Britain was not the work of one man – Chamberlain – but a result of policies and politicians actions over a longer period of time. For example, Sir Horace Nelson is pictured as the spider who is dragging the threads of his spider web behind Chamberlain – a major influence on Chamberlain and his Government's policies.

Guilty Men goes into detail about what it regards as defining key moments in the time frame leading up to the outbreak of World War two, and who is responsible for Britain not being 'prepared'. One chapter in the book is named "the Golden Age", referring to the most 'successful' time period for Chamberlain and his peers - from the "I believe it is peace in our time" and the speech in Parliament on the 30th of September 1938, to the 15th of March 1939 - when Nazi Germany invaded Prague. Britain broke its promise, either due to incompetence and unwillingness to go to war over a small European nation, or due to not being ready for war, in its effort to rearm. "Czechoslovakia vanished overnight. So did the Golden Age."¹⁷³

¹⁷³ CATO, (1940), p. 63.

Guilty Men comes forward as a semantic and realpolitik polemic dissertation for the events that shaped how Britain looked in 1940. Amongst other things, the guarantee that the British Government gave to Poland in 1939, is regarded as the equivalent to the German-Austrian blank check assurance of the day. The authors behind the book also write of how and whom the politicians should have contacted in order to make sure the country had strong allies. An argument being that Poland had bad relations to Russia, meaning that this would worsen the relations between Russia and the United Kingdom, and make an alliance unlikely. Ergo, CATO argues that Britain should not have given Poland its promise of help if attacked, when the two countries were so far apart, weak and by doing so, cuttings relations to Russia.¹⁷⁴

The book 'Guilty Men', all in all, has different qualities, both in positive and negative ways. It offers insight to how men of the British society were desperate in seeing change in the leadership of Great Britain, as they believed that the politicians in charge were not be trusted and the wrong men for the job; in other words appeasers who were reluctant to prepare for war. However, the book is also a polemic which manages to make a narrative of the people in charge not having done their job in preparing Britain for war. It also seems to be clear that from the beginning of the book, Winston Churchill is drawn forward as the candidate to lead the country - the 'messiah' to save Britain.

In Mr. Churchill as Premier, and in his three service supply chiefs, Ernest Bevin, Herbert Morrison and Lord Beaverbook (to name only four) we have an assurance that all that is within the range of human achievement will be done to make this island 'a fortress'.¹⁷⁵

Not only does CATO declare who are 'the guilty men', it also declares that Winston Churchill is the right man for the job. The book ends with a final note, in making sure that the ones who were responsible for the state of Britain in 1940 should be removed from Government.¹⁷⁶ This point was not to happen, as both Sir Kingsley Wood and Lord Halifax stayed in important Government positions, and most importantly Neville Chamberlain took on the role as Lord Chancellor, was a part of the War council and stayed as leader of the Conservative party.

¹⁷⁴ CATO, (1940), p.68.

¹⁷⁵ CATO, (1940), p. 122.

¹⁷⁶ CATO, (1940), p.123.

Having examined the role of *Guilty Men* in shaping the perception of Chamberlain, let's consider the ensuing shift in political landscape and public opinion, as the chapter transitions to the post-war era. In June of 1945 *The Left Was Never Right*, by Quintin Hogg, was published as a strategic counter to "The Guilty Men," a critique of Neville Chamberlain's appeasement policy.¹⁷⁷ Hogg's book aimed to bolster the Conservative Party by juxtaposing the speeches and policies of Labour and Liberal politicians on armaments and appeasement with those of Conservative MPs, such as Winston Churchill and Sir Austen Chamberlain.

Published in post-war Britain, *The Left Was Never Right* contributed to the ongoing discourse surrounding Chamberlain's policies. It sought to paint the Conservative Party in a favourable light, challenging the narrative set by *Guilty Men*, which ascribed significant blame to Neville Chamberlain for Britain's unpreparedness for war. By highlighting the contributions of left-leaning parties to this unpreparedness, Hogg attempted to provide a more balanced assessment of the political landscape at that time.

Nevertheless, it's worth keeping in mind that the release of *The Left Was Never Right* overlapped with a substantial shift in public interest. In the lead up to war, and while the war was ongoing, Britons were keen to understand the events that were unfolding, which made books tend to sell in good numbers and get considerable attention. But, in the aftermath of the war, this appetite diminished. The urgency and imminence of the past were superseded by a focus on rebuilding and moving forward, which reduced the public's curiosity in re-evaluating pre-war policies. Furthermore, *The Left Was Never Right* was released in the build-up to the General election in an obvious effort to strengthen the Conservative party. Yet, it failed to have the needed effect. The Labour Party secured a majority in the election, signifying that the book did not meaningfully sway public sentiment. The controversy around Chamberlain, appeasement, and rearmament had lost its imminence, and consequently the book did not make the same impression as it might have done previously. Ultimately, while *The Left Was Never Right* provided a different perspective and contributed to the examination on the pre-war policies of different political parties, its power was inadequate. The setting of the post-war period and the shifting priorities of the British public largely subdued its effect. As such, it could not drastically alter the predominant narrative of Chamberlain's government and the policy of appeasement.

¹⁷⁷ Hogg, 1945.

The Left was Never Right serves as a significant marker of the post-war political shift, highlighting the multi-layered nature of Chamberlain's reputation. This piece presents a counter narrative to *Guilty Men*, thereby adding complexity to Chamberlain's characterisation. As the chapter now moves from *The Left was Never Right*, a piece with its stocks firmly invested in the political dynamics of the immediate post-war era, to *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, a work dedicated to the individual behind the political persona, a shift in the narrative lens is perceived. This progression takes the analysis from the broader political arena and contentious debates, where Chamberlain's reputation was either contested or defended, to a more intimate, personal perspective that enquires the life and motivations of the man himself.

In Keith Feiling's biography, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain – 1946*, the narrative concerning Neville Chamberlain is explored in-depth.¹⁷⁸ This book scrutinizes the former Prime Minister's life and his decisions, aiming to provide a balanced perspective. The thorough work of Feiling's is evident in Winston Churchill's *The Gathering Storm*, published two years later, where Churchill frequently references the biography as a primary source for his analyses. Despite these efforts, Feiling's biography was generally viewed as an unsuccessful attempt to restore the Chamberlain family's reputation. As a conservative historian, Feiling faced stiff competition, especially from Churchill's more popular works.

This struggle to restore Chamberlain's reputation is further discussed in historian David Reynolds's book, *In command of history: Churchill fighting and writing the Second World War*. Reynolds notes that the only thinkable challenger to Churchill was the official biographer of Chamberlain, who had had completed a draft by 1944:

But as we have seen Sir Edward Bridges kept him away from the Cabinet documents and took months to nitpick his way through the text. When Feiling's neutered biography appeared in December 1946, some reviewers offered praise. 'I am convinced,' wrote Lord Templewood (Chamberlain's Old colleague Sam Hoare) in a dig at *Guilty Men*, that history's judgement on Chamberlain 'will be very different from the partisan verdict of a people's court in 1940.'¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ Feiling, 1970.

¹⁷⁹ Reynolds, 2005, p. 92.

However, most were not convinced of Feiling's work, as both friends and family of the deceased Premier were largely disheartened with the book. As history would have it, no biographer would have had a stress-free task, given what had happened since Munich. Furthermore, Richard Law, a conservative politician, regarded it as a "serious weakness" that the biography had not used official papers, which also Chamberlain's parliamentary private secretary, the future Prime Minister Alec Douglas-Home agreed to, in private.¹⁸⁰ Feiling had been torpedoed by Bridges, and the success of the biography suffered from it.

Feiling's biography's perceived limitations and the restricted access to Cabinet documents illustrate the challenges in constructing an accurate narrative around Chamberlain's tenure. The contrasting perspectives offered by reviewers such as Lord Templewood, however, point to the existence of differing opinions about Chamberlain's legacy, a reminder that history's judgment can significantly deviate from the immediate reaction of the public during contentious times. Furthermore, comparing the work of Feiling to Churchill, it's clear that as Churchill was an active politician, who had many friends and contacts in parliament, he would in his book inhabit and serve for a more authoritative experience for its readers.

Moving from *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, which offers an intimate portrait of Chamberlain as a person and leader, the chapter turns its attention to *The Gathering Storm* - a perspective that assesses Chamberlain's legacy from a different vantage point.¹⁸¹ Authored by Winston Churchill, a towering figure of the era, this work extends the narrative beyond Chamberlain's personal journey and places it within the context of a global conflict.

Throughout the second world war, Sir Winston Churchill became known for his speeches, and opposition to the policy of appeasement, to which Neville Chamberlain is forever linked to. In 1948, Churchill published his war memoirs, with the fitting name 'The Gathering Storm'.¹⁸² The author goes in depth, in a 914 pages long book, to how the war could have been avoided, and gives critique to those who were in charge in the lead up to the war, and during the war. Interestingly, the author shows little to no self-criticism in the story telling of what went wrong, and who was to blame for it all. He even points to who he thinks should be noted as

¹⁸⁰ Reynolds, 2005, pp. 92-93.

¹⁸¹ Churchill, 2002.

¹⁸² Churchill, 2002.

‘the guilty men’ of France, with a reference to the 1940 polemical book written under the same title by the author writing under the pseudonym "Cato".

It would not be unjust to refer to Winston Churchill as a master narrative composer. In the book, he fails to emphasise his own role in the failure of the Norway campaign. After all, the ‘victors are left to write history’. Of course, after the success and victory of the allies in the end of the second world war, Churchill was hailed as the leader of the time – the one who ‘foresaw’ it all. Naturally, Churchill then possessed great power in how the war was to be looked back at and what wrongdoings were to be regarded as especially awful. This is argument is supported by Keith Robbins:

Churchill, who became Prime Minister in the following spring, distanced himself at every opportunity from those who held power in the preceding decade. It was tempting to believe that appeasement had produced the catastrophe from which he was in process of rescuing the country. Churchill encouraged that belief. The Second World War was not the time for historians to embark on a defence of British foreign policy in the heyday of 'appeasement'. At its conclusion, Churchill's description of the conflict as 'the unnecessary war' gained authority from the fact that, fortunately, he had seen to it that things had turned out right in the end.¹⁸³

It's easy to forget how popular the Munich deal was in 1938, when you look at the second world war through the lens of Churchill and modern-day history books.¹⁸⁴ Appeasement, the policy of appeasing Nazi Germany, was also very popular all the way up to the onset of the war on September 3rd of 1939.¹⁸⁵ The British people wanted peace – but at all costs?¹⁸⁶ Chamberlain too, by nature was a man of peace. Then, when Churchill looks back at the war, Chamberlain is the antagonist to blame for much of the unpreparedness of Great Britain in terms of armament. Describing his college as an opponent of all emergency measures, and that he thought too highly of his own abilities to do what was right for the country.

His all-pervading hope was to go down to history as the Great Peacemaker; and for this he was prepared to strive continually in the teeth of facts, and face great risks for himself and his country. Unhappily, he ran into tides the force of which he could not measure, and met hurricanes from which he did not flinch, but with which he could not cope.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Robbins, 1997, pp. 1-2.

¹⁸⁴ The Daily Mirror, 03.10.1938, pp. 14-15- Millions bow in thanks of peace.

¹⁸⁵ The Daily Express, 30.09.1938, p. 8 - Nations hail peace hope – Hero Chamberlain.

¹⁸⁶ The Daily Mirror, 21.09.1938, p. 13 - The Daily mirror opinion “Price of peace”.

¹⁸⁷ Churchill, 2002, p. 267.

The author himself, on the other hand, is the protagonist - the knight in shining armour who foresaw the bad character of Hitler and Mussolini. And yes, surely Winston Churchill was right that Chamberlain and Britain should not have trusted Hitler and Mussolini. But should there never have been a hope of peace without bloodshed? Chamberlain, in the view of the thesis, can be regarded as naïve and hopeful, maybe even a dreamer. But is he to be blamed for working for ‘peace in our time’? When even the public supported his policies, and the Labour party did not even support rearmament until 1937.¹⁸⁸ In the Norway debate, Churchill reminisces of how the Labour opposition continuously interrupted the Prime Minister. “I thought of their mistaken and dangerous pacifism in former years, and how, only four months before the outbreak of the war, they had voted solidly against conscription.”¹⁸⁹ Britain had wanted peace – and a peacemaker was fostered. However, working for peace is hard when your partner for peace wishes for world domination and the extermination of all inferior races.

Sure, this comes down to the department of counterfactual history, but what would have happened if Britain never went to war, or if Chamberlain would have stayed in power until the end in 1945? Counterfactual history aims to conjecture the things that did not happen, or finding out what could have happened, with the goal of trying to understand what actually did happen. Chamberlain never got to write his memoirs and take part in discussions as to his choices when he was in power during the war. Churchill on the other hand, did. Winston died in 1965 – 20 years after the end of the second world war. While Chamberlain died in 1940 without getting the opportunity to see the end of the war, and thence also never got to define his own narrative. Historian David Reynolds supports this viewpoint:

Their case [Churchill, John Wheeler-Bennet & Lewis Namier] was strengthened by the fact that none of Britain's three Prime Ministers of the 1930s published their own version of events... Neville Chamberlain (1937-40) lasted only six months after the end of his premiership.¹⁹⁰

In the *Gathering Storm*, Churchill looks back on the build-up to the war and what happened all the way to the end of it, in 1945. Not surprisingly, he takes on the role as a foreshadowing oracle, that knew the right thing to do, as to when they should have happened, in order to prevent war altogether. In chapter 5, named ‘The Locust Years 1931–1935’, he mentions how he in May 1932 issued his ‘first formal warning of approaching war’.

¹⁸⁸ Kleine Ahlbrandt, 1970, p. 81.

¹⁸⁹ Churchill, 2002, p. 764.

¹⁹⁰ Reynolds, 2005, p. 91.

To say that is not in the least to imply any want of regard or admiration for the great qualities of the German people, but I am sure that the thesis that they should be placed in an equal military position with France is one which, if it ever emerged in fact, would bring us within practical distance of almost measureless calamity.¹⁹¹

Altogether, the representation of Churchill as a clairvoyant figure in his own memoir serves not only to accentuate his foresight and comprehension of the delicate political landscape that lead up the second world war, but also to shape the way in which history is deciphered. Through his written works and speeches, Churchill pursued to influence the public perception of his contemporaries, particularly that of Neville Chamberlain. His early warnings, such as the one he issued in May 1932, illustrate his acknowledgment of the potential peril posed by Germany's rearmament and the hazards associated with their military equivalence to France. Warnings like these were a part of what strengthened his ethos in the aftermath of the war, as he had 'known' what was to happen, and this stance is stressed in the book. Churchill writes that on 9th of May 1940, after he had been asked by the king to form a Government, he felt like he had walked with destiny towards it all:

At last I had the authority to give directions over the whole scene. I felt as if I were walking with Destiny, and that all my past life had been but a preparation for this hour and for this trial. Eleven years in the political wilderness had freed me from ordinary party antagonisms. My warnings over the last six years had been so numerous, so detailed, and were now so terribly vindicated, that no one could gainsay me. I could not be reproached either for making the war or with want of preparation for it.¹⁹²

Therefore, it is important to study the context in which these narratives were put together and the objectives of the authors, encompassing both Churchill and his contemporaries. By constructing his narrative in a manner that features his own foresight and downplays the complexities of the situation faced by Chamberlain, Churchill successfully impacted the latter's reputation. As historical events transpire and novel evidence comes to light, it is essential for researchers to doggedly re-evaluate and contest prior interpretations, ensuring the development of a more manifold and complete knowledge of the era. By studying the impact of Churchill's narrative on the historical perspective, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the interwar period and the intricate network of decisions that made for

¹⁹¹ Churchill, 2002, p. 96.

¹⁹² Churchill, 2002, p. 771.

the path to the second World War. This also reminds us of the significance of assessing diverse angles and sources to avoid only being persuaded by the narratives put together by dominant figures, such as Churchill, in order to maintain a sensible understanding of history.

Lastly, *The Gathering Storm* adds a strong narrative voice to the literary depiction of Chamberlain's reputation. The cumulative impact of these different accounts - from blame-laying polemics to personal biographies, from political critiques to war memoirs - enables a holistic view in seeing how each book played a role in moulding the Chamberlain reputation.

Conclusion - “I should not fear the historian’s verdict”.

The thesis has contributed with an in-depth research of primary source material, represented through *The Daily Express*, *The Daily Mirror*, *The Observer* and *The Manchester Guardian*. Furthermore, the thesis has looked into a selection of books which were important in the shaping of Neville Chamberlain’s reputation. Represented through *Guilty men*, *The Left was never right*, *The Life of Neville Chamberlain*, and *The Gathering storm*. All things considered, by combining the available primary source material, literature from Chamberlain’s time, books written decades after the war and secondary sources, a more nuanced understanding to the Prime Minister can be presented.

The thesis has sought to research in more detail several key elements of how Chamberlain’s reputation was initially and then retrospectively formed through print culture, mainly national newspapers and polemical books or indeed those written by Churchill himself. In doing so, it found that during the period of 1937-1945, a considerable volume of newspaper articles and reports focused on Neville Chamberlain. It is worth noting, though, that the prevalence of these reports correlates with his lifetime, as the coverage significantly dwindled after his death in 1940. This observation may suggest that the public interest in Chamberlain and his policies quickly waned once he was no longer an active participant in the political arena.

Consequently, the historical narrative and assessments of his actions and legacy may have been shaped by the limited retrospective coverage in the years immediately following his passing. Then, between 1945 and 1963, the volume of newspaper articles and reports on Neville Chamberlain was notably sparse, at least in the context of the newspapers examined in this thesis. Underlining this is how *The Daily Express*, as shown throughout the thesis as a supporter of Chamberlain, only mentioned him once in 1954, once in 1956, once in 1958, and twice in 1960. It appears that the interest in the former Prime Minister had significantly diminished, while the fascination with Winston Churchill persisted. This enduring curiosity about Churchill was evident not only among the general public but also in the publication of books. The disparity in coverage between the two leaders might have contributed to the shaping of historical perceptions and evaluations of their respective legacies, with Chamberlain's role in the pre-war era receiving less attention in comparison to Churchill's wartime leadership.

Furthermore, the study has shown that there were variations in how the different newspapers represented Chamberlain in its headlines and articles. Overall, *The Daily Express* comes forward as a blatant supporter of Chamberlain from the day he entered the office of Downing Street 10. While *The Daily Mirror*'s stance on Chamberlain developed from initial scepticism to severe critique, urging for him to step down from his office. Not surprisingly, keeping its left-leaning political ideology in mind. Whereas *The Manchester Guardian*'s reporting on Chamberlain shifted from initial neutrality, towards an intricate mix of praise and criticism. However, as shown in the analysis of its headlines, *The Manchester Guardian* presents a finding that there was already much misunderstanding when it came to the representation of Neville Chamberlain in 1940, showing that his reputation was already suffering at this point. Lastly, it's apparent that *The Observer* held a rather ambivalent view of Chamberlain's leadership, policies, and actions. While The Observer exhibited criticism towards Chamberlain's administration, the term 'negative' may not entirely encapsulate its stand. Additionally, in the case of all the newspaper which have been examined, there is shown some degree of appreciation and acknowledgement of Chamberlain's effort in working for peace. Nonetheless, they differ in supporting its approach or not.

Also, by examining the books the study has gone some way in offering a fresh perspective in suggesting that Churchill is a common thread in the conception of the Chamberlain legacy. Either, through a direct comparison between Chamberlain and Churchill, where Chamberlain is portrayed as weak and German-friendly, whereas Churchill is depicted as a resolute, British nationalist hero. Or in the sense that Churchill himself was writing history as seen through his own perception of the past. This view is further supported by the ethos which Churchill inhabited, as a war time hero, Nobel literature winner and a famous writer, which might have influenced other historians writing about Chamberlain and appeasement in the decades following the war. This new perspective offers a possible explanation for why Churchill's reputation supplanted that of Chamberlain, and why this narrative has largely dominated historical accounts of appeasement in the secondary literature.

Even in contemporary times, Chamberlain's name continues to elicit diverse reactions, with some casting him in a negative light while others propose a more supportive portrayal, as demonstrated by a recent film about his life, offering "a sympathetic portrait of Neville

Chamberlain.”¹⁹³ Predominantly Chamberlain has been perceived as weak, naïve, and disillusioned, having failed to adequately prepare Great Britain for war. Conversely, some view him as the individual responsible for providing Britain with the time necessary to rebuild its military and economy in the aftermath of the Great Depression. Proponents of this perspective argue that the Munich Agreement allowed Britain to prepare for the inevitable conflict in Europe by bolstering its armed forces and addressing the economic challenges of the 1930s.¹⁹⁴ This claim is substantiated by General Ismay's analysis of the British military in 1938, which revealed the substantial disparity between British and Nazi German military capabilities at the time.¹⁹⁵ The reputation of the man who is undeniably associated with the policy of appeasement turns out to have been affected by a range of influences, including editorials and articles in newspapers, the writing of Winston Churchill, and the practice of Churchills books serving as a source for later academics and writers of popular literature.

Research on Neville Chamberlain has a long tradition, and in this the thesis remains relevant in relation to the topic's continued interest, both seen in films, books, and articles. Further, it contributes a widely researched dissertation to the field of reputational studies, in that it focuses both on primary sources such as newspaper articles and books, but also secondary sources, represented by scholarship written after the period in which the thesis has focused on. Altogether, the thesis is meant to be a thoroughly researched but ultimately modest contribution to thinking more about how Chamberlain has been seen in life and death through the British media and print cultures. In answering the research question: ‘what was Neville Chamberlain’s political reputation in British print culture between 1937 and 1960’, the study has shown that there were significant variations in how different newspapers represented Chamberlain in its headlines and articles. Furthermore, the books which the study has examined, support the offering of a fresh perspective that Churchill is central in the conception of the negative Chamberlain legacy.

¹⁹³ The Economist, 24.01.2022.

¹⁹⁴ McKinstry, 2022, The Telegraph.

¹⁹⁵ National Archives, CAB 21/544.

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Statement of relevance for the MLSPRÅK Programme:

In this thesis, the author has examined the reputation of Neville Chamberlain, who was Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1937-1940. As an English teacher, the author of the thesis believes the study to be relevant to the teaching practice by virtue of it concerning British politics and British personalities. Additionally, the topic is also relevant to the field of social science and political science, which the author has studied as part of the Master's Programme - Language Studies with Teacher Education.

By close reading primary sources, including the reading of newspapers and books, and secondary literature, such as scholarly articles, the author of the thesis firmly believes that that the study has developed his ability of evaluating an information source, which is a fundamental capability in the Norwegian school system. Furthermore, by going depth in a particular topic, interpreting, and analysing a broad spectre of literature, the author believes that the future teaching of literacy to students will benefit from the work which has been conducted.



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