

# The Treatment of the Munich Agreement in British and German Textbooks: Content Analysis and Comparison

Denisa Labischová / e-mail: denisa.labischova@osu.cz

Department of Civic, Faculty of Education, Ostrava University, Czech Republic

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*This paper presents the results of a qualitative content analysis and comparison of British and German history textbooks for secondary schools, focusing on the textbooks' treatment of the Munich Agreement. The research explored the overall concept applied to the treatment of this subject, the length of the text, the selection of factual data, the use of historical sources (including iconographic sources), types of learning tasks, the use of various didactic elements (cartograms, diagrams, timelines), and topics for problem-based and project-based teaching. The results of the analysis show that the topic of the Munich Agreement is treated much more thoroughly in the British textbooks – in terms of the quantity of information, the use of didactic resources stimulating critical thinking and argumentation skills, problem-based teaching, creative activities and inquiry-based activities; the controversial policy of appeasement lies at the centre of attention. By contrast, the German textbooks mostly restrict themselves to brief factual information, with only a limited number of educational activities.*

*Key words: subject-specific didactics; multi-perspectivity; content analysis; comparison; British and German textbooks; Munich Agreement*

## 1. Contemporary relevance of the issue and current state of research

In 2018, the Czech Republic commemorated the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signature of the Munich Agreement, which not only had a major impact on events in the former Czechoslovakia, but also made a substantial contribution to the tragic events that were to unfold throughout Europe in the subsequent years. Besides taking a scholarly historiographic view – investigating the course of events and the contemporary context based on the study of historical sources – it is also very important to examine the specific historical narratives presented by school textbooks. The manner in which history is presented to school students as part of teaching has a fundamental impact on the younger generation's perception and awareness of history, as well as influencing how they perceive and evaluate key events from European history today.

History textbooks published in various European countries present different perspectives on the same historical events and processes; there is no single, identical “shared” image of a particular event. This fact reflects the principle of multi-perspectivity developed by Robert Stradling;<sup>1</sup> in Stradling’s view, one of the most important tasks of subject-specific didactics is to understand and respect diverse evaluations of a shared past, including historical controversies and conflicts. It is therefore essential to compare the image of history depicted by Czech textbooks with teaching materials published in other countries, and to explore the key features of the presentation of historical events, the interpretation of these events, and the facts which the authors of these texts foreground and consider most salient.

Content analysis of history textbooks published in the Czech Republic and other countries (Germany, Austria, Switzerland, the UK, France, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, etc.) forms an integral part of subject-specific didactic research in the Czech Republic. During the past two decades and more, such analyses have often been conducted for international textbook committees, primarily the *Czech-German Textbook Committee* and the *Czech-Polish Working Group for School Textbooks*. Research of history textbooks covers a relatively wide range of topics, focusing primarily on the following areas:

- the image of selected European nations and their histories in Czech history textbooks; the main focus is on the Central European region and on milestone events in the shared history of border regions (e.g. the Czechoslovak-Polish dispute over the Těšín/Cieszyn region in 1919–1920);<sup>2</sup>
- the presentation of key periods of history and specific historical events and figures in history textbooks from the Czech Republic and other countries (e.g. the figure of Charles IV, chapters covering the communist era);<sup>3</sup>
- the reflection of certain social phenomena and their historical development and transformation (everyday history, gender-related topics, multiculturalism).<sup>4</sup>

The subject explored in this paper has previously been investigated by two scholarly studies. In 2002, Denisa Labischová published the results of a content

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<sup>1</sup> Stradling, R. (2003). *Multiperspektivita ve vyučování dějepisu: příručka pro učitele*. Praha: MŠMT.

<sup>2</sup> For an overview of publications on the image of European nations in history textbooks, see Gracová, B. (2007). Empirické výzkumy v didaktice dějepisu u nás, jejich potřebnost a význam. In *IX. Sjezd českých historiků*. Pardubice – Praha – Ústí nad Labem: Sdružení historiků České republiky.

<sup>3</sup> Konieccka-Śliwińska, D. – Machalek, M. (eds.) (2018). *Historické mezníky v současných polských a českých školních učebnicích*. Poznaň: Instytut historii; Gracová, B. – Tomášek, M. (eds.) (2016). *Obraz období „socialismu“ v českých a polských učebnicích*. Ostrava: Ostravská univerzita.

analysis of British and American textbooks focusing on their presentation of the history of the Bohemian Crown Lands (the territory of today's Czech Republic). The study covered developments from the early Middle Ages up to the partition of Czechoslovakia in 1993; considerable attention was devoted to the Munich crisis in 1938. The author found that the writers of textbooks published in the UK between 1995 and 2000 focused mainly on Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. In some of the textbooks, appeasement was illustrated directly using case studies taken from the situation in Czechoslovakia during 1938; students were thus able to compare and evaluate the conflicting views of various contemporary politicians and journalists, and to develop their own individual stance. From a purely quantitative perspective, the textbooks gave slightly more arguments evaluating Chamberlain's approach to the Czechoslovak crisis in a positive light, though there was a clear effort to present a relatively balanced selection of arguments both for and against his policy. The study showed that textbooks published in the UK devoted more space to the Munich Agreement than Czech secondary school history textbooks, and one positive finding of the research was that while Czech textbooks published during the second half of the 1990s were mostly restricted to a chronological presentation of factual data, the British textbooks were based mainly on the interpretation of historical sources, including learning tasks which required higher-level cognitive functions.<sup>5</sup>

The second scholarly study of direct relevance to the subject explored in this paper was presented by Zdeněk Beneš in October 2003 at an international conference in Prague entitled *The Munich Agreement – The Path to the Destruction of Democracy in Europe*. Beneš carried out a monothematic analysis of Czechoslovak and Czech history textbooks focusing on the Munich Agreement of 1938; his research explored 37 textbooks, which were analyzed and compared diachronically over the period from 1948 to 2002. The analysis produced several interesting findings. During the immediate post-war years, and during the period

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<sup>4</sup> Gracová, B. (2010). Ženská tematika na stránkách nejnovějších českých učebnic dějepisu. In *Žena jako subjekt a objekt dějepisného vyučování*. Ústí nad Labem: Univerzita Jana Evangelisty Purkyně, pp. 27–38; Gracová, B. (2006). Ženská tematika v současných českých dějepisných učebnicích. In Vaculík, J. – Němec, J. (eds.) *Problematika sociálních skupin ve výuce společenskovedních předmětů*. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, pp. 144–151; Labischová, D. (2015). Analiza genderowa brytyjskich i niemieckich podręczników historii. In *Kobieta i mężczyzna – dwa światy, jedna przestrzeń*. Warszawa: DiG, pp. 641–650; Labischová, D. (2015). Genderová dimenze zahraničních učebnic dějepisu: obsahová analýza edukačního média. *Sborník prací Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity, řada společenských věd*, 29/1, pp. 95–110.

<sup>5</sup> Labischová, D. (2002). Obraz Čechů a českých zemí v anglických a amerických dějepisných učebnicích. *Historica. Sborník prací Filozofické fakulty Ostravské univerzity*, 9/2002, pp. 151–179.

of “normalization” (the hardline political crackdown that followed the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968), the textbooks predominantly depicted the Munich Agreement as a highly traumatic development, an unforgettable act of betrayal (mainly from Hlinka’s far-right Slovak People’s Party, which “despised” the Soviet Union). However, during the second half of the 1970s, some textbooks presented a more sober, factual view of the events, taking into account the historical context (developments from 1936 onwards, including Czechoslovakia’s deepening international isolation). Since the collapse of communism in 1989, the authors of textbooks have tended to view the events of Munich primarily as a “memento”; the Czechoslovak Communist Party is no longer the focus of attention, and instead the textbooks emphasize the moral aspects of the Czechoslovak government’s acceptance of the dictates of the Munich Agreement, including the political and economic consequences that ensued from this course of action.<sup>6</sup>

## 2. Aims and methodology of the research

The aim of the research presented in this study was to determine how the circumstances surrounding the signature of the Munich Agreement in September 1938 are presented in history textbooks designed for upper secondary students in two European countries, specifically the United Kingdom and Germany. The analysis focused on the extent and scope of the presentation, the interpretation and evaluation of the events, as well as on the didactic methodologies used – such as the formulation of learning tasks and the use of iconographic materials, contemporary historical documents, explanatory diagrams, mental maps, etc. In the case of the British textbooks, it was also possible to trace changes in the content and didactic conception of the presentation since the previous research carried out in 2002.<sup>7</sup>

The methodology involved non-quantitative content analysis;<sup>8</sup> this method has also been applied in other studies with a similar focus.<sup>9</sup> The research is based primarily on a qualitative approach, analyzing the following criteria:

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<sup>6</sup> Beneš, Z. (2004). Mnichov v československých a českých učebnicích dějepisu. In Němeček, J. (ed.). *Mnichovská dohoda. Cesta k destrukci demokracie v Evropě*. Praha: Karolinum, pp. 294–302.

<sup>7</sup> Labischová, D. (2002). *Obraz Čechů a českých zemí*, op. cit.

<sup>8</sup> Gavora, P. (2000). *Úvod do pedagogického výzkumu*. Brno: Paido, p. 117.

<sup>9</sup> See the selected publications listed above.

1.	presence of separate chapters devoted to the Munich Agreement
2.	scope/length of the treatment of the Munich Agreement
3.	selection of specific factual data (dates, names etc.)
4.	overall evaluation of the causes, consequences and importance of the events
5.	absence or misrepresentation of historical information
6.	use of historical sources of various provenances
7.	choice of iconographic material
8.	use of didactic elements, e.g. cartograms, diagrams, mental maps, timelines
9.	types of learning tasks
10.	topics for problem-based, inquiry-based and project-based teaching

Criteria 1–7 cover the content of the textbooks, while criteria 8–11 concern didactic and methodological aspects. The research incorporated 10 British<sup>10</sup> and 13 German<sup>11</sup> history textbooks, mostly published in the period 2006–2014. The

<sup>10</sup> Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world. History B*. Edinburgh: Heinemann; Clayton, S. (2009). *History in Progress. 1901 to Present Day. Book 3*. Edinburgh: Heinemann; Evans, D. – Jenkins, J. (2008). *Years of the Third Reich and Post-War Germany*. London: Hodder Education; Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations: Conflict and peace in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes; Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. Twentieth Century. Depth Studies*. Cheltenham: Nelson Thornes; Kerr, J. A. (2005). *History: course notes, book I. Intermediate 2 & higher*. St. Andrews: Leckie & Leckie; McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History. International Relations since 1919*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945. GCSE Modern World History for Edexcel*. London: Hodder Murray; Wilkes, A. (2007). *GCSE History. 20<sup>th</sup> Century Studies*. Haddenham: Folens Publishers; Wilkes, A. – Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities. A World Study After 1900*. Haddenham: Folens Publishers.

<sup>11</sup> Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2008). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Gymnasium Hessen*. Braunschweig: Westermann; Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2011). *Horizonte 9/10. Geschichte Gymnasium Hamburg*. Braunschweig: Westermann; Berger, v. d. Heide, T. (2010). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3. Niedersachsen*. Berlin: Cornelsen; Berger, v. d. Heide, T. (2014). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3. Differenzierende Ausgabe*. Berlin: Cornelsen; Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2011). *Das waren Zeiten 3. Deutschland, Europa und die Welt von 1871 bis zur Gegenwart*. Bamberg: C. C. Bruckners Verlag; Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2010). *Das waren Zeiten 4. Deutschland, Europa und die Welt von 1871 bis zur Gegenwart*. Bamberg: C. C. Bruckners Verlag; Christoffer, S. (2013). *Zeitreise 4*. Stuttgart – Leipzig: Ernst Klett Verlag; Funken, W. – Koltrowitz, B. (2009). *Geschichte plus 9. Gymnasium. Ausgabe Sachsen*. Berlin: Cornelsen; Geus, E. (2011). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Realschule Bayern*. Braunschweig: Westermann; Osburg, F. – Klose, D. (2006). *Expedition Geschichte 4, Klasse 8*. Berlin: Diesterweg; Rauh, R. – Jäger, W. (2011). *Grundwissen Geschichte. Sekundarstufe II*. Berlin: Cornelsen; Regenhardt, H.-O. (2014). *Forum Geschichte 9. Vom Imperialismus bis zur Gegenwart*. Berlin: Cornelsen; Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis. Band 4*. Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag.

selection of textbooks was guided by the availability of titles in the library of the *Georg-Eckert-Institut/Leibnitz-Institut für internationale Schulbuchforschung* in Braunschweig, Germany. The textbooks were designed for students at upper secondary level; in the case of the German texts, the selection also attempted to cover a relatively large number of federal provinces (Länder), as each province has its own education system and a particular publishing house issues different (regionally specific) sets of textbooks for use in different provinces.

## 2. Results of the content analysis of British and German history textbooks

### 2. 1 The British textbooks

The British textbooks analyzed for this study covered a relatively wide range of different timeframes; this reflects the relatively low level of central control over the content of textbooks in the United Kingdom. Some of the textbooks focus on the period from 1901 to the present day, or from 1919 to the present day; others cover only the period from the early 1920s to the end of the Second World War, though one of the textbooks focuses solely on the narrow period from 1938 to 1945. This wide degree of variation is reflected in the varying degrees of detail with which the events surrounding the Munich Agreement are presented; most of the textbooks contain a relatively lengthy chapter devoted purely to the Munich crisis (6–8 pages)<sup>12</sup>, while others limit their treatment to just two pages.<sup>13</sup> However, all the analyzed publications assign considerable importance to the Munich Agreement and the circumstances surrounding it, and in most cases it forms the subject of a separate chapter – or at least a subchapter presenting a broader range of political developments in Europe during the late 1930s. Analyzing the titles of the chapters, two trends are evident: either the chapter title includes the word Munich or refers to the Czechoslovak situation in 1938 (*Munich and the destruction of Czechoslovakia*<sup>14</sup>, *The Czech Crisis, 1938*<sup>15</sup>, *The Sudetenland, September–October 1938*<sup>16</sup>), or the title refers to the policy of appeasement (*Appeasement and the countdown to conflict*<sup>17</sup>, *Why did Chamberlain's policy of appeasement fail to prevent the outbreak of war in 1939?*<sup>18</sup>, *Was appeasement the right policy?*<sup>19</sup>).

<sup>12</sup> All the British textbooks with the exception of the two listed in footnote 13.

<sup>13</sup> Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world*, op. cit.; Clayton, S. (2009). *History in Progress*, op. cit.

<sup>14</sup> McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., pp. 68.

<sup>15</sup> Evans, D., Jenkins, J. (2008). *Years of the Third Reich*, op. cit., pp. 391.

<sup>16</sup> Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. Twentieth Century*, op. cit., pp. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Wilkes, A., Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities*, op. cit., pp. 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations*, op. cit., pp. 37.

<sup>19</sup> Clayton, S. (2009). *History in Progress*, op. cit., pp. 34.

In terms of the selection of factual data, most authors note the existence of a large German population in the Sudetenland; the most frequent figure given is 3 million Germans living in these border regions of Czechoslovakia (though in one case the figure of 3.5 million is given<sup>20</sup>). Factual information is generally presented in a concise manner, listing the names of historical figures, precise dates and detailed descriptions of events. These descriptions focus more on the actions of the great powers than on the situation within Czechoslovakia itself. For example, only three of the analyzed textbooks give the name of the Czechoslovak President (Edvard Beneš), and he is mentioned primarily in connection with Czechoslovakia's alliance with the UK, France and the USSR, as a result of which "Hitler knew that taking over the Sudetenland would not be easy."<sup>21</sup> A more frequently mentioned figure from Czechoslovakia's political scene (mentioned 6 times in total) is Konrad Henlein, the leader of the Sudeten German Party (SDP). The publication *Years of the Third Reich* represents an exception among the British textbooks in the volume of factual information it presents; due to its relatively narrow focus, the book presents a very detailed description of the Sudeten crisis, whose scope and volume of information (precise dates, names and places) are comparable to Czech secondary school textbooks. In order to enable students to understand the wider context, this textbook presents the establishment of the independent Czechoslovak Republic after the First World War, consisting of the provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, part of Silesia, Slovakia and Subcarpathian Ruthenia. It then describes the democratic system of the new state, addresses its problematic ethnic composition (with a particular focus on the situation of the Sudeten Germans), traces the foundation of Henlein's Sudeten German Party in 1933 and its success in the 1935 elections (winning 44 parliamentary seats), the so-called "Karlsbad demands" of April 1938, the growing pressure exerted on Czechoslovakia by Hitler, the Runciman Mission in August 1938, the meetings in Berchtesgaden and Bad Godesberg, the negotiations in Munich on September 29, 1938, and the consequences of the Munich Agreement for Czechoslovakia – including the loss of 2 859 000 hectares of land and 30% of the country's iron and steel production.<sup>22</sup>

All the analyzed textbooks focus on Chamberlain's policy of appeasement. Some of the texts situate this issue within a chronological account of events during the latter half of the 1930s, while others devote a separate chapter to appeasement, offering a thorough explanation of the policy including citations from historical sources and evaluations by historians. For example, the textbook *History: course notes* states that although most historians consider Germany's aggression to have

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<sup>20</sup> Ferriby, D., *History B. International Relations*, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Evans, D. – Jenkins, J. (2008). *Years of the Third Reich and Post-War Germany*, pp. 391–396.

been the main cause of the Second World War, some experts hold the opinion that the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain bears a large part of the responsibility due to his policy of appeasement, which ultimately emboldened Hitler. The authors of this textbook note that this policy remains controversial even today, and is still a subject of debate among experts.<sup>23</sup> The clearest presentation of the policy of appeasement is given in the publication *Modern world*, which presents four arguments in favour of the policy (sympathy for Germany, as some people in Britain felt the conditions of the Treaty of Versailles were too harsh; a desire for peace after the experiences of the First World War; the idea of protecting Czechoslovakia and Poland from the threat of Stalinist communism; and the need to gain time to equip the British armed forces, which were not yet ready for war) and three arguments against appeasement (Chamberlain's underestimation of Hitler and his conviction that appeasement would satisfy the Führer and ensure he made no additional future demands; the moral problem inherent in violating international agreements; the squandering of an excellent opportunity to stop Hitler before he became too powerful). However, all these issues are presented in the form of a secondary explanatory text (the arguments are not supported by specific source materials), and prominence is given to arguments justifying the policy of appeasement.<sup>24</sup> A similar didactic approach (i.e. a secondary text not accompanied by historical sources) is used in the textbook *Technology, War and Identities*, though in this case the arguments for and against appeasement are given equal weight (4 for, 4 against).<sup>25</sup>

However, the analysis reveals that with the above-mentioned exceptions, most of the British textbooks use authentic historical sources, which are systematically and thoughtfully integrated with various (often conflicting) interpretations of appeasement. Based on citations from contemporary politicians, journalists and other historical figures, as well as the opinions of present-day historians, students have the opportunity to gain a multi-perspectival view of the events of Munich, and to compare, assess and evaluate the various arguments in order to form an opinion on how convincing these arguments are. For example, in the textbook *History B. International Relations*, students read and compare excerpts from a speech given by Hitler in 1938, Chamberlain's radio broadcasts of September 22 and October 1, 1938, commentaries in the press (the Daily Express on September 30, 1938 and the Yorkshire Post in December 1938), Churchill's speech to the House of Commons in October 1938, and expert interpretations by the American historian William Shirer, written in 1959.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Kerr, J. A. (2005). *History: course notes*, op. cit., p. 57.

<sup>24</sup> Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world*, op. cit., pp. 45–46.

<sup>25</sup> Wilkes, A. – Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities*, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>26</sup> Ferriby, D., *History B. International Relations*, op. cit., p. 31.

Besides textual sources, the analyzed textbooks also feature iconographic sources, among which historical photographs play a leading role. The photograph of Chamberlain returning to London after the Munich negotiations at the end of September 1938 is used repeatedly; indeed, the textbook *The World at War 1938–1945* displays this photograph as the main image on its front cover.<sup>27</sup> Neville Chamberlain is also pictured in separate portrait photographs showing him as a statesman embodying the policy of appeasement.<sup>28</sup> Only one of the textbooks reproduces a photograph from the Munich conference itself, showing the German, Italian and British representatives at the negotiating table (though the French representative Édouard Daladier is absent).<sup>29</sup> The response to the political situation that followed the Munich Agreement among Czechoslovaks on the one hand and Sudeten Germans on the other hand is represented in a photograph of a weeping woman, her face expressing great sadness, giving the Hitler salute to the German troops arriving in the Czechoslovak border regions in October 1938,<sup>30</sup> and in a photograph of the German population enthusiastically welcoming the troops (girls in German folk costumes presenting the soldiers with bouquets of flowers).<sup>31</sup> Only one textbook shows these two photographs side by side in order to emphasize the contrasting moods of the two parts of the population.<sup>32</sup>

The British didactic tradition in history teaching typically uses historical caricatures (political cartoons) as an aid to understanding. However, only half of the textbooks use this specific type of historical source in their treatment of the Munich crisis. All the caricatures selected by the authors present a critical, mocking attitude to the short-termist policy of appeasement applied by the British and French representatives at Munich, which was based on their belief that the concessions would satisfy Hitler, and that small Central and Eastern European countries could thus be “sacrificed” to ensure peace in Western Europe.<sup>33</sup> Czechoslovakia itself is the focus of two caricatures: one is the well-known cartoon

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<sup>27</sup> Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world*, op. cit., p. 44; Ferriby, D., *History B. International Relations*, op. cit., p. 39; Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*.

<sup>28</sup> McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., p. 72; Wilkes, A. – Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities*, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>29</sup> McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., p. 70.

<sup>30</sup> Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 14; McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., p. 68;

<sup>31</sup> Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 14; McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., p. 72; Wilkes, A. – Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities*, op. cit., p. 71.

<sup>32</sup> Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> McAleavy, T. (2002). *Twentieth Century History*, op. cit., pp. 69 a 73; Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world*, op. cit., pp. 46; Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations: Conflict and peace in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 40.

by the British artist David Low “*What, no chair for me?*”<sup>34</sup>, depicting Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier and Chamberlain seated above a globe and below a map of Czechoslovakia, while Stalin is left standing next to them (published in the *Evening Standard* on September 30, 1938), and the other is a cartoon by the same artist, entitled “*What’s Czechoslovakia to me, anyway?*”, showing a British citizen sitting in a chair and reading about the Munich crisis in a newspaper.<sup>35</sup>

By far the most frequently used type of iconographic material in the British textbooks is the cartogram (i.e. maps depicting specific historical situations, in which geographical content is reduced in favour of other illustrative content). The large majority of the analyzed textbooks contain such images, but there are substantial differences among the individual cartograms. The most prominent differences are in the geographical scope of the maps; some present the overall geopolitical situation in Europe as a diachronic series tracing key developments in the second half of the 1930s (the expansion of Hitler’s Germany in 1933–1939, including milestone events such as Germany’s rearmament from 1933 onwards, the occupation of the demilitarized Ruhr region in 1936, the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, the occupation of the Sudetenland following the Munich Agreement in October 1938, the occupation of the remaining parts of Czechoslovakia in March 1939, and the invasion of Poland in September 1939)<sup>36</sup>, while other cartograms focus purely on Czechoslovakia after the Munich Agreement, depicting the territories lost to Germany (the Sudetenland).<sup>37</sup> The cartograms also differ in the level of detail they present,<sup>38</sup> as well as in their factual accuracy (Fig. 1 shows considerable distortions).

<sup>34</sup> Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. Twentieth Century*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>35</sup> Kerr, J. A. (2005). *History: course notes*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> Wilkes, A. – Ball, J. (2009). *Technology, War and Identities*, op. cit., p. 74; Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations: Conflict and peace in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 36; Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>37</sup> Brodtkin, A. (2009). *Modern world*, op. cit., p. 43; Kerr, J. A. (2005). *History: course notes*, op. cit., p. 88; Evans, D. – Jenkins, J. (2008). *Years of the Third Reich and Post-War Germany*, p. 393.

<sup>38</sup> The least detailed cartogram is published in Ferriby, D., *History B. International Relations*, op. cit., p. 30. It shows only the borders between European countries; the only cities shown are Munich, Danzig (Gdańsk), Vienna and Berlin; the only information on Czechoslovakia is the word “Sudetenland” in the northern border regions, which are not clearly delineated.

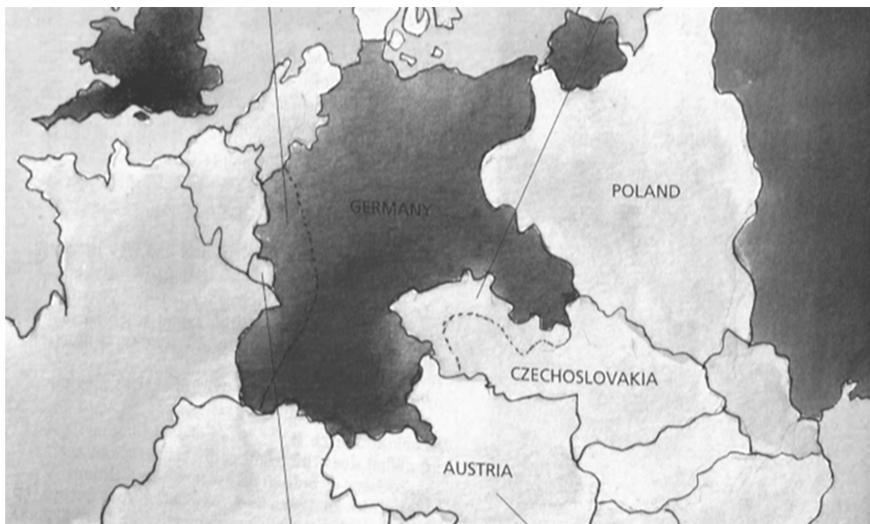


Fig. 1. A distorted presentation of cartographic information (substantial distortion of the international borders in Central Europe in the late 1930s).<sup>39</sup>

Some of the textbooks also incorporate statistical data. These include the results of public opinion surveys conducted on samples of British citizens in March and October 1938 inquiring whether they would be in favour of Britain offering assistance if Czechoslovak territory were to be occupied by Hitler's Germany (the majority of respondents were not in favour) and asking whether they believed Hitler's assurance that he had no more territorial ambitions in Europe (92% of respondents did not believe him).<sup>40</sup> Students can also work with the results of two surveys conducted in 1937 asking respondents whether they supported global disarmament (most were in favour) and asking whether they would be prepared to volunteer for military service if war were to break out (most rejected this idea).<sup>41</sup>

The British textbooks only sporadically feature didactic elements used to organize key factual information and to highlight and systematize core concepts – such as diagrams, mental maps and timelines. Only one of the textbooks contains a mental map exploring the central concept of *appeasement*, to which eleven conceptually related statements are appended (e.g. that France in the 1930s was

<sup>39</sup> Wilkes, A. (2007). *GCSE History*, op. cit., p. 196.

<sup>40</sup> Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations: Conflict and peace in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>41</sup> Wilkes, A. (2007). *GCSE History*, op. cit., p. 199.

weak, that there were large German minorities living in Czechoslovakia and Poland, that British public opinion was anti-war, that the Treaty of Versailles was too harsh on Germany, etc.).<sup>42</sup> Only one textbook contains a timeline tracing the global path to war, in the form of a bumpy road with collapsing bridges and milestones in 1931 (the Japanese invasion of Manchuria), 1933 (when Germany walked out of a disarmament conference and withdrew from the League of Nations), 1934 (Hitler's first, unsuccessful, attempt to annex Austria), 1935 (Germany's announcement of its rearmament, Italy's invasion of Ethiopia), 1936 (the re-militarization of the Ruhr, the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War), 1937 (the bombing of Guernica, Hitler's detailed plan to conquer Russia and Eastern Europe), 1938 (the Anschluss of Austria, the annexation of the Sudetenland), and 1939 (the occupation of the remaining territory of Czechoslovakia, the invasion of Poland).<sup>43</sup>

Learning tasks and their formulation are undoubtedly the most important tool for managing the learning process. The analysis shows that a very dominant role in the British textbooks is played by tasks seeking to activate students' higher cognitive functions rather than merely reproducing the material taught. In all the analyzed textbooks, a central role is played by questions which encourage students to evaluate arguments for and against the policy of appeasement based on historical sources and the opinions of historians. There are also tasks related to the cartograms and other iconographic materials presented in the textbooks (for example, students are asked to explain how the Anschluss of Austria helped to strengthen Germany's position and which country was most threatened by the Anschluss).<sup>44</sup> A somewhat surprising finding is that although some of the textbooks include caricatures (political cartoons), none of them presents a systematic list of questions encouraging students to analyze the caricatures in detail and to interpret them (including an interpretation of the artist's intentions and political stance). There are also questions which develop critical thinking, primarily based on comparing and analyzing photographs (e.g. students are asked to judge the appropriateness of the caption below a photograph of a weeping woman giving the Nazi salute, "Inhabitants of the Sudetenland welcome the German troops" – a caption which was published in several sources)<sup>45</sup>.

Among the educational activities supporting students' creativity in the analyzed British textbooks are an activity in which students create five different newspaper headlines about the signature of the Munich Agreement – one for

<sup>42</sup> Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 12.

<sup>43</sup> Kerr, J. A. (2005). *History: course notes*, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>44</sup> Ferriby, D. (2009). *History B. International Relations: Conflict and peace in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>45</sup> Waugh, S. – Wright, J. (2007). *The World at War 1938–1945*, op. cit., p. 14.

a British newspaper supportive of the UK government, and others for a Czechoslovak newspaper, a German newspaper, a British newspaper critical of the UK government, and an American newspaper (the USA was neutral at the time).<sup>46</sup>

## 2. 2 The German textbooks

It is evident at first glance that the German textbooks devote considerably less space to the Munich Agreement than their British counterparts. Very frequently the topic is incorporated into a wider-ranging chapter tracing the development of Germany's foreign policy between 1933 and 1938 or 1939 (*Nationalsozialistische Außenpolitik 1933–1938*<sup>47</sup>, *NS–Außenpolitik bis 1939*<sup>48</sup> etc.), in which the treatment of the Munich crisis is restricted to just two or three paragraphs. An exception is the textbook *Von...bis 4*, which presents a somewhat more detailed description of the situation in Czechoslovakia in 1938, covering an entire page of text in the subchapter *Erst das Sudetenland...*, part of the chapter entitled *Die Kriegsgefahr ist akut*.<sup>49</sup> However, some sets of textbooks present the Munich Agreement even more briefly than the other German texts; the coverage of the Agreement may be restricted to a single sentence,<sup>50</sup> or it may form part of a table setting out the key steps in Germany's foreign policy from 1933 to 1939 (the table in question contains 11 historical events).<sup>51</sup>

With regard to the selection of factual information, the main focus of attention is on the position of the German community in the Sudetenland. Most of the textbooks do not give a specific figure for the number of Germans living in Czechoslovakia; there are four exceptions, which cite figures ranging from 3 to 3.5 million.<sup>52</sup> Some of the textbooks emphasize the demands for self-determination voiced by Germans living in the border regions of Czechoslovakia, pointing out that many of them were inclined towards anti-Czech Nazi propaganda because minority communities in Czechoslovakia had restricted rights.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Wilkes, A. (2007). *GCSE History*, op. cit., p. 197.

<sup>47</sup> Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2011). *Horizonte 9/10*, op. cit., p. 194.

<sup>48</sup> Geus, E. (2011). *Horizonte 9*, op. cit., p. 164.

<sup>49</sup> Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>50</sup> Christoffer, S. (2013). *Zeitreise 4*, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>51</sup> Rauh, R. – Jäger, W. (2011). *Grundwissen Geschichte*, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>52</sup> Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2010). *Das waren Zeiten 4*, op. cit., p. 158 – 3 million; Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2011). *Horizonte 9/10*, op. cit., p. 195 – 3.2 million; Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 136 – 3.5 million, Osburg, F. – Klose, D. (2006). *Expedition Geschichte 4*, op. cit., p. 52 – 3.5 million.

<sup>53</sup> Christoffer, S. (2013). *Zeitreise 4*, op. cit., p. 72; Osburg, F. – Klose, D. (2006). *Expedition Geschichte 4*, op. cit., p. 52; Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2010). *Das waren Zeiten 4*, op. cit., p. 158.

Most of the analyzed German textbooks place the events leading up to the signature of the Munich Agreement within the context of the policy of appeasement pursued by Britain and France; only one textbook mentions the existence of the Berlin-funded Sudeten German Party, the mouthpiece for the Sudeten Germans' demands for autonomy.<sup>54</sup> Some textbooks give the precise date of the signature of the Agreement (September 29, 1938),<sup>55</sup> but the description of the events surrounding the Agreement is generally brief, bordering on skeletal.

As has already been mentioned, the only major exception to the relatively scant coverage of the Munich Agreement is the publication *Von...bis 4*, which gives a much more detailed account of the course of the historical events. It mentions the Runciman Mission (though without mentioning Lord Runciman by name), President Edvard Beneš's declaration of martial law in areas with a majority German population in 1938 (it is the only textbook to mention Beneš by name), and the discussions between Hitler and Chamberlain – here, surprisingly, although Chamberlain's fear of war is mentioned, it is not situated within the context of the policy of appeasement (indeed, unlike the other German textbooks, this publication does not mention the concept of appeasement at all). The authors further state that after the signature of the Munich Agreement, the Czech population was expelled from the border regions, Slovakia gained autonomy, more rights were granted to Poles and Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia, and Emil Hácha became the new President (it is the only German textbook to feature all this information).<sup>56</sup>

Partly due to the relatively small quantity of factual information in the German textbooks, there are no cases of factual inaccuracies. The textbooks generally do not present a synthetic evaluation of the Munich crisis; only the textbook *Horizonte* states that it still remains a matter of debate whether it was unavoidable for other countries to negotiate with Hitler to the detriment of Czechoslovakia, or whether they should have taken a much tougher stance. This evaluation demonstrates the differences between regionally specific variants of the same textbooks; the versions of *Horizonte* published for use in Hessen, Hamburg and Bavaria all share the same factual explanation, but the Bavarian version lacks the above-mentioned evaluation of the policy of appeasement.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2010). *Das waren Zeiten 4*, op. cit., p. 158.

<sup>55</sup> Funken, W. – Koltrowitz, B. (2009). *Geschichte plus 9*, op. cit., p. 110; Berger, v. d. Heide, T. (2010). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3*, op. cit., p. 43; Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>56</sup> Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 136.

<sup>57</sup> Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2008). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Gymnasium Hessen*, op. cit., p. 131; *Horizonte 9/10. Geschichte Gymnasium Hamburg*, op. cit., p. 195; Geus, E. (2011). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Realschule Bayern*, op. cit., p. 165.

The German textbooks include a relatively small number of historical sources pertaining directly to the Munich crisis – whether textual documents or iconographic materials – and most of the textbooks lack such sources entirely. Only one textbook gives students the opportunity to analyze, interpret and compare foreign-language historical sources (written in English), specifically an excerpt from the Manchester Guardian newspaper with the headline “London’s welcome” (October 1, 1938), informing readers of Chamberlain’s return to Britain, and part of Churchill’s speech delivered on October 5, 1938 (“Czechoslovakia recedes into the darkness...”).<sup>58</sup>

More frequently, the German textbooks include photographs – though these are generally not integrated with the learning tasks, instead performing a solely illustrative function. They include the well-known photograph of Chamberlain at the airfield on his return from Munich (September 30, 1938)<sup>59</sup> or a photograph of the German troops entering the Sudetenland (October 1, 1938) accompanied by a brief text stating that the German population in the Sudetenland felt economically and politically disadvantaged, which was the reason why Hitler’s agitation fell on fertile ground.<sup>60</sup> Other types of iconographic sources, such as caricatures (political cartoons) or political posters – which are frequently used in German history textbooks – are not featured in the sections dealing with the Munich Agreement.

Similarly, most of the analyzed textbooks lack geographical information in their cartograms. Four publications contain maps showing the expansion of German territory up to the outbreak of the Second World War, delineating the Sudeten territories acquired by Germany.<sup>61</sup> The textbook *Von...bis 4* is the only German textbook to include a separate cartogram showing Czechoslovakia in the second half of the 1930s, depicting the national communities living within the state and giving population numbers (7.2 million Czechs, 3.5 million Germans, 2.5 million Slovaks, plus numbers of Hungarians, Ruthenians and Poles).<sup>62</sup> However, here too the cartograms are not integrated with learning tasks for students which would provide a didactic guide for working with these sources.

With regard to learning tasks related to the Munich crisis, six of the analyzed textbooks at least contain several questions and tasks. Students are asked to

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<sup>58</sup> Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2011). *Das waren Zeiten 3*, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.; Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2008). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Gymnasium Hessen*, op. cit., p. 131; *Horizonte 9/10. Geschichte Gymnasium Hamburg*, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>60</sup> Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2008). *Horizonte 9. Geschichte Gymnasium Hessen*, op. cit., p. 131; *Horizonte 9/10. Geschichte Gymnasium Hamburg*, op. cit., p. 195.

<sup>61</sup> v. d. Heide, T. (2010). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3*, op. cit., p. 42; Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2011). *Das waren Zeiten 3*, op. cit., p. 166; v. d. Heide, T. (2014). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3*, op. cit., p. 42; Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> Simianer, N. (2011). *Von...bis*, op. cit., p. 137.

express an opinion on whether the policy of appeasement was justified,<sup>63</sup> to explain why most Germans living in Czechoslovakia supported Hitler's policies,<sup>64</sup> to compare the different positions of Chamberlain and Churchill on the basis of sources,<sup>65</sup> to draw a timeline and mark on it the main steps in Germany's foreign policy between 1933 and 1939, and to explain the relevance of the Treaty of Versailles.<sup>66</sup> In rare cases, the textbooks encourage multi-perspectivity and creative activities, asking students to form groups and write newspaper reports on the annexation of the Sudetenland from the perspective of Czechoslovakia, Germany and Britain.<sup>67</sup> The principle of multi-perspectivity also forms the basis of a discussion topic, as students are asked to speak about various statements by Hitler, Chamberlain and Stalin and to explain the situation from the Czech point of view in accordance with the statement "we were betrayed"<sup>68</sup>

### Conclusion

Present-day textbook didactics is based on the principle that there does not exist any single view of historical events that is shared by all European countries, and that historical narratives in different countries are substantially influenced both by a country's historiographic and didactic traditions and also by its specific historical experience. This principle is clearly reflected in the findings of the research presented in this paper. Summarizing the results of the content analysis and comparison, it can be stated that the British and German history textbooks display substantial differences in their presentation of the Munich crisis and the Munich Agreement. British textbooks devote considerable space to this topic – often a separate chapter of up to eight pages. Here the central concept is the policy of appeasement, which continues to be controversial even today; the British textbooks also include numerous historical sources (both textual and iconographic) presenting arguments for and against this policy. Students have access to varied didactic elements encouraging multi-perspective interpretation, comparison, evaluation, critical thinking, discussion and argumentation, as well as creative activities (e.g. writing newspaper headlines). By contrast, the German textbooks present the events of Munich solely within the context of Nazi Germany's foreign policy ambitions, mostly restricting their treatment to just two or three paragraphs of text and presenting only very brief information focusing

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<sup>63</sup> Baumgärtner, U. – Weigand, W. (2008). *Horizonte 9*, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>64</sup> Heide v. d., T. (2010). *Entdecken und Verstehen 3*, op. cit., p. 42.

<sup>65</sup> Brückner, D. – Focke, H. (2011). *Das waren Zeiten 3*, op. cit., p. 167.

<sup>66</sup> Christoffer, S. (2013). *Zeitreise 4*, op. cit., p. 73.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Osburg, F. – Klose, D. (2006). *Expedition Geschichte 4*, op. cit., p. 42.

mainly on the demands of the Sudeten Germans. The German textbooks likewise contain only a limited number of historical sources, didactic elements, learning tasks and questions for discussion. The findings of the analysis indicate that the authors of the British and German textbooks assign different levels of importance to the situation in Czechoslovakia during 1938 within the broader context of European history, and their treatments of these events accentuate different dimensions and contextual factors.