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U.S. Diplomatic Correspondence on the Destruction of Czechoslovakia, Spring 1939

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1. January 26, 1939 *The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

760F.62/1911:Telegram

*The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
Praha, January 26, 1939 5 p.m. [Received January 26-2: 20 p.m.]*

7. I visited the Foreign Minister yesterday. In contrast with his appearance at the end of December he seemed worn and dispirited but this may have been due to the fact that he had not been well and carried out his recent trip to Berlin despite a high fever.

The Reichs Chancellor, he said, had expressed himself as dissatisfied with Czech attitude toward several matters principally the Jews, the press, the army and the German minority. Hitler had said that he would not be content, until every Jew had been driven out of Germany and that he thought that Czechoslovakia, if it wished to show its loyalty to Germany and establish proper relations with it, should pursue a like course instead. No drastic measures had been taken against the Jews and many of them still occupied high positions in the Government as they had under Beneš. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had replied that it was absolutely impossible for Czechoslovakia to pursue toward the Jews the same course which had been pursued in Germany. Hitler's reply had been that he was not telling Czechoslovakia what to do but that if the Jewish question were not settled to Germany's satisfaction Czechoslovakia would have to abide by the consequences. The bulk of Hitler's delineations had been in relation to the Jews and he had made it clear that until that question was settled no satisfactory relations could be established between Germany and Czechoslovakia. The Government was now considering this matter.

Hitler had also asked that the Czechoslovak Army be reduced and that the country agree to be neutralized or at least to place itself in much the position of Holland and Denmark. Germany, Hitler had said, had no desire ever to attack either of those countries and would have the same attitude toward Czechoslovakia if she should reduce her army and bring herself into harmony with the policies of the Reich. In response to my question the

Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Hitler positively did not want the Czechoslovak Army enlarged or to utilize it to supplement the German Army.

Another demand of Hitler had been that the Germans now in Czechoslovakia should have the right to develop their National Socialist philosophy in this country without hindrance.

Unless these things should be done it would be impossible for Hitler to guarantee boundaries and establish satisfactory relations with Czechoslovakia.

In response to my question the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that Germany had not asked for a customs union and that in fact Dr. Ritter, connected with Foreign Office, had told him positively that Germany had no intention of doing so. The Minister for Foreign Affairs added that Germany is this country's largest buyer and that she wants to buy more but frank]y says that she will pay only in German goods and she wants to enter into an understanding as to the precise goods which are to be accepted in payment.

It is interesting to note that the Minister for Foreign Affairs' return has been followed by the liquidation of a number of Communist labor unions and the suppression of the newspaper which was the organ of the pro-Beneš legionnaire group.

-Carr

2. February 1, 1939 *The Chargé in Germany (Gilbert) to the Secretary of State*

760F.62/1914: Telegram

The Chargé in Germany (Gilbert) to the Secretary of State
Berlin, February 1, 1939-2 p. m.

[Received February 1-12:03 p. m.]

83.1. The Czechoslovak Government has informed Germany in a note which has been made public that it will permit the activities of the National Socialist Foreign Organization among Germans in Czechoslovakia.

2. The Czechoslovak Minister informs me that in the course of recent discussions here with German officials the question arose as to what would be Czechoslovakia's future attitude toward the Jewish question. Czechoslovakia took the position that it could not resort to anti-Semitic action owing to the grave effects that foreign boycotts would have on its difficult trade position. This standpoint was accepted by the German Government.

-Gilbert

3. March 10, 1939 *The Chargé in Germany (Gilbert) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/600: Telegram

*The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State
Praha, March 10, 1939*

18. According to an official communiqué broadcast here this morning, President Hacha has dismissed the entire Slovak Cabinet with the exception of Teplansky, Minister of Finance, and Joseph Sivak, Minister of Education, both of whom are moderate members of the Slovak Party. Sidor remains Deputy Prime Minister in the Central Government. At the same time it is stated that the Central Government has assured Slovakia financial assistance for economic reconstruction.

This change follows closely upon the attempt within the past week (see my dispatch 345 sent by air mail this morning) to settle differences between the Slovak and the Central Government hinging chiefly upon the question of financial assistance to Slovakia and its constitutional status within the state. The action is claimed to have been taken in full agreement with all responsible Slovak authorities are said to realize that the existence of Slovakia can be secured only within the outline of the present Czechoslovak Republic (as declared by the Slovak Government on Saturday) and the Pittsburgh Agreement and therefore answers the program of the Hlinka Party.

At the request of the President of Czechoslovakia, Sokol, speaker Slovak Diet, has come to Praha and is discussing the formation of a new Slovak government. Sivak en route to Rome as delegate of the Slovak Government to the Papal coronation has been recalled to Praha. Meanwhile Teplansky is in charge of the Government in Bratislava.

The changes seem to eliminate most of those personages who were furthering a separatist movement and who were reputed to be carrying on direct negotiations with Berlin. Moreover, the changes would seem to represent the Central Government's conditions for the financial aid essential to repair the large deficit in the Slovak budget and indicate a stronger attitude which it is presumed must have been taken with the actual or tacit approval of Berlin. The Foreign Minister told me yesterday that Germany is not supporting separatist activities in Slovakia, although I learn from other non-governmental sources which I consider reliable that the secessionist policy has been actively encouraged from Vienna if not from Berlin.

The dismissals seem to have been precipitated by propaganda in favor of Slovak independence carried on by Tuka and Slovak propaganda chief Mach, and the increasing disorder in Slovakia culminating in disturbances at various points in the province yesterday. In neither case was the Slovak Government strong enough to exercise the necessary control and it became imperative that drastic measures be taken. The dismissed Ministers and Mach and Tuka are reported to be under detention in Bratislava and public buildings there are occupied by the military. Order is said to prevail.

-Carr

4. March 14, 1939 *The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/614

The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State
March 14, 1939-2 p. m.

166. Developments during the last 12 hours indicate that the Germans intend to take decisive action in connection with the Slovakian crisis.

It looks now as though this intervention may consist (1) of a military occupation not only of Slovakia and Ruthenia but possibly also Bohemia and Moravia or (2) the possibility of setting up an independent Slovakia and Ruthenia under German protectorate. While the development toward the crisis appears to be as grave as those preceding the occupation of Austria and the Sudeten area the reaction on the part of the Western powers appears not to be serious.

The British Counselor, who returned from London today, states that the British Foreign Office is inclined to regard any move by the Germans in Czechoslovakia with calmness and will advise the British Government against assuming a threatening attitude when in fact it contemplates doing nothing. He stated in short that "the British Government were reconciled to a possibly extreme German action in Czechoslovakia". The British Embassy has no information as to what Hitler intends.

Troop movements identified indicate German military action in force in which possibly 40 divisions will participate. Military opinion in Berlin is divided as to whether the Poles will do nothing or attempt to occupy Ruthenia.

-Geist

5. March 14, 1939 *The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/626

The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State
Paris, March 14, 1939-7 p. m.

480. I called on Bonnet (French Minister of Foreign Affairs) this evening to ask for information with regard to the situation in Slovakia. He read to me a telegram which he had just received from Coulondre, French Ambassador in Berlin. Coulondre said that he

had called on Weisz"cker today. Weisz"cker had said that there were 12 to 14 German divisions on the Czech frontier. The German Government considered the Government of M. Tiso the only legal government of Slovakia and had warned the Czechoslovak Government not to interfere with its operations. No ultimatum had yet been sent to the Czechoslovak Government.

The British ChargÈ d'Affaires in Berlin also saw Weisz"cker today and his impression was that the Germans did not intend to march into the territories controlled by the Czechoslovak Government.

On the other hand, the French Minister in Praha had telegraphed that both he and the Government in Praha believed that a German attack on the Czechoslovak Army was imminent. The Germans desired to destroy all power of resistance of the Czechoslovaks and for this purpose desired to destroy completely the Czechoslovak Army.

Bonnet said that he personally did not believe that Germany would go this far at once.

While I was with Bonnet he telephoned to Daladier and consulted him with regard to the course that France should pursue, giving him the information recorded above.

Daladier and Bonnet decided that Bonnet should send immediately an instruction to Coulondre in Berlin ordering him to go at once to the German Foreign Office and to state that present German actions were in entire disaccord with the Munich agreements and that the French Government would regard most seriously any entry of German troops into the territories now controlled by the Czechoslovak Government Coulondre was given discretion as to the wording of his remarks even to the point of being authorized to make them in the form of asking for information.

Bonnet said that the British Government had been in contact with him this afternoon and that the British simply did not know what to do.

I asked Bonnet what action would be taken by the French Government if in spite of Coulondre's *demarche* German troops should enter Czech territories. He said he had no idea, which is quite true.

-Bullitt

6. March 15, 1939 The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State

860F.00/657

Memorandum of Trans-Atlantic Telephone Conversation Between the Ambassador in France (Bullitt) and the Acting Secretary of State

[Washington] March 15, 1939-3:20 p.m.

Mr. Welles: What is happening today?

Mr. Bullitt: I have just seen Bonnet and the German Ambassador handed him half an hour ago a note from his Government saying that since everything which had happened had happened at the request of the Czech Government which was unable to preserve order, and since he had taken possession of the territory at the request of the Czech Government, there was no cause for France to get excited about anything. He said he received this note and made no comment of any kind. He saw him for just about two minutes because I was waiting to go in myself. In general the news of what had happened was not published until this afternoon because it happened too late for the early morning papers and the reaction is just beginning, but the people over here in general are completely stunned by these repeated blows. I do not know how pronounced the reaction will be, press reaction, I mean. There is the most intense and violent private feeling. I wanted to ask you if there was a possibility that we might have something to say.

Mr. Welles: I spoke with the President this morning and also gave him your telegram. He has decided that he is not going to say anything at this time; and with regard to neutrality legislation, since there is every prospect that that will be coming along satisfactorily in the immediate future, he does not want to tie that up with this.

Mr. Bullitt: Is the reaction of the country as intense as I have been led to believe?

Mr. Welles: The reaction is exactly what you could expect, but at the same time there is a very definite feeling, so far as I can see from the press, that there is nothing personal, intimately personal, about it. It is a reaction to something horrifying and shocking but not personally connected, and from the impressions I get-I was up two hours and a half with the Foreign Relations Committee this morning the impressions that I get are that it would be very much better not to link this up with neutrality legislation since I think that will be coming along in very satisfactory form.

7. March 15, 1939 *The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/645: Telegram

The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State

Berlin, March 15, 1939-3 p.m.

172. I saw Dr. Woermann of the Foreign Office this morning and informed him that I had noted in the press the Chancellor's proclamation and the agreement between the authorities of Czechoslovakia and the Reich and the newspaper reports of other events now taking place in Czechoslovakia and requested whatever information he could give

concerning these matters. Dr. Woermann stated that he was not in a position to give any definite information with regard to the status of Czechoslovakia beyond what had appeared in the press and that he thought decisions would be rapidly made and the status clarified in several days. He informed me that instructions had been given to allow diplomatic missions and consulates in Praha to continue to communicate with their governments; that Herr Ritter had been appointed diplomatic liaison officer whose headquarters would be at the German Legation in Praha.

I brought up the question of the protection of American citizens, their property and their interests in Czechoslovakia, and Dr. Woermann said that he considered the commanders of the German forces in Moravia and in Bohemia would be responsible in those districts; he was unable to make any statement with regard to the responsible authorities in Slovakia or Ruthenia with respect to the protection of properties of foreigners. He believed that any questions arising could be discussed with Herr Ritter in Praha until the status of all the territory concerned became clear.

-Geist

8. March 15, 1939 *The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/631: Telegram

The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

Praha, March 15, 1939-6 a. m.

82. The occupation of the remainder of this country by German troops is scheduled to begin at this moment, i.e., 6 a. m.

The Military AttachÉ reports that this information has been confirmed by the General Staff.

-Carr

9. March 15, 1939 *The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/657

The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State

Paris, March 15, 1939-9 p. m.

491. Bonnet said to me this evening that the German Ambassador had delivered to him a note on behalf of his Government in which it was stated that since the Czechoslovak Government had requested Hitler to take charge of Bohemia and Moravia because the Czechoslovak Government was unable to preserve order in those districts and since everything that had happened was in accordance with the desires of the Czechoslovak Government there was no cause for France to be in the least excited about the developments. I asked him what he had replied He said that he had received the note and said nothing.

I asked Bonnet if the French Government intended to make any statement or to react in any way. He said that Coulonde had asked for information at the Foreign Office in Berlin today and that Alphand, Director of Commercial Accords, had received orders to return to Paris and to break off the commercial negotiations which were about to be brought to a successful conclusion. There would be a debate in the Chamber of Deputies on Thursday or Friday in which both he and Daladier would express the point of view of the French Government.

I asked Bonnet what he envisaged for the future. He said that he could not see any possibility of any successful negotiations any-where in Europe at the present time. There was nothing for France and England to do but to arm as fast as possible and stand ready to meet any attack. He then said "You must help us." I passed over this remark and began to ask him other questions but he repeated "The United States must help us." I asked what he meant by this and he said "You must support us in any way you can". I said that there were very decided limits on any support to be expected from the United States. He replied "At least you can change the Neutrality Act so that we can get arms and munitions from America".

-Bullitt

10. March 16, 1939 *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Controls (Green)*

740.00/640

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of Controls (Green)

[WASHINGTON,] March 16, 1939.

The British Ambassador called at my office this morning to discuss some problems which have arisen in connection with the administration of the Act of June 8, 1938, requiring the registration of agents of foreign principals. Before he took up that matter, however, we had some general conversation in regard to the present situation in Europe. I asked him whether during his stay in England he had found any considerable number of persons of the opinion that "peace in our time" had been assured.

He replied emphatically in the negative, saying that he had discussed the matter with all sorts of people and that no one to whom he had talked-"not even the Prime Minister"-was now of the opinion that war could be indefinitely postponed. He went on to tell me at some length of the British preparations for defense.

Joseph C. Green

11. March 16, 1939 *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)*

701.60F11/273

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)

Washington, March 16, 1939

The Czechoslovak Minister, Dr. Hurban, came to see me on a number of matters:

(1) Dr. Hurban said that he had been talking with Mr. Beneš and Mr. Jan Masaryk concerning what he should do in the way of turning over his Legation if ordered to do so. The tentative conclusion that he had reached was not to turn over the Legation until he had received written orders from President Hacha. He would not accept telegraphic orders as anyone could sign Hacha's name to a telegram. He had this morning sent a message to his colleagues in Paris and London inquiring what they were doing, but had not yet received a reply.

He asked for my comment on his plans. I told him that at first blush I would well understand his desire to be perfectly certain that he was carrying out the wishes of his Government, and that in any event I thought he was well advised to do nothing precipitately.

(2) Dr. Hurban was increasingly worried concerning the safety of Miss Alice Masaryk. He said that a plane had reached London having on board General Syrový and Premier Beran. Miss Masaryk was not on the plane. He understood that the Germans now had orders to shoot down any Czech plane in the air. I called up Mr. Norman Davis" again, who agreed to send off a telegram this morning to de Rouget of the League of Red Cross Societies in Paris urging him to give Miss Masaryk a post, and to use the influence of the Society in getting her out of Bohemia.

(3) Dr. Hurban inquired about the status not only of Czech officials but of their personal employees and servants in the matter of their visas. I took the Minister to call on Mr. Avra Warren, who explained the situation as it affected different categories of official diplomats, consuls, servants, those married to Americans, et cetera. He also told the Minister about certain private bills that had been introduced.

(4) Dr. Hurban touched lightly and in strict confidence on the financial embarrassment in which Czechoslovak officials would find themselves by virtue of their official salaries being (presumably) cut off. I shall not make this part of the conversation a matter of record.

(5) The Minister reverted to the claims of the Germans that Hacha had invited them into the country, and thought that from everybody's point of view it was essential to get this phase of the matter cleared up.

Pierrepont Moffat

12. March 16, 1939 *The Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat) to the Under Secretary of State*

701.60F11/272

The Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat) to the Under Secretary of State

[WASHINGTON,] March 16, 1939.

MR. WELLES: The Czechoslovak Minister has just telephoned that upon returning to his Legation from the Department of State he received a call from Herr Resenberg. The latter read him an excerpt of a telegram directing Dr. Thomsen to get in touch at once with Dr. Hurban, explain to him the developments that had taken place, and take over the Czechoslovak Legation.

The Czechoslovak Minister replied that he did not take orders from Berlin, and that the only condition under which he would turn over the Legation was upon receipt of written orders from President Hacha.

Dr. Resenberg endeavored to read a number of messages, telegrams and clippings, which he said would explain the situation, but Dr. Hurban replied that he was not interested in messages from Berlin, and could only consider messages from Praha as being applicable to him.

Later the Minister called up and asked if I saw objection to his telling this to the press. I replied that as the U. P. already carried a story that Dr. Thomsen was on his way to ask him to give up the Legation I saw no harm.

Pierrepont Moffat

13. March 17, 1939 *The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*

800F.00/679: Telegram

The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State

ROME; March 17, 1939-1 p.m.

[Received March 17-9: 20 a.m.]

91. My telegram number 90, March 16. I told Ciano this morning that I had come to him in the thought that he might give me some statement regarding the Italian Government's attitude toward events in Central Europe which I could transmit to Washington. He replied somewhat hesitatingly that developments had proceeded in accordance with the Rome-Berlin Axis and added with even more hesitation "and in accordance with an understanding between the German and Italian Governments." He used the expression that developments had proceeded "in their normal course".

I asked him whether my impression was correct that the Italian Government had agreed previously to the separation of Slovakia from Bohemia and Moravia. He replied that I was "neither correct nor incorrect in this impression."

I said that Hitler's performance had greatly shocked American public opinion and that while naturally I had no communication to make from my Government I did wish to tell him that the brutal methods employed by Hitler in seizing Bohemia and Moravia by armed force had created a profound impression in the United States. Ciano seemed interested and I repeated that such was indeed a fact. He made a point of the lack of national spirit exhibited by the Czechs as indicated by the fact that they had not fired a single shot. Adding that Hacha and Chvalkovsky had gone to Berlin and "given away their country", he exclaimed "what could be said for a country which showed so little spirit of resistance".

As I was leaving I adverted to Ciano's opening statement that developments had proceeded normally under the Rome-Berlin Axis and I inquired whether I might transmit this to Washington. He became distinctly confused and asked me not to do so. After endeavoring for some moments to think of the proper phrase he said "there were no adjectives which could be used." His confusion and inability or unwillingness to formulate any statement would seem to justify the inference that the seizure of Bohemia and Moravia had come as a disagreeable surprise.

Phillips

14. March 17, 1939 *The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)*

860F.00/703a: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)

WASHINGTON, March 17, 1939-1 p.m.

14. The Department would appreciate receiving from you as soon as you can prepare it a telegram somewhat along the following lines, but in greater factual detail.

Since Bohemia and Moravia have been occupied by Germany which has declared a protectorate and sent military officials to assume the functions of government; since Slovakia, through her President, has asked Hitler to assume a protectorate, and since Ruthenia is now occupied by Hungarian troops, there are no Czechoslovak officials with whom you can carry on business. In the circumstances you request instructions as to your future activities.

Upon receipt of such a telegram we shall reply directing you to close the Legation and turn over the files and archives to the Consul General, and to return to Washington at your convenience.

Your telegram should be drafted in such form that if we desire it can be given publicity.

Welles

15. March 17, 1939 *The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/687 : Telegram

The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State.

PARIS, March 17, 1939-4 p.m.

[Received 6:05 p.m.]

498. The shock of Hitler's invasion of Czechoslovakia stunned not only the members of the Government but all Frenchmen. Thought as to the future has, however, already begun to crystallize in the following manner:

The invasion of Czechoslovakia ends definitely all possibility of diplomatic negotiations. Seven specific promises by Hitler that he would not invade Czechoslovakia were broken by this action and it is no longer possible to have confidence in any promises he may make

Mussolini is considered as unscrupulous as Hitler and it is believed with equal force that no confidence can be had in any promises by Mussolini. The practice of diplomacy therefore becomes impossible. Nothing remains but to develop as much armed force as

possible, as rapidly as possible, to await the day when Germany and Italy will strike against France and England.

It is believed that this day may arrive as early as the 26th of the month. Reports from Italy indicate that Mussolini's prestige with his own people has been diminished so seriously by Hitler's advance in Central Europe that he must attempt to make annexations for Italy. It is thought that he may first seize Albania but it is also thought that he may consider his present control over Albania sufficient and may first act by an advance on Djibouti. The French troops at Djibouti will resist and war will result not only in Africa but also in Europe.

It is believed that Hitler has promised Mussolini his support in such a war but would like to have Mussolini adjourn action until after he, Hitler, should have reduced Hungary and Rumania to the position of vassal states. It is not believed that Mussolini will wait for this new advance by Hitler even though Hitler may predict confidently that he will have both Hungary and Rumania in hand within a month.

Reports indicate that extreme fear of Hitler is now prevalent throughout Eastern Europe especially in Lithuania and the other Baltic States, in Rumania and in Hungary. There is consternation in Poland; but it is believed that the Poles will have the courage to fight if Hitler makes any direct attack on Polish territory. No assistance is expected from the Soviet Union against Germany unless Soviet territory is attacked.

The French are making every effort to persuade the British to introduce conscription and to prepare for immediate war.

There is no excitement in Paris or in France. There is only regret that Hitler's action has ended the period when it was still possible to hope that constructive diplomatic action might maintain peace.

16. March 17, 1939 *The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)*

860F.00/690a: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)

WASHINGTON, March 17, 1939- 6 p. m.

15. At the press conference today I issued the following statement of the position of this Government toward recent developments in Czechoslovakia:

[Here follows text of press release printed *supra*.]

We hope that you may be able to make this available to the Czechoslovak press and that the latter may find a way to give it publicity.

Welles

17. March 17, 1939 *The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/691: Telegram

The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

PRAHA, March 17, 1939-11 p. m.

[Received March 17; 11:40 a. m.]

51. In recapitulation of my several telegrams of the last few days permit me to review as follows the present situation in this area.

Bohemia and Moravia have been occupied by German military forces. They have been declared by the Reichs Chancellor to be a protectorate of the Reich and to constitute a part of greater Germany. According to this same declaration their head of state must enjoy the confidence of the Reichs Chancellor, and their foreign affairs and military protection are taken over by the Reich. German military and civil authorities have assumed administrative power in the provinces. The Czechoslovak Foreign Office has been closed.

The Reichs Chancellor is reported to have accepted the request of the Slovak President that he take Slovakia under his protection.

Indirect reports from Ruthenia, which is now completely cut off from Praha indicate that that province is partially occupied by Hungarian troops and that there are no authorities left who could be considered as representing the power of the Czechoslovak State.

There are consequently no officials of the Czechoslovak Government to which I am accredited with whom I can maintain relations for the protection of the interests of the United States and its citizens.

In these circumstances I respectfully request instructions in regard to my future course.

18. March 17, 1939 *The German Chargé (Thomsen) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/756

The German Chargé (Thomsen) to the Secretary of State

[Translation]

WASHINGTON, March 17, 1939.

MR. SECRETARY OF STATE: By direction of the German Government, I have the honor to notify the Government of the United States of America of the following decree of March 16 of the Government of the Reich on the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia :

"Article 1. The areas of the former Czechoslovak Republic occupied by German troops belong from now on to the domain of the Greater German Reich and come under its protection as the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

"Article 2. The German inhabitants of the Protectorate become nationals and, under the provisions of the Reich Citizens Law of September 1935, citizens of the Reich. With respect to them, there-fore, the provisions for the protection of the German blood and the German honor also apply. They are subject to the jurisdiction of German courts. The other inhabitants become nationals of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

"Article 3. The Protectorate is autonomous and administers its own affairs. It exercises its rights of sovereignty granted it within the framework of the Protectorate in harmony with the political, military and economic requirements of the Reich. The rights of sovereignty will be exercised by its own organs and its own authorities with officials of its own.

"Article 4. The head of the autonomous government of the Protectorate enjoys the protection and the honors of the head of a state. The head of the Protectorate must have the confidence of the Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich for the exercise of his office.

"Article 5. As protector of the interests of the Reich, the Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich appoints the Reich Protector in Bohemia and Moravia, whose seat is Prague. The Reich Protector has the duty of seeing to the observance of the political policies of the Fuehrer and Chancellor of the Reich. The members of the Protectorate government are confirmed by the Reich Protector. The latter is empowered to have himself informed regarding all measures of the government of the Protectorate and to give it advice. He may veto measures capable of injuring the Reich, and in case there is danger in delay, he may take the measures necessary for the common interest. The promulgation of laws, regulations and other legal prescriptions, as well as the execution of administrative measures and court orders having the force of law is to be suspended if the Reich Protector interposes a veto.

"Article 6. The Reich takes charge of the foreign affairs of the Protectorate, and in particular of the protection of its nationals in foreign countries. The Reich will conduct

foreign affairs in accordance with the common interests. The Protectorate is given a representative near the Reich Government with the official designation of Minister.

"*Article 7.* The Reich grants military protection to the Protectorate. In the exercise of this protection, the Reich maintains garrisons and military establishments in the Protectorate. For maintaining internal security and order, the Protectorate may organize its own units. Their organization, strength, number and armament are determined by the Government of the Reich.

"*Article 8.* The Reich exercises direct supervision over transportation, mail and telecommunications.

"*Article 9.* The Protectorate belongs to the customs territory of the Reich and is under its customs sovereignty.

"*Article 10.* Until further notice, the crown is legal tender together with the Reichsmark. The relation of the two currencies to each other is determined by the Reich Government.

"*Article 11.* The Reich can issue legal regulations valid for the Protectorate, in so far as the common interests so require. In so far as a common need exists, the Reich can transfer administrative branches to its own administration and provide the officials belonging to the Reich who are needed therefor. The Government of the Reich can take the measures necessary for the maintenance of security and order.

"*Article 12.* The law now in effect in Bohemia and Moravia remains in force, in so far as it does not contradict the sense of the assumption of protection by the German Reich.

"*Article 13.* The Reich Minister of the Interior issues, in agreement with the Reich Ministers concerned, the legal and administrative regulations necessary for the execution and supplementing of this decree."

Under Article 6 of this decree the German Reich takes charge of the foreign affairs of the Protectorate, in particular, of the protection of its nationals in foreign countries. The former diplomatic representatives of Czechoslovakia in foreign countries are no longer qualified for official acts.

Accept [etc.] Thomsen

19. March 17, 1939 *Statement issued to the Press by the Acting Secretary of State*

860F.00/712

Statement issued to the Press by the Acting Secretary of State

March 17, 1939

The Government of the United States has on frequent occasions stated its conviction that only through international support of a program of order based upon law can world peace be assured.

This Government, founded upon and dedicated to the principles of human liberty and of democracy, cannot refrain from making known this country's condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of the liberties of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czechoslovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations.

The position of the Government of the United States has been made consistently clear. It has emphasized the need for respect for the sanctity of treaties and of the pledged word, and for non-intervention by any nation in the domestic affairs of other nations; and it has on repeated occasions expressed its condemnation of a policy of military aggression.

It is manifest that acts of wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force are threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilization. The imperative need for the observance of the principles advocated by this Government has been clearly demonstrated by the developments which have taken place during the past three days.

20. March 18, 1939 *The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/692: Telegram

The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

PRAHA, March 18, 1939- 6 p.m.

[Received March 18- 2:55 p.m.]

52. Your No.15, March 17. The entire press here is under strict German control, the Gestapo is everywhere and it would be virtual suicide for anyone to publish the statement unless indeed it first appeared in Berlin press.

Carr

21. March 18, 1939 *The Consul at Geneva (Bucknell) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/698: Telegram

The Consul at Geneva (Bucknell) to the Secretary of State

GENEVA, March 18, 1939- 6 p. m
[Received March 18- 4:35 p. m.]

51. The consensus of responsible Secretariat and other informed opinion at Geneva regarding the situation resulting from the German annexation of Czechoslovakia may be summarized as follows:

1. The latest German move by its revelation, even to the most skeptical, of the ruthlessness of German methods and the extent of her ultimate aims has marked a turning point in the European situation and has rendered an eventual war almost inevitable. The Czech annexation is considered as Hitler's first great error since it can not be justified on racial or other reasonable grounds and starkly reflects a determination to extend German expansion to such an extent that this ambition can only be checked by force.

2. Further German moves in Eastern Europe are expected to take place in the near future. It is thought that such future moves will as in the case of Czechoslovakia, be directed either to securing Germany's "back door" in preparation for a move to the west or be preliminary to a further rapid expansion eastward or both.

3. As regards the highly desirable possibility of rallying the small states of Europe, particularly of Southeastern Europe, against further German attacks, this is thought to present great difficulties unless Great Britain and France are prepared immediately to take such a strong stand that they could not recede therefrom at the last moment. In the light of what has taken place in Europe during the past year, no small state or group of states it is felt would dare risk resistance to a German attack without the certainty of immediate and effective support from these two countries. More than ever there is much pessimism not only as regards the determination but also the ability of France and Great Britain to afford such support at present.

4. The position of Russia both as to her willingness and her ability to give effective aid presents a big question mark and must inevitably affect British and French policy.

5. The importance of Mediterranean as an immediate danger spot is stressed. One view expressed is that Mussolini has two main alternatives, (a) now feeling the German menace himself, come to terms with the British and French in return for their protection against Germany or (b) push his demands against France to the point of risking a war on the gamble that Hitler would be forced through fear of losing Italy as an ally to come to her assistance. Grave concern is felt here lest Mussolini choose the second alternative since the first would entail the abandonment of his dreams of empire. This concern is increased by the feeling that in the last analysis Hitler could not afford to see Italy defeated even though a war to save Italy would be highly unpopular in Germany.

Finally, these predictions and preoccupations are based upon the premise that any major hostilities in either Eastern Europe or in the Mediterranean would eventually extend into a general war and that such hostilities might in the existing situation be provoked by even a minor incident.

Bucknell

22. March 18, 1939 *The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/608

The Ambassador in France (Bullitt) to the Secretary of State

Paris, March 18, 1939 -7p. m.

470. We are told by the Czech Legation that the present situation in Slovakia has been created deliberately by the Germans because of the refusal of the Czech Government and people to hand over control of their country to Germany. The Czech Government has withstood demands by Germany for the dismissal of officials who had been associated with Beneš and Czech financial and business people have refused to sell the controlling interest in their concerns to Germans. The Nazis therefore determined to get at Bohemia and Moravia by first obtaining control of Slovakia. If the attempted coup had succeeded on the 10th it was intended to proclaim immediately not only a so-called independent Slovakia but also a customs and monetary union between Slovakia and Germany.

Our informant said that the Nazis had been greatly assisted by the political incapacity and venality of the Slovaks. The Germans have already acquired control of the principal Slovak industries and mining properties including all lands where oil is believed to exist: in fact, "the Germans have already bought Slovakia".

In the opinion of our informant the Nazis will not rest until they have a government in Praha completely subservient to their wishes. Once this has been accomplished it will then be the turn of Hungary and after that of Rumania. The French listen sympathetically but are doing nothing. The British have appeared to be entirely without interest in the matter until this afternoon when the Czechoslovak Legation here heard from London that the British Government had made some statement, whether to the press or to the German Government was not clear, to the effect that they were in fact interested in this latest crisis affecting Czechoslovakia.

In reply to a question regarding the status of the guarantee of Czechoslovakia's frontiers promised at Munich we were told that about a month ago the Czechoslovak Government raised this question with the French and British Governments. These Governments took the matter up with Berlin, but were informed that the guarantee could not be made effective until the problem of Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia had been adjusted-whatever that might mean. There the matter has been allowed to rest.

-Bullitt

23. March 18, 1939 *The German Chargé (Thomsen) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/756

The German Chargé (Thomsen) to the Secretary of State
[Translation]

WASHINGTON, March 18, 1939.

MR. SECRETARY OF STATE: Following my note of the 17th of this month, I have the honor to make known to Your Excellency, below, the preamble to the decree of March 16th of the Reich Government on the establishment of the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. This preamble, which had not reached me before, forms an integral part of the decree mentioned. It reads as follows:

"For a thousand years the lands of Bohemia and Moravia belonged to the living area of the German people.

"Force and want of understanding arbitrarily tore them from their ancient historic surroundings and finally by their incorporation in the artificial structure of Czechoslovakia created the center of constant unrest

"From year to year the danger increased that a new and terrible threat to the peace of Europe would come from this area, as it once did in the past.

"For the Czechoslovak State and its rulers had not succeeded in organizing the common life of the national groups arbitrarily united in it and thereby in arousing and maintaining the interest of all concerned in the maintenance of their common State.

"In that way, however, it displayed its internal incapacity for life and therefore it has now fallen into actual disintegration.

"The German Reich, however, cannot permit any continuous disturbances in these regions, of such decisive importance to its own peace and security and to the general welfare and the general peace.

"Sooner or later it was bound, as the power most interested and sympathetically affected because of the historical and geographic situation, to have to bear the most serious consequences.

"It is therefore in keeping with the law of self-preservation if the German Reich has determined to intervene decisively for the restoration of the bases for a reasonable order in Central Europe and to take the measures arising therefrom.

"For it has already proved in its historical past of a thousand years that it alone is called to solve these problems, both because of the greatness and the characteristics of the German nation.

"Filled with earnest desire to serve the true interests of the peoples dwelling in this area, to safeguard the national individuality of the German and the Czech peoples, and to further the peace and social welfare of all, I therefore order the following, in the name of the German Reich, as the basis for the future common life of the inhabitants of these regions:"

Accept [etc.] Thomsen

24. March 19, 1939 *Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

860F.48/50: Telegram

Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

[Extracts]

PRAHA, March 19, 1939- 5 p. m.

[Received 5: 20 p. m.]

55. From available information it seems clear that the refugee question here has already reached a serious stage. Nansen of the Nansen Aid Committee informed me this morning that there are several thousand Social Democrats and other political refugees and their families here in hiding and in danger of their lives. Many of the women and children are spending the days and nights in the woods in the vicinity of Praha notwithstanding that the ground is covered by snow. All relief organizations have been forcibly disbanded....

The German secret police here are making hundreds and perhaps thousands of arrests in the usual Nazi manner; the Jewish population is terrified; as are the Social Democrats and also those persons closely associated with the former regime. Consequently if action can be taken it should be done speedily. While the British legation seems to be hopeful of obtaining exit permits for most of its refugee cases I am personally doubtful whether Germany would be receptive to requests for the departure of political refugees and Jews but it would seem to be the humane duty of our Government to support some kind of international action to this end even though doubts may be entertained as to the outcome.

25. March 19, 1939 *The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State*

860F.48/50: Telegram

Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

[Extracts]

PRAHA, March 19, 1939- 5 p. m.

[Received 5: 20 p. m.]

860F.48/52: Telegram

The Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr) to the Secretary of State

PRAHA, March 19, 1939- 6 p.m.

[Received 6: 40 p.m.]

56. My 55, March 19, 5 p.m. Fully aware of and in full sympathy with the later reports and policy of the United States in regard to immigration, I nevertheless feel that a special situation exists here which merits the serious attention of the President and of Congress. The Czechoslovak state was in part the creation of the United States of America upon whose form of government the Czechoslovaks were proud to model their own. There are many here who gave their best efforts over a period of years with the encouragement and strengthened support of the United States and other democratic nations to an attempt to preserve in Central Europe an independent state devoted to the principles of liberty for which the United States stands. They made extraordinary progress in public improvements, education and social welfare. They may justly be proud of their contribution to progressive and enlightened government. Through no real fault of theirs their independence has ended. The men who were the leaders in the establishment of the Czechoslovak state, the public servants who patriotically carried on the public work often times under great handicaps, and some men of industry and business who devoted their best efforts to the building up of the state are now under arrest hunted by secret police facing loss of property and even life itself or apprehensive of some or all of these eventualities. It is obviously for the several governments to endeavor to persuade the German Government to permit these people to leave the country unharmed and seek homes elsewhere. But even if they could depart from this country no adequate provision exists for their admission to other countries. By law they are effectually shut out of the one country whose policies and principles they have sought most earnestly to emulate. It seems to me that by not opening our doors to a reasonable number of these distressed people the United States is likely to appear to the people here who depended upon its friendship to the end and to democratic people everywhere as lacking in sincerity and humane interest in the very people who have tried to mould their institutions upon its model. I think this should not be viewed as an emigration matter but one of the protection of innocent human beings from the effect of a catastrophe.

Carr

26. March 20, 1939 *The Acting Secretary Of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)*

124.60F/37a: Telegram

The Acting Secretary Of State to the Minister in Czechoslovakia (Carr)

WASHINGTON, March 20, 1939-11 a. m.

19. In view of the situation as set forth in your telegram of March 17th, you are directed to close the Legation at Praha; to turn over the Government building, property and archives to the Consulate General; and at your convenience to leave Praha. A separate message containing detailed administrative instructions will be sent you.

The President has requested me to express to you his particular appreciation of the highly distinguished service you have rendered the Government as Minister to Czechoslovakia. I desire also in the name of the Secretary of State as well as in my own to evidence our recognition of the exceptional work you have done under circumstances of-peculiar difficulty. The services you have rendered are a matter of pride to the entire Foreign Service with which you have been closely connected over a period of so many years.

I am giving this telegram, together with your March 17th, to the press at noon today.

Welles

27. March 20, 1939 *The Acting Secretary of State to the German Chargé (Thomsen)*

860F.00/756

The Acting Secretary of State to the German Chargé (Thomsen)

WASHINGTON, March 20, 1939.

SIR: I acknowledge the receipt of your note of March 17 in which, by direction of your Government, you inform the Government of the United States of the terms of the decree issued on March 16 by the Government of the Reich announcing the assumption of a protectorate over the provinces of Bohemia and Moravia.

The Government of the United States has observed that the provinces referred to are now under the *de facto* administration of the German authorities. The Government of the United States does not recognize that any legal basis exists for the status so indicated.

The views of this Government with regard to the situation above referred to, as well as with regard to related facts, were made known on March 17. I enclose herewith for the information of your Government a copy of the statement in which those views were expressed.

Accept [etc.] Sumner Welles

28. March 21, 1939 *The Acting Secretary of State to the Consul at Praha (Bruins)*

860F.48/53: Telegram

The Acting Secretary of State to the Consul at Praha (Bruins)
WASHINGTON, March 21, 1939 -7 p.m.

The Department has received a telegram from Nansen, care Norwegian Consulate General, Prague, requesting intervention with the German Government to permit refugee emigration through Poland. Please advise him that our Embassy at Berlin, in conjunction with the British Embassy, has made representations urging that no obstacles be placed in the way of departure from Czechoslovakian territory under control of Germany of persons who have prospects of admission into the United States or Great Britain.

Welles

29. March 21, 1939 *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)*

701.60411/268

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)
[WASHINGTON,] March 21, 1939.

The Czechoslovak Minister called this morning. He had been out in Chicago and had spent twenty-four hours with Mr. Beneš. He said that although Mr. Beneš was without official status, nonetheless he and various other Czechs who do not accept the new regime look up to him for advice and guidance and will follow his lead.

I inquired about published reports that Mr. Beneš might be considering proclaiming a new provisional government in this country. He said that there was nothing in the idea, that Mr. Benes denials should be taken on their face value, and it had been decided by both of them to take no sensational or dramatic stand.

I then told the Minister that in reply to his question as to whether he could transfer the Legation property to the Masaryk Institute, the Legal Adviser had ruled that he could not do so. The Legation stood not in his name but in the name of the Czechoslovak Republic, and he could only transfer title if he had "full powers" to do so given by the Czechoslovak Government or a recognized successor thereto.

I then told him that we had read in the paper of Mr. Osusky's action in turning over the keys of the Czechoslovak Legation in Paris to the French authorities, and intimated that if he should choose to follow suit this Government would gladly assume custody. At this suggestion the Minister became very excited and said that so long as we did not recognize the disappearance of Czechoslovakia he remained the Minister, and counted on us to give him full and active support.

As to Mr. Osusky, he said that he could not understand his activities of late. He was one of the few old guard Czechs who had not maintained touch in any way with Mr. Beneš since the crisis.

The Minister then went further, and advanced the doctrine that as his Government had disappeared and he could not obtain full powers from his Government, he could act on the theory that he was the Czechoslovak Government and control its physical properties as he saw fit. Th this connection he referred not only to the Legation building but to Czechoslovak gold in New York banks. I pointed out that he should be very careful to assure himself that he was on sound legal ground in advancing these claims. Personally I felt that there was some doubt as to whether he could act in matters which normally required the presentation of full powers.

The question next arose about the advisability of a visit by Mr. Beneš to Washington. I told him that I could inform him in confidence that although the President in other circumstances would be delighted to receive Mr. Beneš, he felt that under present conditions everybody's interests would be served if Mr. Beneš should refrain from coming to Washington or asking an interview with the President. The Minister said that this message was not unexpected, and that he would guard its confidential character.

The Minister next took up the question of his staff. lie does not consider the Counselor of Legation sufficiently qualified for the post, and wished to make certain that in in his absence Dr. Cerveka would be recognized as ChargÈ d' Affaires....

Pierrepont Moffat

30. March 22, 1939 *The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State*

860F.48/55: Telegram

The Chargé in Germany (Geist) to the Secretary of State
BERLIN, March 22, 1939-11 a.m.
[Received March 22- 8:40 a. m.]

188. Department's 51, March 17, 6 p.m. I saw Doctor Woermann at the Foreign Office and made urgent representations in the sense of the Department's telegram above referred to. Doctor Woermann stated that the British ChargÉ d' Affaires had made a similar request with regard to persons holding visas for England and that he would take immediate measures to see that our wish was made known to-the proper authorities in Praha.

I discussed at some length with Doctor Woermaun the question of achieving orderly emigration from Germany of persons whose departure was urged by the German authorities. Doctor Woermann reiterated the position taken by Goering in his conversations with Rublee, namely that the German Government desired to cooperate in achieving an orderly emigration from this country. I pointed out that if events in Czechoslovakia resulted in the driving of a large number of persons out of newly occupied territories, it would have a serious detrimental effect upon the arrangements now being made by certain other countries to facilitate orderly emigration from Germany. Doctor Woermann asserted that he would take the necessary measures to bring this observation to the attention of the authorities concerned.

Geist

[For the President's proclamation of March 23, 1939, suspending the operation of the trade agreement with Czechoslovakia, see Department of State, *Press Releases*, March 25, 1939, page 241, or 53 Stat. 2530.]

31. March 24, 1939 *The Minister in Guatemala (Des Portes) to the Secretary of State*

8605.00/762: Telegram

The Minister in Guatemala (Des Portes) to the Secretary of State
GUATEMALA CITY, March 24, 1939-4 p. m.
[Received 6: 12 p.m.]

8. The Foreign Office has just informed me that the German Legation has formally notified this Government of the absorption of Czechoslovakia and that the communication has been acknowledged without comment. President Ubico now requests the advice and counsel of the American Government as to the attitude which should be adopted with respect to this aggression. He also suggests the convenience and desirability of the United States taking the initiative in effecting throughout Latin America a common

policy and united front towards the *de facto* occupation. The Department's telegraphic instructions would be appreciated.

Des Portes

32. March 24, 1939 *Statement Issued to the Press by the Secretary Of State, March 24, 1939*

860F.00/778

Statement Issued to the Press by the Secretary Of State, March 24, 1939

At the press conference this afternoon, Secretary Hull, returning from an absence of two weeks and responding to the greeting of the correspondents, said that he was more than pleased to be back. He went on to say that he wished to make the following remarks which might be quoted:

"Having closely followed international developments at home and abroad during my temporary absence I have in common with the general public here been profoundly shocked by the recent developments in Europe. They have been of a nature seriously to threaten the peace of the world.

"These new evidences of international lawlessness make it all the more clear that never before has the support of all nations for law and order and sound economic relations been more urgently needed than at present. We in this country have striven, particularly during recent years, and we shall continue to strive, to strengthen the threatened structure of world peace by fostering in every possible way the rule of law and the building of sound economic relationships upon which alone peace can rest. Every citizen and every group in this country will, I am sure, cooperate loyally and wholeheartedly in this great and urgent task."

33. March 25, 1939 *The Consul General at Praha (Linnell) to the Secretary of State [discusses Slovak declaration of independence]*

860F.00/768: Telegram

The Consul General at Praha (Linnell) to the Secretary of State
PRAHA, March 25, 1939-4 p. m.
[Received 5:30 p. m]

Under no circumstances to become public at present. Following from Minister Carr:

"During the last few days I have obtained details of some of the events in this country which I shall report in due time but the substance of the following I think the Department should have by telegraph. In regard to Slovakia information received from two highly responsible sources indicates unmistakably that Slovak declaration of independence was the result of German intrigue and dictation and not the voluntary expression of the will of the Slovaks; that Tiso went to Berlin at the request of Beckel, Seyss-Inquart and German generals; that Tiso was told by Hitler on the 13th that he had decided to occupy Bohemia and Moravia at 12 o'clock on the 14th and that the Slovaks would choose between declaring their independence under German protection or having Hitler dissociate himself from them; that while Tiso was reporting on the 14th to the Diet the majority of which was opposed to separation from the Czechoslovak State, Karmasin entered and warned Tiso that the hour for German occupation was near and they should declare their independence which they did amid demonstrations of great emotion.

Referring to the visit of the President to Berlin (see my telegrams numbers 35, March 15 and 53, March 19 [18]) information from a high source impossible at present to reveal is in substance that owing to the news of the concentration of German troops on the Czechoslovak frontier and with the approval of the Government, the President of Czechoslovakia on the 13th asked for an interview with Hitler. The reply granting the interview came at 2 o'clock in the afternoon of the 14th. The President accompanied by the Minister for Foreign Affairs left on a special train for Berlin at 4 o'clock. Meanwhile the German troops had already crossed the Silesian frontier at 12 o'clock and at 4:30 they entered Moravska Ostrava. The train was delayed and the President did not reach Berlin until 11. The conference with Hitler began about 1:00 in the presence of a number of German generals. Hitler announced his unalterable decision to occupy Bohemia and Moravia with the German military forces at 6 o'clock that morning, the 15th; said he had been willing to receive the President only in the hope of preventing resistance on the part of the Czechs and therefore bloodshed; demanded that the Czechoslovak Army be disarmed and kept in barracks, that railways, postal service, Government offices, theaters should continue to function and the people go about their work and warned that any resistance would be put down by the most drastic and even brutal methods. He claimed that he had reached his decision because of the failure of the Government to carry out definitely his wishes including measures against the Jews. He said he did not question the sincerity of the President and the Foreign Minister but clearly they were too weak. He then suggested that they might wish to consult their Government in Praha. In an adjoining room telephones were ready with a direct wire to the Prime Minister in Praha. On the way to the telephone Goering remarked to them that he would regret if resistance were offered for that would make it necessary for him under his orders to destroy Praha with his air force. The old President showed unsteadiness from the strain and fatigue and a stimulant was suggested. A physician was already at hand and administered a hypodermic injection. The President and the Foreign Minister telephoned to Praha but always in the presence of Hitler's aides. Praha telephoned in an hour that the terms [were accepted?] and orders given not to resist. The President then re-reported to Hitler and said his people were now in Hitler's hands and appealed to his 'chivalry'. Further discussion occurred and the communiqué later announced to the press was prepared and signed. There was no compulsion as to that. Hitler said he would give the provinces autonomy

and added 'you cannot dream what we shall do for you; we shall give you autonomy and far exceed anything you did for the Sudeten Germans'. The German Army crossed the frontiers generally at 6 o'clock and began to arrive at Praha about 8:30 the morning of the 15th. The President reached Praha about 8 p. m., and immediately summoned the Council of Ministers. While he was relating his experiences in Berlin he was told that Hitler was already in the Presidential Palace. He refused to believe it. One of the Ministers went to investigate and returned to say that he had spoken with Von Ribbentrop and seen the Fuehrer. They had in fact arrived by automobile in advance of the President and unknown to him. The following day Ribbentrop read to the public (see my 42, March 16, and 43, March 16) the proclamation declaring that the two provinces of Bohemia and Moravia should constitute a protectorate and be a part of greater Germany.

My informant says the President is completely powerless and is actuated by purely patriotic motives in continuing temporarily to serve."

Linell

34. March 26, 1939 *The Secretary of State to the Minister in Guatemala (Des Portes)*

860F.00/762: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Minister in Guatemala (Des Portes)

WASHINGTON, March 26, 1939-noon.

11. Your 8, March 24, 4 p.m. After thanking the Foreign Minister for his confidence in consulting this Government with respect to the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia you should give him copies of the statement issued by the Acting Secretary on March 17, and a copy of the reply of this Government to the note from the German Embassy, this reply being dated March 20 (see radio bulletin for texts).

Although, as is evident from the statement of the Acting Secretary, the Department views with concern recent developments in Central Europe, it does not believe that these developments present occasion -for initiating the procedure of consultation as provided for in the Buenos Aires Pact and the Declaration of Lima. The Foreign Minister's suggestion will be borne in mind, however, for future reference.

Hull

35. March 27, 1939 *Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)*

701.60F11/277

Memorandum of Conversation, by the Chief of the Division of European Affairs (Moffat)
[WASHINGTON,] March 27, 1939.

The Czechoslovak Minister came in this morning saying that for the first time in a fortnight he felt inclined to smile. The reason was he now believed that his own authorities in Praha, in their heart of hearts, approved the stand that he had taken. In the last two or three days there had been received from Praha some funds for the Consulate General at New York and some funds for the Legation. Obviously the Germans could not watch over every administrative detail, and he regarded this transfer as in the nature of an unwritten message to him.

Even more important, some of the private Czech banks which had money on deposit in New York had transferred their accounts to the National Bank of Czechoslovakia. He, the Minister, could naturally do nothing with accounts in this country of private banks, but this did not apply to deposits of the National Bank. As a matter of fact, he had been in New York and talked the whole situation over with the Chase Bank. The Chase Bank has asked him to write- them a letter forbidding them to transfer any money on deposit to the account of the National Bank, back to Czechoslovakia. If there is a lawsuit, the Chase Bank is prepared to defend it.

The Minister went on to say that he felt his primary task was to keep his financial transactions so above-board that he could not become the subject of criticism. He had under his control various sums of money belonging to individuals which he could not transfer to their owners. He asked whether we would accept these funds. I told him that I did not believe we had authority in law to do so, but that this matter should be taken up with the Legal Adviser. He said he would ask Mr. Acheson to discuss the matter with Mr. Hackworth.

The Minister then went on to say that he was putting all employees of the Legation and Consulates, except the few that were absolutely essential, on a leave status. They would be carried as absent on our various lists. I told him that if any of them accepted other employment we could naturally not continue to give them immunities or carry their names on any lists. The Minister agreed, and undertook promptly to let us know if and when any of them accepted employment. As a matter of fact, he said that they were having difficulty in securing employment as many firms had answered that as a matter of policy they would not engage aliens who had not yet taken out their first papers. He asked if we could intervene with the A. F. of L. or the C. I. O. I told him that I did not think the Department could do this, but if he chose to send one of his secretaries to the Department of Labor to discuss the employment angle I felt certain he would receive sympathetic consideration.

Pierrepont Moffat

36. March 28, 1939 *The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Hungary (Travers)*
[American refusal to recognize Slovak independence]

860F.01/268

The Secretary of State to the Chargé in Hungary (Travers)
No.872
WASHINGTON, August 28, 1939.

SIR: With reference to the legation's despatch No.1701 of August 7,1939 concerning the question of the *de facto* recognition of Slovakia, there is transmitted for your confidential information a copy of a memorandum prepared in the Department on August 17 on this subject. This memorandum sets forth the position which the Department has assumed in this connection and from which it is unwilling to recede.

The Department perceives no useful purpose in pursuing conversations on this matter with the "Minister of Slovakia".

Very truly yours,

For the Secretary of State:

G. S. Messersmith

[enclosure - Memorandum]
[WASHINGTON,] August 17, 1939.

A Consulate cannot very well be established in Slovakia by the United States unless this Government is willing to recede from the position assumed by it on the German occupation of Czechoslovakia last March. At that time, namely on March 17, the State Department advised the Treasury that "in view of the recent military occupation of the Provinces of Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia of Czechoslovakia by German armed forces and the assumption of control over these areas by German authorities, the State Department, while not recognizing any legal basis for the assumption of so-called protection over this territory, is constrained by force of the foregoing circumstances to regard the above-mentioned Provinces as being under the *de facto* administration of the German authorities....

On March 14, 1939, Dr. F. Duransky', "Minister of Foreign Affairs of Slovakia," addressed an appeal to the American Government for recognition of the Slovak State. This was filed without acknowledgment. A similar communication was apparently sent to the Argentine Government as the Ambassador of that country asked the Department what it intended to do about it as Argentina wished to pursue the same course as the United States. Several American diplomatic representatives abroad have also been approached by Slovak officials for recognition of the State of Slovakia. The principal reason for these

overtures was the difficulties which have arisen over the marking of goods from this area in connection with their importation into the United States.

On July 11 the Consulate General in Prague informed the Department by telegram that the local press had reported that Slovak official circles had made it known that after July 15 consular offices of all states which had not recognized the new Slovak State would no longer be permitted to function in Slovakia. Nothing further in this connection has been received by the Department.

Despite the hardships that may be suffered because of the nonexistence of an American consular office in Slovakia, both by those resident in Slovakia and in the United States, it is not thought that this Government is prepared to abandon its position of non-recognition of Slovakia. The situation in Slovakia has not changed and German military forces occupy parts of Western and Northern Slovakia. There, therefore, appears to be no alternative but to inform Dr. Wise in the above sense.

37. May 23, 1939 *The Consul General at Prague (Linnell) to the Secretary of State*

860F.00/863

The Consul General at Prague (Linnell) to the Secretary of State

No. 98

PRAGUE, May 23, 1939.

[Received June 9.]

SIR: On pages 4 to 6 of the report which accompanied my despatch No. 84 of May 15, 1939, I mentioned a few of the main features of the unsatisfactory state of political developments in the Czech lands. I now have the honor to report that the past week has shown a still further deterioration in the relations between Czechs and Germans, and that the resulting tension is approaching a point where the Czech leaders themselves may find it impossible to continue their cooperation in the maintenance of the fiction of a Czech autonomous regime.

That Czech "autonomy" has proved a fiction is no longer open to doubt. Despite continued German assurances to the contrary the Protectorate system, as guaranteed to the Czechs by the Reichs Chancellor in his decree of March 16, has never been seriously put into effect. Such steps as were originally taken towards even the formal observance of its provisions are now being steadily retracted in practice if not in theory.

The civil administration, which was supposed to have been restored to the Czech authorities upon the relinquishment of executive authority by the Reichswehr in April, has actually remained in German hands. There has been no move to withdraw the numerous commissars, many of them Sudeten Germans with various personal axes to grind, who were appointed to all the central ministries and to many municipal offices and

state enterprises in March. The same is true of the German "Landrats" who were set up throughout the countryside during the period of the exercise of civil authority by the Reichswehr. Each of these officials has assigned to him a given field of competence comprising several of the existing Czech administrative districts (comparable to our counties). In these territories they continue to exercise real administrative authority with no legal basis whatsoever. The Czech district officials often report to them and take orders from them rather than from their own dormant Ministry of the Interior. Cases are known where failure to do this, or at least to obey the Landrat's instructions, has been followed by prompt arrest. The Landrats themselves are subordinated through the Reichsprotektor's office to the Reich Ministry of the Interior. Last week they were all summoned to Prague to confer directly with Herr von Stuckart, who handles Protectorate affairs in that Ministry and who came to Prague expressly for this purpose.

In many instances, the Czech authorities are being simply displaced by those of the Reich. This has been the case, for example, with the customs officials on the Polish and Slovak borders. It is characteristic that the Czech central authorities no longer even know precisely where these borders lie. There are indications - although the Slovaks deny this - that the Germans have been altering the Slovak-Moravian border at will, during the last few weeks, with no consultation of the Czech authorities. Quite probably, the same thing has been happening on the other frontiers as well.

In their administrative activities the German authorities are actively assisted by the various German police units - Schutzpolizei, SS and Gestapo - which are present in all sizeable Czech communities despite the fact that the Law of March 16 provides as little justification for their presence as for that of the Landrats and the Commissars. Quite recently, these police units have developed intense activity. As nearly as can be ascertained in the absence of official information, the number of arrests has been increasing daily. The existing prisons are overcrowded and old ones, long in disuse under the Czech regime, are again being put into operation. Tales of brutality, of physical and mental torture, seem unfortunately to be only too well authenticated. All in all, it would scarcely be an exaggeration to say that "terror", in the accepted totalitarian sense, had now begun, and that the Czech authorities are quite powerless to oppose it.

It is obvious that in these circumstances, the position of the Czech Government is anything but enviable. As far as I am aware, it has had nothing of any importance to do during the last month but to draft two laws at German behest and submit them to the Reichsprotektor for consideration. Meanwhile, personal relations between some of its members and leaders of the Reichsprotektor's office have become strained. As was anticipated, Baron von Neurath seems to be playing a much less conspicuous role in Prague than certain of his subordinates. Herr Frank (formerly deputy Gauleiter in the Sudeten district) and Dr. Sebekovsky (formerly Regierungspräsident in Karlsbad) are now said to be the most active members of his staff. Both are Sudeten Germans and neither is in any sense *persona grata* to the Czechs. In general, it may be said that if the Germans ever had any intention of appeasing the Czechs, the wide-spread admission of Sudeten-Germans to positions of influence in the Protectorate has been the worst mistake they could have made. During the past century, if we may believe the historians, it was

largely the Sudetens who ruined relations between the Czechs and Vienna. They are now in a fair way to repeating this performance with respect to the relations between the Czechs and Berlin.

But Czech anxiety is not confined to the future of the Czech administration, which they regard as a lost cause in any case. It is the German attitude with respect to President Hacha's new Czech political movement, the so-called "National Community", which is arousing the greatest apprehension in influential Czech circles. For it is on this movement that they are depending for the preservation of their own unity and discipline pending the day when it may again become possible for them to assert themselves actively in opposition to the German rule.

It has been related in previous communications from this office that the organization of the National Community was a conspicuous success and that its leaders even succeeded in gaining the adherence of over 97 percent of those eligible for membership. While the movement first seemed to find favor in German eyes as a gesture towards totalitarianism, its' success aroused definite irritation in German circles. The Czechs, it seems, were expected to make the effort but they were not expected to succeed. The Germans had evidently hoped that a large proportion of the Czechs would remain outside the movement and would thus constitute an element which could always be played off against the remainder of the Czech population for the advancement of German aims. Since this hope did not materialize, the Germans have now adopted a definitely hostile tone toward the movement and are using the only remaining available element, namely the Czech fascists, as a lever for the creation of dissension among the Czech population.

It will be recalled that the Czech fascists, under the leadership of General Gayda, endeavored to gain control of Czech political life immediately after the occupation but were pushed out with German connivance in favor of President Hacha and his friends. For some time after that the fascists wavered. They were torn between admiration for Nationalist-Socialist methods, which drew them toward the Germans, and nationalistic tendencies, which drew them toward the overwhelming anti-German majority of the Czech population. Their indecision was aggravated by the personality of their leader, who commanded little confidence among the Germans and who was himself never marked by any great clarity or firmness of decision. Dissension soon developed between the Moravian and the Bohemian sections. More recently, the Moravian section began to receive extensive support, financially and otherwise from the Gestapo. At the beginning of May, Gayda, finally disillusioned of German motives, tried to lead his followers into a dissolution of the whole movement, to be followed by a merging with the "National Community" Had this step succeeded, the Czech nation would have been truly united in the face of German occupation. But the Moravian wing, acting doubtless on Gestapo inspiration, revolted, carrying with it a portion of the Bohemian party as well, and has now set itself up in opposition not only to Gayda but also to President Hacha and the "National Community". The result has been retaliation on the part of the President through the removal of the recalcitrant fascist members of the Committee of National Community. The break is now complete, and is fraught with danger for the preservation of Czech unity. For while the fascists have thus far been numerically insignificant,

German support is nothing to be sneezed at. Money is always a powerful weapon, and the fascist press claims that membership is now increasing rapidly, ten thousand members having been added within the last week.

In the face of this situation the Czech leaders are now wondering whether the disadvantages of nominal cooperation with the Germans are not beginning to outweigh the advantages. They see clearly what the Germans are trying to do to them. They are afraid that their continued participation-however devoid of content in the Protectorate Government will only compromise them in the eyes of their own people without accomplishing anything tangible for their followers. They are coming to the conclusion that they would have better chances of preserving Czech unity as frank opponents of the German rule rather than as nominal participants in it.

For these reasons, I am reliably informed, they are contemplating some sort of a voluntary step on their own part which would put an end to their participation in the Government and to their cooperation with the Germans in general and would leave them in a position to come out openly, in opposition to the Germans, as whole-hearted protagonists and leaders of Czech separatism. They would prefer this course, which might well turn out to be a form of martyrdom, to the continuance of a cooperation which has proved so one-sided.

They are only waiting at the present moment for the favorable outcome of the Anglo-Russian conversations before taking this step. Despite the various disillusionments of the past year, they still have great hopes for the eventual efficacy of support from England and the United States, and they feel that if Germany were to be backed to the wall diplomatically there might be some possibility for at least a partial retraction of the action which the Germans have taken in the Czech lands. How long they can continue to wait, however, is problematical. The situation is becoming daily more difficult for them, and they have always to bear in mind the possibility that the Germans may anticipate them by abolishing or changing the Protectorate before they get around to making their own move.

If President Hacha and the National Community should back out on the Germans in this fashion, it is difficult to predict what would follow. The fascists are already pressing for seats on the Protectorate Government, and there might be an attempt to set up another Government composed exclusively of Czech fascists. But the moral authority of such a body-which represents its chief value to the Germans-would be minimal, and its popularity no greater than those of the puppet regimes established by the Japanese in China. The job of finding a new president would present a problem of particular difficulty.

Whether such a regime could serve as an effective instrument of German control is doubtful. I consider it more probable that the Germans will find themselves forced in the end to sweep away the last figments of Czech autonomy; to place their reliance solely on their bayonets and to attempt to crush by sheer force the powerful Czech nationalism which they have hitherto tried to exploit. In this case, it is outright war: an undeclared war in which imprisonments, shootings, deportations, intimidation and bribery on the one

side would be pitted against passive resistance, sabotage, espionage and conspiracy on the other. If it comes to this, the Germans will probably hold the upper hand without undue difficulty as long as the broad basis of national-socialist power remains intact. But they will have no happy time of it, and if the tide ever turns, Czech retaliation will be fearful to contemplate.

Respectfully yours,

Irving N. Linnell

38. June 26, 1939 *The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State*

142.14/2427: Telegram

The Ambassador in Italy (Phillips) to the Secretary of State

Rome, June 26, 1939-4 p. m.

[Received June 26-3:20 p. m.]

234. I have just received the following communication dated June 22, from the Slovak Minister to Italy:

"Lacking other channels I permit myself to address Your Excellency personally requesting that you intervene with the competent authorities of the United States in the following matter:

The United States customs authorities require of our exporters that merchandise originating in Slovakia be marked 'made in Germany'. The Slovak exporters are unable to comply with any such requirement in view of the fact that Slovakia is an independent country from the political as well as from the economic point of view and is not bound to Germany other than by a treaty of friendship and guarantee such as have often been concluded in recent times. The Slovak Government, by governmental decision of March 14th last, declared that it would maintain in force all the international agreements concluded by the Czechoslovak Republic. Consequently as far as concerns Slovakia there remains in effect also the commercial agreements entered into between the United States of America and Czechoslovakia.

Furthermore the Slovak Republic has not entered into a customs union with Germany; it has its own national bank and its money-the Slovak crown.

The Slovak Government earnestly desires not only to continue to maintain the good relations which have so happily developed between my country and the United States but also to strengthen them as much as possible."

I have refrained from entering into official relations with the Slovak Minister and should consequently appreciate having the Department's instructions concerning the response which should be made to his letter.

Phillips

39. June 28, 1939 *The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)*

142.14/2427: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)
WASHINGTON, June 28, 1939-5 p. m.

59. Your 234, June 26, 4 p. m. Should you feel that there is occasion to reply to the Slovak Minister you should confine yourself to the statement that you have referred his communication to the Department.

For your own information the position of this Government with regard to Slovakia as set forth in Radio Bulletin No. 63 of March 17, 1939 has not changed.

Hull

40. August 7, 1939 *The Chargé in Hungary (Travers) to the Secretary of State [Slovak government requests de facto recognition]*

142.14/2427: Telegram

The Secretary of State to the Ambassador in Italy (Phillips)
WASHINGTON, June 28, 1939-5 p. m.

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Hull

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