

CONTENTS

Communications from Germany

Telegram No. 156, July 12, 1937, (762.63/368)
Despatch No. 3564, July 14, 1937, (762.63/370)
Telegram No. 185, August 4, 1937, (741.65/392)
Telegram No. 195, August 11, 1937, (741.65/402)
Telegram No. 206, August 28, 1937, (793.94/9755)
Telegram No. 226, September 9, 1937, (852.00/6414)
Telegram No. 237, September 27, 1937, (762.65/346)
Telegram No. 249, October 19, 1937, (793.94/10733)
Telegram No. 269, November 9, 1937, (762.94/183)
Despatch No. 3804, January 3, 1938, (762.00/152)
Telegram No. 11, January 13, 1938, (793.94/12070)
Telegram No. 16, January 17, 1938, (741.62/221)
Telegram No. 19, January 19, 1938, (760C.62/350)
Telegram No. 49, February 11, 1938, (762.00/160)
Telegram No. 59, February 16, 1938, (762.63/432)
Telegram No. 62, February 18, 1938, (762.63/453)
Telegram No. 63, February 18, 1938, (")
Telegram No. 79, February 25, 1938, (762.00/175)
Telegram No. 83, February 26, 1938, (762.63/473)
Telegram No. 99, March 9, 1938, (741.62/242)
Telegram No. 205, April 28, 1938, (760F.62/224)
Despatch No. 123, May 2, 1938, (760F.62/249)
Telegram No. 223, May 5, 1938, (760F.62/236)
Telegram No. 225, May 6, 1938, (760F.62/239)
Telegram No. 226, May 6, 1938, (760F.62/238)

Communications from Germany

Telegram No. 229, May 7, 1938, (762.65/429)
Telegram No. 246, May 14, 1938, (760F.62/263)
Despatch No. 154, May 16, 1938, (760F.62/352)
Despatch No. 156, May 18, 1938, (760F.62/353)
Telegram No. 265, May 24, 1938, (760F.62/332)
Telegram No. 266, May 24, 1938, (760F.62/333)
Telegram No. 267, May 25, 1938, (760F.62/342)
Telegram No. 292, June 4, 1938, (760F.62/392)
Despatch No. 183, June 15, 1938, (760F.62/461)
Telegram No. 334, June 29, 1938, (760F.62/455)
Telegram No. 349, July 16, 1938, (762.00/202)
Telegram No. 357, July 23, 1938, (760F.62/504)
Telegram No. 383, August 13, 1938, (760F.62/563)
Telegram No. 384, August 13, 1938, (760F.62/562)
Telegram No. 407, August 29, 1938, (760F.62/617)
Telegram No. 425, September 8, 1938, (760F.62/701)

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR

This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (B)

Berlin

Dated July 12, 1937

FROM

Rec'd 10:10 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington. —

156. July 12, 1 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL.

As doubtless the American press has reported there has been a certain uneasiness and rumors have been in the air lately with regard to Austro-German relations. Sensationally minded persons have been suggesting possibilities of a Nazi putsch in Austria.

In the circumstances we have discussed the matter with the Austrian Legation. Generally speaking they are anxious, as always, concerning Austro-German affairs but have no reason to believe that Germany will take aggressive action at this time either directly or through a Nazi putsch in Austria. The Austrian Legation still pins its faith to the belief that in the long run Mussolini must consider Austrian independence a cornerstone of his own security.

The Austrian Legation is aware, however, of the constant and increasing pressure the German Government is exerting towards the Nazification of Austria. The tone of communications and conversations with Austria is less and less friendly and more insistent on this score. The

chief



762.63/368

FILED

GE

JUL 14 1937

JR #156, July 12, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

chief troublemaker is the Ministry of Propaganda which the Austrian Legation considers is attempting by publishing sensational false and misleading anti-Austrian news deliberately to sabotage efforts which the two Foreign Offices make to come to a reasonable execution of the agreement of July 11, 1936. This naturally arouses counter attacks in Austria and so it goes.

The German Commission to discuss the execution of the July 11th agreement has just returned from several days' conversations in Vienna. We may shortly learn something on this score which will be of interest in the above regard.

The last three paragraphs Embassy's 153, July 6, 1 p.m., appear pertinent to the Austrian situation.

Copies to London, Paris, Rome, Geneva, Vienna, Praha, Warsaw.

DODD

CSB:KLP



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 3564

Berlin, July 14, 1937.

Subject: Austro-German Relations.

Fill. PM



M. I. D - In Confidence

SECRET

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

Referring to the Embassy's telegram No. 156,
of July 12, 1 p.m., I have the honor to transmit
herewith, in translation, a DNB statement, which
appeared in the BERLINER TAGEBLATT of July 13, 1937,
regarding the attitude to be adopted by the press
in Germany and Austria as a result of the conversa-
tions carried on in Vienna recently in execution of
the agreement of July 11, 1936. As the Department
will

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

JUL 23 1937

762.63/370

FP

will observe, the arrangement would foresee that in the future an effort is to be made by the press in both countries not to publish offensive articles.

This press arrangement is considered of some importance I understand, especially in Vienna, where its agreement would evidence the successful termination of many months of complaints on the part of the Austrian authorities against articles in the German press which have only served to irritate and confuse the difficult issues between the two countries.

CONFIDENTIAL.

According to local Austrian officials, the German press attacks on the part of the Propaganda Ministry have been one of the worst handicaps to the maintenance of satisfactory relations between Austria and Germany. These Austrian officials believe that the more radical element in the Nazi Party in Germany, represented in the Propaganda Ministry or operating through it, deliberately set out to create difficulties between the two countries by printing offensive press matter whenever the conservative elements in Germany and Austria, represented by the two Foreign Offices, are by way of getting together. As the latest evidence of this method of procedure the Austrian officials in question cite the publication in Germany, just prior to the recent Austro-German discussions in Vienna, of allegations of ill treatment of Nazi prisoners in Austria. These allegations arose from the flimsiest

of

of pretexts and could not be substantiated by investigations made by the Austrian authorities themselves. We might add that the German Foreign Office expressed to us today the satisfactory nature of the discussions just concluded at Vienna. The Foreign Office even went so far as to say that Herr Hitler himself entirely approved of the moderate manner in which the German commission claims to have negotiated and that he has no intention whatsoever of pressing unduly upon Austria. The Embassy gathered that Hitler is determined to pursue this moderate course because he feels that in time Austria is bound to fall into Germany's lap, so-to-say, and that aggressive action could only result dangerously both for German-Austrian relations and for Europe in general, as well as probably retard the achievement of the end in view.

Respectfully yours,

✓
Enclosure:
Translation.

William E. Dodd
William E. Dodd.

710
FILM-GW

4

RECEIVED

J. L. N.

Enclosure 1.

Translation
from
BERLINER TAGEBLATT, July 13, 1937.

Berlin, July 12, (DNB).

In the German-Austrian conversations carried on from the 6th to the 10th of this month in the sense of the Agreement of July 11, 1936, the questions of mutual press relations were also discussed in detail. In these conversations the guiding idea was that especially the attitude of the press in the two countries is of the greatest importance for a successful development of the relations between the two states.

Accordingly, in the course of the conversation, which was conducted in a friendly spirit, the observation of certain principles was declared to be necessary. In the future, in the news service and in the press, no reports are to be published uninvestigated which might cause offense in the other country and start polemics, and no reports are to be taken over from notoriously unfriendly sheets and agencies. Furthermore, reporting and article service are to occupy themselves in a loyal manner also with the positive achievements in the two countries and not to take an exclusively negative direction; in particular, attacks of a personal nature are to be refrained from.

Questions of philosophy of life and of conceptions of state are to be treated, even where differences of opinion exist, dispassionately and not in an insulting form. The press must refrain from all support or encouragement of activity directed against the other state and its government, and be conscious of the responsibility imposed on the journalism of both states by their belonging to the German people.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



JR

1-1338

FROM

Berlin

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

Dated August 4, 1937

Rec'd 10:45 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

125. August 4, 1 p.m.

My 180, July 29, 6 p.m., paragraph three and four.

CONFIDENTIAL. We have no evidence that the development of Anglo-Italian relations is viewed here otherwise than at least complacently if not indeed with approbation. A recent conversation with the acting head of the Foreign Office confirms this opinion. While being cautious in his comment the latter seemed pleased with the way things were developing in the European diplomatic situation. He seemed to feel that the British and possibly even the French were determined not to permit Soviet tactics to prevent a constructive move at a seemingly favorable opportunity in European affairs even to the extent, if necessary, of leaving Russia outside the picture. Eisenhower indicated that possibly Russia should have said the first word which it was hoped would be the case since even if left outside Russia could make considerable difficulties. Eisenhower also suggested that among other factors inspiring the new line in British policy the situation in the Far East probably

741.65/392

GMB

JR #185, August 4, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

probably played an important role since the British could not afford to have their great interests in the Far East as well as those in Europe simultaneously jeopardized.

The Soviet Counsellor called on me yesterday. He discussed the nonintervention situation as well as its larger aspects, indicating that their information was to the effect that the Chamberlain-Mussolini communications had reached the point of considering concrete matters, for example recognition of Italy's position in Abyssinia. In our discussing the possibility of Soviet isolation if she continued her present course with regard to Spain the Soviet Counsellor also said that the door was not closed and that Russia may possibly not have said her last word. I gained the impression that while the Soviets were certainly not enthusiastic about the new British policy yet they felt that an Anglo-Italian rapprochement would upset the Rome-Berlin axis making Italy more independent on the continent than would otherwise be the case.

In this latter respect I am inclined to think that the present British move as viewed () Berlin is directed less toward warning Italy away from her German associations than frankly recognizing the same and appearing at least to play equally with both parties. Furthermore, that will

JR #185, August 4, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

by no means abandoning France at the same time England is putting pressure on her to join with the other three countries in four power arrangements similar to the recent abortive move in this direction. Whether this would be under the name of "Locarno" it would be substantially a new development on the basis of Mussolini's well known four power pact policy.

Copies to London, Paris, Geneva, Rome, Warsaw.

HAYES

CSB

This telegram must be
closely paraphrased by
for being communicated
to the one. (E)

BERLIN

Dated August 11, 1937

Rec'd. August 12, 10 am

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

1-1338

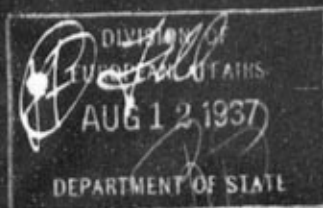
FROM

Secretary of State,

Washington

1937, August 11, noon.

CONFIDENTIAL.



In a conversation with the French Ambassador recently he analyzed the present Anglo-Italian conversations in the following manner.

First of all, the maneuver is in the classic Italian manner. Likewise it is the sort of maneuver both the Italians and Germans have to resort to on occasion because of their respective peculiar positions in Europe. Alone, either Germany or Italy, and especially the latter, is relatively isolated in European politics, whereas, associated they exercise a large influence. Certain important aims and interests of the two countries, however, are opposed with special reference to Central Europe. It is necessary, therefore, from time to time that each demonstrate a certain independence. Eventually this may well result in the one selling out the other. The situation has not gone so far at present, however, since the Berlin-Rome axis is still extremely useful to both parties, particularly in regard to the ultimate relations with the British. In the above would imply it is too early to estimate the real scope or aims of the British or Italian policy in the present discussions. The Abyssinian matter should

741.65/402

FILED

AUG 13 1937

FP

#195, August 11, noon from BERLIN -2-

should be, and doubtless will be, cleared up during the next Assembly when the whole move should become clearer. While the Four Power Pact so phrased is undesirable as causing offense and apprehension to Russia and certain smaller European states, the basic idea is sound and inevitable if there is to be a real peace. European cooperation, whether through a League of Nations or some similar idea, must be founded on and can only result after the agreement of the principal European countries.

The French Ambassador further stated his understanding that the Anglo-Italian discussions were initiated by Mussolini. Mussolini was apprehensive of the British, aware that his economic position is not good and is growing more difficult, and desirous of carrying favor with the British at this time, especially when Mussolini believes France will win and Germany will demand of Italy as regards Austria and Central Europe the price which Germany stipulated for assistance in Spain.

Copies to London, Paris, Rome, Warsaw.

HAYER

GV RR

FS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

Berlin

Dated August 28, 1937

Rec'd 8:45 a.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

206, August 28, 11 a.m.

Supplementing from a somewhat different political angle my No. 202, August 26, 8 p.m., concerning the expressed attitude of the Foreign Office toward Japanese action in China, a colleague who is a close personal friend of von Mackensen, at present acting head of the Foreign Ministry, informs me in strict confidence that the latter expressed himself to him heatedly respecting Japanese action and policy.

Von Mackensen stated that Japan's entanglement in China which he believed would be indefinitely protracted had practically nullified the value to Germany of the German-Japanese understanding respecting Russia which received a form of outward expression in the anti-Communist agreement.

In association with the considerations discussed in my telegram under reference, I feel that von Mackensen's preoccupations lie at the core of the question and to the extent the Foreign Office may play a part in the determination of German external policy, its views should be

given

NOTE
762.94

FE
EU

FS 2-No. 206, August 28, 11 a.m. from Berlin

given careful consideration in their possible effects on Germany's role in the European situation.

Copies in code by mail to London, Paris, Rome, Moscow, Tokyo.

JLS:KLP

GILBERT

MBa A portion of
this telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

EU
Berlin

Dated September 9, 1937

Rec'd 4:53 p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

226, September 9, 7 p.m.

(GRAY) One. I learn at the Foreign Office that identic
replies to invitations to the proposed conference on the
Mediterranean situation which were in the form of identic
notes from the French and the British were handed to the
British Ambassador and the French Charge this morning.
The German Government in effect declines participation.
The attitude of the Foreign Office is one of continuing
resentment that London refused Germany's suggestion for
joint consideration of the LEIPZIG and DEUTSCHLAND incidents
and that on this score the refusal of the present invita-
tions is justified. The expressed Foreign Office reason is
that due in particular to the situation created by the
Russian note to Italy, the "atmosphere is not favorable to
a successful conference." Foreign Office officials ad-
mitted that up to the time of that occurrence they had been
inclined to accept. The notes in reply state that the mat-
ter should be referred to the existing Non-intervention
Committee. I was told that Germany would attend a Non-
intervention

6014

MBo 2- No. 226, September 9, from Berlin.

intervention Committee meeting for that purpose whenever called. (END GRAY)

Two. As seen from here the Russian note to Italy has the appearance of a move in the realm of "pressure politics" which with increasing frequency has characterized the recent European situation, a feature of which is that positions taken for pressure purposes by no means necessarily imply the intent or even a willingness to translate words into action.

This Russian position may, I think, be regarded as a natural repercussion in Europe of the Far Eastern situation and thus in a sense confirmatory of Von Mackensen's opinion reported in my 206, August 28, 11 a.m. Incidentally, in my conversation at the Foreign Office the view was expressed that the present Russo-Italian difficulties would not (repeat not) result in a rupture of diplomatic relations.

Three. The German notes just published are substantially along the lines outlined above. They stress throughout, however, that the action taken is in agreement with the Italian Government and give as one of the reasons why the matter should be referred to the Non-intervention Committee as thereby permitting the participation of other states such as Poland and Portugal.

Copies in code by mail to Rome, Paris, Moscow.

GILBERT

SMS:NPL

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



RB
A portion of this telegram must be closely paraphrased **FROM** before being communicated to anyone. (Band C)

Berlin

Dated September 27, 1937

Rec'd 2:55 p. m.

Secretary of State
Washington.

237, September 27, -4 p. m.

(GRAY) One. On the eve of Mussolini's arrival here today where according to reports from Munich the "real conversations" between him and Hitler will take place, the air is rife with alleged facts concerning the portent of this visit. (END GRAY)

German old line officialdom manifests a general dislike at the happening. They are clearly uneasy over it. I believe that they are fearful of the meeting of the two prima donnas. They recall the Venice meeting. Their apprehension expressed in lowest terms is that "nothing realistic can come of it". They are also fearful that should it so happen that Hitler is caught in one of his ecstatic moods the more realistic Italian can work upon his anti-Communist emotions to obtain greater support than the German Army desires to give in Spain and hence increased support in the Mediterranean.

762.65/346

FILED

OCT 2 1937

GWL

RB

-2-4237, September 27, 4 p.m. from
Berlin

I myself am not inclined to share this latter view.

I feel that Hitler is too readily misjudged and that he has again and again demonstrated a keen perception of realities. I think that with recollections of Venice Hitler is more likely to regard the Duce's coming to Berlin as a personally satisfying triumph and that he will not give anything to Italy which is not clearly in line with Germany's individual interests. While I believe it cannot be doubted that Spain will come up in the conversations Mussolini is nevertheless seen as coming here under the disadvantage of the Franco British working agreement under the Nyon accord.

Back of all this, furthermore, lies a deep seated German distrust of Italy based in part on traditional Italian political methods with sharp recollections of 1915 a feeling at this time enhanced by open expressions in German military circles of a lack of faith in the power of Italian arms and also by a belief that Germany's further involvement in Spain was induced by Ciano's persuasiveness at Berchtesgaden last October.

The Austrian Minister here a week ago displayed obvious nervousness that the meeting would have "something to do

RB

-3-1237, September 27, 4 p. m. from
Berlin

to do with Austria". In talking to him more recently this nervousness had apparently disappeared. I said to him that I felt that to prevent an unrestricted Germany at the Brenner could be considered as an irrevocably cardinal point in Italian policy. He replied that he was certain that this was the case. The implication might be drawn that Vienna had recently received further assurances from Rome. I know nothing more definite. I am advised, however, by sound diplomatic sources that they have knowledge that on the occasion of Schmidt's visit here earlier in the month the project was broached to him of Austria's becoming a part of a middle and southeastern European block under the joint aegis of Germany and Italy. Certain diplomatic opinion believes that Vienna might accept this as the lesser of various evils and indeed might easily prefer it as a form of guarantee of Austria's integrity to her present uncertain status. Should such a project come into the open it would undoubtedly be advanced as an anti-Communist sanitary cordon. If this idea is indeed seriously contemplated it is felt nevertheless to be as yet in a nebulous state and the complexity of the difficulties in effecting

-4- 27, September 27, 4 p. m. from
Berlin

concerning it including the possible attitudes of such states as Poland and Czechoslovakia which may need enlargement. It is believed, however, that this will be touched upon in the conversations as at least a possible consideration for the two countries. There has of course long been talk of the formation of a neutral political bloc in that area. The Foreign Office asserts to me that the meeting has no purpose other than "a demonstration" with perfectly obvious and understandable internal and external objectives. The Italian Ambassador made similar statements to me adding that he could assure me that no specific agreement of any kind was contemplated and that none would come into being. The truth is that it is highly probable that outside of Hitler no one in Germany knows precisely what may be on foot with the reservation that I am unable to obtain anything definite as to what may possibly be transpiring, for my part I gain the impression that the very magnitude of the demonstration which is everywhere in evidence here bears out the assertion that it is an end in itself. I feel that a grimmer purpose would be accomplished in a grimmer style.

As an echo of the distrust of Italy mentioned above a statement

RB

-5-7237, September 27, 4 p. m. from
Berlin

statement frequently made here in both German and diplomatic circles is that Mussolini consented to the visit as enhancing his bargaining value in a "selling out" to Great Britain. Whatever passing phases such a possibility might appear to assume in my view Rome's fundamental opposition to a continued British domination in the Mediterranean in any form is as immutable as Rome's preoccupation regarding the Brenner.

I do think, however, that the conversations might result in Germany and Italy each for its own reasons agreeing not to enter into arrangements with third powers without prior consultation,

Two. I encounter the understanding in both German and Italian circles here that Hitler will pay a return visit to Rome. The Germans speak of such a visit taking place later this year while the Italians speak more vaguely of "sometime in the spring".

Three. In view of the public alarm apparently felt in some quarters over these happenings, I venture to add whatever may be their outcome I continue to be optimistic respecting imminent danger of a general European conflict as I now view the situation from here. I do not believe

that

RB

-6-#237, September 27, 4 p.m. from
Berlin

that any nation due to realistic considerations desires war. I do not believe that any nation is at present prepared for warlike initiative in that each is lacking in one or more of the following prerequisites, (A) the completion of its armament program, a corollary of which is that the Spanish campaign has demonstrated that highly specialized offensive warfare is not yet able to overcome defenses to a degree to make possible and short and decisive war upon which certain continental especially German and Italian military policy has been based; (B) a sufficiency of reserves of food or other essential material; (C) the psychological affiliating of its people. In particular I do not believe that any nation would institute a war unless it had a 90% chance of success and no such favorable chances are anywhere evident. While there are many sharp divergences in policy which present alarming aspects as causes of war and indeed may perhaps be held as rendering a war eventually inevitable the general circumstances do not appear ripe for attempting their solution by any particular war. It would seem certain that no state would venture on a war alone. The divergencies of policy mentioned are found furthermore within

-7-237, September 27, 4 p. m. from
Berlin

within all of the present great power associations of which the binding force is certainly only a limited parallelism of objectives back of which lie almost irreconcilable differences in national policy or inherent mutual distrust. This I feel inhibits the formation of solid opposing blocks in which perhaps would lie the greatest danger to peace. There, of course, remains the danger of inflammatory incidents. It is however illuminating respecting the temper of the situation how such pretexts for war have repeatedly been passed over. While there will continue to be much jockeying for position and much posturing particularly on the part of Germany and Italy the "return" of Russia to Europe has evidently given pause to these two states which have been considered as the most liable to start trouble.

Copies by mail to Paris, London, Rome, Vienna, Geneva, Praha, Moscow.

GILBERT

CSB

GRAY
TELEGRAM RECEIVED

Berlin

Dated October 19, 1937

FROM

Rec'd 9:45 a.m.

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
OCT 19 1937

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State,
Washington.

249, October 19, noon.

It is considered advisable to inform the Department for whatever attention it may merit of a news despatch appearing in the VOLKISCHER BEOBACHTER under Moscow date line of October 16 to the effect that a well known American statesman recently visited Moscow as "Washington's unofficial envoy".

Under the headline "Moscow as the battering ram of the United States" the despatch states in substance that according to Soviet and informed diplomatic circles the American referred to as "L" had conversations with numerous high Soviet officials with a view to ascertaining "to what extent the internal political crisis in Russia hindered its freedom of movement in the Far East". The United States Government is reported to have offered "certain concrete assurances in case Moscow should engage itself further in the Far Eastern conflict" and the despatch adds that it is planned to conduct detailed negotiations in this respect in Vladivostok.

Repeated to Moscow by telegraph.

GILBERT

793.94/10733

F/FG

MB o

This telegram was closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

Berlin

Dated November 9, 1937

Rec'd 12:23 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington

269, November 9, 4 p.m.

FROM



The French Ambassador here came to see me yesterday.

He said the recent German, Italo, Japanese agreement is the result of the Mussolini visit to Germany and it really means a more serious outlook for his country and England. He says this almost guarantees German control and annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, and doubts whether the Franco-Russian pact of 1935 would have any preventive effect. He added that Von Papen now in Paris has asked high government official whether France would do anything if Austria were annexed to Germany. I think recent German Polish minority agreement only adds to the difficulties of the Baltic and Danube states. Every effort to have a general conference for cooperation has been defeated by Germany or Italy. And if Hitler should be able to bring China and Japan into peace negotiations it would only add to German prestige at home and abroad. Public officials announce over the radio and the press publishes that "now our combination with Italy and Japan gives us two hundred million people and two million tons of naval war power."

By mail to American delegation.

CSB:

DCDD

762.94/183

GMB

FILED

NOV 16 1937



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

LEGAL ADVISER

MAR 22 1938

No. 3804

Berlin, January 3, 1938.

Subject: German Foreign Policy;
Political and Military
Aspects.



Full [signature]
By [signature]
summarized

CONFIDENTIAL



M.I.D. } in confidence
O.N.I. }

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL



1938 JAN 12 PM 2 29

COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

762.00/152

The Honorable

The Secretary of State
Washington.

Sir:



I beg to refer to the Embassy's telegrams
Nos. 279 and 296, dated respectively November 23,
2 p.m., and December 16, 6 p.m., in which were set
forth statements respecting Germany's external
policy expressed to me direct by responsible offi-
cials in the Foreign Office.

I

FILED
MAR 23 1938

FP

I now have the honor to report that at the opening of 1938 I find these expressions maintained in the same quarters and furthermore still employed with specific reference to the Hitler-Halifax conversations which took place toward the end of November 1937. This conveys the impression that what might be termed the "implications" of those conversations remain alive in Berlin and that the reaching of an understanding with London is still an active objective.

A question which has, however, all along been uppermost is as to the extent German expressions of policy represent actual intentions. From a British and French point of view this question emerges under the form as to just how far Germany's current statements and assurances, i.e., Hitler's, may be given credence. London's policy in particular is seen from Berlin as being to an important degree dependent on British opinion on that point.

On this score it is evident that there are many cross-currents in Germany and that in particular the influences or the individuals which may govern German action on any specific issue or at any given stage are to a distinct degree not susceptible of advance determination. I have nevertheless from conversations with a relatively large number of responsible German officials during the past several weeks, drawn together a survey of their statements and opinions respecting German policy and the bases

upon

upon which that policy is alleged to rest. Much of what was said to me was uttered with unexpected frankness; in other cases inferences to be drawn from remarks made were almost unmistakeable.

As to the validity of these expressions as an appraisal of German policy it may be said at least that they are the views of officials who are at present entrusted with the execution of current German policy in a variety of its phases. An important feature of this is that what these men presented has but little association with accepted concepts of National Socialist ideology; it is in fact in some instances a negation of the standardized propaganda expressions of that ideology. In the background there of course exists the mass of the German people indoctrinated with National Socialist ideas and methods of thought. What all this may mean in an estimate of possibilities in German future action is a question I am not attempting to answer. Nor do I know where an answer to that question may be found. I do nevertheless find it of peculiar interest, and perhaps of significance, to note to what a marked degree the various elements of German policy conveyed to me in the manner I have described are interrelated and thus present something of an homogeneous concept of German external policy. I thus venture to express the view that this concept may well be given consideration in an observation of developments in Germany.

The survey to which I am referring is as follows:

(1) The cardinal points in present German policy concern the so-called Eastern European question and the colonial question. Although much greater public emphasis is placed on the latter, the former is regarded as the more fundamental and thus as far more important. The very circumstances of this outward emphasis on the colonial question has, however, given rise to an impression that Germany is advancing her colonial claims chiefly as a bargaining point for continental concessions. It is asserted to me, however, that this is not the case, but rather that Germany will pursue both objectives simultaneously.

762.63
(a) In the continental field, based if on nothing else on the concept of race, Germany desires the incorporation at some stage of Austria and the Sudeten-Germans into the Reich. It is evident, of course, that these two questions are not on the same footing. An Austrian Anschluss has from time to time been a declared German policy. Austria is moreover racially a Teutonic bloc. Respecting the Sudeten-Germans, on the other hand, Germany has never demanded territorial concessions from Czechoslovakia; in fact official Germany and the German inspired press have sedulously refrained from so doing. German immediate contentions in this respect are limited to the thesis that the Sudeten-Germans should be accorded "equal treatment" within the Czechoslovak state. It must be clearly understood nevertheless that the ideal of German racial unity

lies

lies deep in German consciousness. It is something much more fundamental than a mere National Socialist doctrine. In this sense the ultimate incorporation of Austria and, in some manner, of the Sudeten-German elements of Czechoslovakia into the Reich, may, I have been informed, be regarded as an essential German aim and that thus current attitudes may be considered as to a degree adopted within the framework of that general objective.

German tactics are to accomplish what Germany may be seeking in Eastern Europe without war. In the sense that presumably no civil leader of any state actively desires war per se, Germany does not wish a war. Parenthetically, the best diplomatic opinion here does not feel that German leaders believe that under present conditions or in the immediate foreseeable future war is essential or would indeed contribute to the maintenance of their regime. Should conditions change, the present type of German leadership suggests nevertheless the possibility of Germany's going to unpredictable extremes in both her internal and external affairs.

Germany believes that certainly the chances of a general war, and perhaps even of a limited strife, arising out of any developments in either the Austrian or Czechoslovak questions, depend largely on the attitude of France and Great Britain. German officials assert a belief that Russia would not move, at least under present circumstances, except in response to a move on the part of the Western Powers.

Germany

Germany alleges that any possible change in the political status of either Austria or Czechoslovakia should result from the principle of self-determination. To make Germany's alleged position clearer on this point, it may be added that German officials do not choose to commit themselves to any opinion as to whether the majority of Austrians or Sudeten-Germans desire union with Germany, or in particular as to whether Germany would take any steps to promote that end. They merely content themselves with asserting that Germany does not desire any change whatsoever except as responsive to an expressed wish of the peoples concerned.

Berlin's general aim is to gain Great Britain's acceptance of the formula that the incorporation, or attempted incorporation, into the Reich of the territories involved would not be regarded by Great Britain as ipso facto a hostile action or a cause of war. Berlin's immediate tactics are to advance this formula in a modified fashion. The character of British acquiescence in any of these projects might either be tacit or openly declared; these are merely matters of procedure. Germany believes that a like French acceptance must inevitably follow. Germany portrays the Franco-British reluctance to such acquiescence as not reasonably based on any "moral" grounds and thus as derived solely from Great Power political considerations which center primarily in objections to any increase in Germany's political or economic power.

(b) In the colonial sphere Germany desires the return of her former colonies or their "equivalent". She demands this as a moral right, in that the peace treaties were signed under duress, and on the grounds that international appeasement can lie only in the reduction of the gap between what she holds to be the "over-privileged" and "under-privileged" states. While admitting that colonies are desired in part for reasons of prestige, German leaders assert that colonies would be an economic advantage, and that of this Germany is solely in a position to judge.

462.01W
Incidentally, it will be recalled that the alleged suggestion respecting Belgian and Portuguese colonies during the Hitler-Halifax conversations was later attributed by the press to Schacht in his conversation with Halifax. Schacht informs me that, in response to Halifax' remark that it would be impossible to give Tanganyika to Germany, he had indeed said that, if Great Britain "feared" a "German Tanganyika", the problem might be worked out by giving Tanganyika to Portugal in exchange for some Portuguese possessions going to Germany. He asserted to me, however, that what he had said was merely an hypothetical illustration of what was meant by an "equivalent" and that he had added that any such matter was entirely for London and not for Berlin. Schacht added that it was obvious to everyone that he had no power to negotiate nor in any way to exceed the Chancellor's pronouncements, and that he resented the construction which

which the press had placed on his remarks. Schacht furthermore told me that he had also, at Halifax' request, given, during the course of the conversation, a few details of his idea regarding the setting up of a chartered company in Africa under international control, but that it was common knowledge that this was an old project of his and that he had in no way advanced it as a German proposal.

(2) Based on the premise that in both the continental and the colonial fields, the British and French objections to Germany's desires are motivated by political considerations, Germany "justifies" her attitude and action in the entire international sphere by stating that she is combatting French and British opposition with precisely the same weapon, i.e., political and ideological, which these two powers have at all times, in Geneva and elsewhere, employed against her.

In sustaining their statements respecting the essential aims of German external policy, responsible German officials have made the following "admissions". Aside from Hitler and certain of his followers who are undoubtedly sincere anti-Communists, and apart from German internal considerations, German leaders are consciously employing the ideological front in the international field solely to achieve immediate national ends. Germany is not interested in the international spread of Fascism. Indeed, Germany perceives disadvan-

tages

793.94
tages to herself - in the political, military, economic and Minority spheres - in totalitarian developments in other states. The immediate ends she is seeking by propaganda methods are (1) to create a popular sentiment in individual states favorable to Germany (2) to promote a general troubling of the international scene, whereby Great Britain and France may be driven to come to terms with Germany. Germany has thus no essential interest in Spain except as a threat to Great Britain and France in the Mediterranean and as pressure on France at the Pyrenees. The value of Italy to Germany is of precisely the same order. Respecting the Far East, Germany's tendency is to favor China, except as Japan may afford a menace to Great Britain. The value of many of Germany's present-day activities is represented as being ephemeral, and the implication is conveyed that they would gradually be discarded under changed conditions. In particular, with a view to the future, Germany carefully avoids alliances or any arrangements involving general reciprocal support, either with Italy or with Japan.

Anti-Communist agitation, aside from internal uses, is employed to the same end. Its particular objective at the moment is to gain the support for Germany of elements in Great Britain. High German officials have stated to me that in their view it is still a moot question as to whether the Russian army is permanently injured by the "purge". They consider recent happenings in Russia as, nevertheless, a definite gain for Germany, in that the consequent anti-Russian reaction in France

and

and Great Britain has weakened the French continental position.

(3) The present political situation obviously can not be considered apart from military factors, not necessarily in relation to actual combat, but certainly their potentialities for political pressure are taken into consideration.

On this score Germany takes note of expressions of British belief that time is operating in Britain's favor due to the progress of British rearmament and to an estimate of a progressive deterioration in German economy. German leaders, however, hold that precisely the opposite is true: that on a relative basis German strength is increasing. Respecting British naval rearmament they point out that as between Great Britain and Germany per se the British fleet could at its present strength successfully blockade Germany and that an increased navy would not better Britain's position in this respect. Concerning estimates of the military factors in German economy, it is granted that no opinion is readily susceptible of proof. German contentions are nevertheless that their present plans are especially designed to prevent a recurrence of the effects of the British blockade in the World War, that these plans when implemented can accomplish that end under war conditions for a year or perhaps longer, and in general that foreign estimates of German economy are customarily based on classical economic standards which are not applicable to present-day Germany. They admit nevertheless that in a protracted

war a British blockade would be a formidable weapon. German strategists recognize British superiority of access to raw materials but contend that, while raw materials are an essential and predominant factor in naval strength, man power is a sine qua non in land forces. They hold that on land French military power has reached its maximum, that the British increase is negligible, and that the German increase, both in personnel and matériel, is progressive. They to a definite degree discount air forces on either side as a "determining combat weapon". They expand on this by saying that it is true both in respect of the air plane as a weapon per se and because overwhelming air superiority on either side is not to be reasonably expected. They point to German strategic superiority over the 1914 situation in that their forces were then divided by pursuing the initiative on two fronts, while their present military dispositions and political arrangements are with a view to acting solely defensively on the Western front. Their contentions are that the relative military forces involved, taken together with British political and military embarrassments in the Mediterranean and in the Far East in contrast to German freedom from such difficulties, will eventually evolve into a situation whereby Great Britain will be brought to a compromise. This estimate, they assert, lies back of the official attitude that Germany is not pressing her case, and also back of Hitler's public statements that time will be required for a settlement.

A general military estimate respecting Great Britain is that she cannot be considered as a significant continental power for any immediate action until she adopts general military service. It is admitted that should Great Britain introduce peace-time conscription the strategic situation on the Continent would radically change.

(4) With reference to the immediate issues in the international field, aside from the concrete calculations enumerated above, there is prevalent in Germany a belief in her inherent greatness and strength. In this sense too, Germans feel that time, or what they might term destiny, is working in Germany's favor. While there is a readiness to combat any force actively attacking her, Germany's "offensive" for the moment is described as limited to an expression of her desires and aims, in the belief that the general world situation in the natural course of events will work to their realization.

(5) There is a strong undercurrent of feeling running through certain German circles, particularly in the Economics Ministry, that an economic rapprochement with Russia would be a logical and advantageous development. I have not, however, encountered a serious presentation of this theory as a political possibility for at least the immediate future.

(6) Further in respect of the continental situation, Germans concede that should the Austrian and Czechoslovak questions be settled in their favor, Germany on the same basis of unity of race would undoubtedly turn its attention to the "unsatisfactory" situations in East Prussia and Danzig. These issues are, however, at present held in abeyance.

(7) Whether upon accomplishing its present stated desires in the continental and colonial spheres, Germany would seek further territorial aggrandizement is a speculative matter which, although generally informed opinion on this score is of interest, would presumably be determined by the conditions then prevailing. It is nevertheless regarded as highly probable that the accomplishment of her immediate main objectives, particularly in view of her methods of seeking their attainment, would quickly be followed by a radical reorientation of Germany's external policy, for example, in respect of Italy.

Respectfully yours,

Frentiss Gilbert
Frentiss Gilbert,
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

800
PG-GW

4
Carbon Copies

Received *[Signature]*

1 copy for info

DOCUMENT FILE

NOTE

SEE 793.94/12070

FOR Tel #11, 10am

FROM Germany

(Gilbert)

DATED Jan 13, 1938

TO

NAME

T-1127

WFO

REGARDING: Sino-Japanese conflict:-American and British courses in premises.

Possibility of Japanese attack on Hong Kong:-Britain would declare war on Japanese if such attack should eventuate, according to statement attributed to Eden, entertaining hopes of military support of U.S. Foregoing according to informant who requested Gilbert's views on possible American action in circumstances envisaged.

FRG.

741.94/163

FP

EG
This message must be
closely paraphrased or
form being communicated
to anyone. (3)

London

Dated January 12, 1931

10:11 a.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

12, January 13, 10 a.m.

CONFIDENTIAL

A chief of mission here of a state having interest
in the Far East showed me last evening a copy of a
despatch which the diplomatic representative of his
country at London had addressed to his Government which
recounted the following: Eden before leaving for the
Riviera had asked me to come to see him and had stated
that he believed it to be highly possible that the
Japanese would attack Hong Kong and that in such a case
Great Britain would certainly declare war on Japan.
Eden had added that London was in daily touch with
Washington and that he entertained hopes that in such
an eventuality Great Britain could count on the military
support of the United States.

My informant said that he had shown me the despatch
in strict confidence as he wanted to obtain my views on
possible American action in the circumstances envisaged.

-2- No. 11, January 13, 10 p.m. from Berlin

I told him in reply that as far as American public opinion was concerned, in view of the strained relations in the Far East, the course that the United States might pursue under various conditions was from time to time the subject of speculation in the American press but that in so far as I could observe from that source there was nothing approaching a definite crystallization of a common view. Regarding what official attitude my government might adopt in the specific expectations mentioned I could throw no light whatsoever.

GILBERT

RR:MC

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



LMS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (E) and (C)

Dated January 17, 1938

Rec'd 2:55 p. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

16, January 17, 5 p. m.

One. In a recent conversation with the Director of the Political Section of the Foreign Office he reviewed British-German relations in substantially the same terms I reported in the Embassy's 296, December 16, 6 p. m. I recalled to him that in December he had anticipated that London would perhaps "reply" in January to the statement of Germany's position which Hitler had enunciated to Halifax during the latter's visit in Berlin. Weizsaecker said that he now did not look for any action by London before late February or perhaps March. He added that Berlin was in no way pressing the matter or anxious about it, that it was fully understood that prior conversations must be had with both France and the Dominions, that Germany preferred that necessary time be taken for these preliminaries to any constructive development, and in particular the Foreign Office did not wish any repetition of such a "fiasco"

as the

741.62/221

GLG

LMS 2-No. 16, January 17, 5 p. m., from Berlin

as the British invitation to Neurath last June. He added that he was not prepared to speculate on what form the British reply might take.

I told Weizsaecker that some friends of mine in the Propaganda Ministry had said to me that Germany would not remain patient in the face of any indeterminate delay in London's reply and that if something did not develop by the end of January "the German press would be turned loose". Weizsaecker scouted this idea. He said that the absolute silence on this subject which the German press had maintained since Halifax's departure would continue as long as Berlin was convinced that "constructive measures were being studied in London."

In respect of the immediate foregoing I can only say that if a conflict of policy on this score actually exists between the Foreign Office and the Propaganda Ministry I would not venture to predict the outcome.

Two. In a subsequent conversation with the British Ambassador following his return from a visit to London he confirmed from a British view the status of the pertinent British-German relationship as described above. He said that the tacitly accepted situation was that

LMS 3-No. 16, January 17, 5 p. m., from Berlin.

was that the British would definitely make a "reply". When in London he had found Chamberlain personally engaged with this. He did not, however, anticipate a British readiness for action before perhaps two or three months. He personally deplored this as he felt that something arising out of the generally unsatisfactory state of international affairs might create a less favorable situation in the future. He said that in his talk with Chamberlain the difficulty was seen in that Great Britain as a possessor power must for effective conciliation relinquish something tangible while Germany with nothing to give can only proffer assurances. He said that of this last score it would not only be "absurd but dangerously absurd" for London to consider attempting to come to a serious settlement with Germany without being prepared to accept German assurances as valid and that if London was not prepared to do this it would be wiser to abandon any idea of an understanding with Berlin.

Three. In contrast with the foregoing certain chiefs of mission here inform me that their governments have gained the impression from London that the British do not intend to "go ahead with Berlin".

The

LMS 4-No. 16, January 17, 5 p. m., from Berlin.

The local representatives of the northern neutral states express anxiety over this situation. They picture Europe as further crystallizing into two opposing blocs as an offset to which tendency they have been hoping for some adjustment between London and Berlin.

GILBERT

UIC:SMS

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR

A portion of this telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated ^{FROM} to anyone. (C)

Berlin (part air)

Dated January 19, 1938

Rec'd 6:50 a.m., 20th.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

19, January 19, 5 p.m.

(GRAY) The Polish Foreign Minister visited Berlin January 13 to 15 and the Yugoslav Foreign Minister brought his stay in Berlin to a close last evening. Beck's visit while widely noted in the press was not accompanied by any public ceremonies while Stoyadinovitch's visit was the occasion for a lavish ceremonial display.

There is a tendency to seek for a special explanation in each case for the exchanges of visits between Berlin and other European capitals which Germany has for some time been fostering. That a concrete important reason exists or that a significant result may be expected in connection with each such event is not necessarily the case. Such happenings may easily from a German point of view serve an adequate end in themselves as a demonstration both for internal and external effect of a dissolving of the elements of Germany's former isolation and as emphasizing Germany's declared policy of bilateral as opposed to multilateral relationships (END GRAY).

(a)



FILED

760C.62/350

E/HC

-2- #19, January 19, 5 p.m., from Berlin.

(a) Respecting Beck's visit I am informed by a source which I am inclined credit that Germany is alarmed over an alleged deterioration in Polish economy and desired to discuss with Beck what might be undertaken in the way of improvement. A high German official is quoted as describing the Polish situation as "an excellent army in an economically rotten state".

— (GRAY) That Germany should wish for the maintenance of a relatively strong Poland for some time to come is entirely consistent with an estimate of German policy which perceives Poland as a valuable buffer against Russia, a policy rendered explicit by the German-Polish ten year pact and currently evidenced by direct German-Polish arrangements regarding treatment of minorities and the circumstance of the Danzig and corridor questions being held by Germany in relative abeyance.

It is also understood here that conversations took place respecting Poland's relations with the League. It is believed that these conversations touched upon the contemplated British demarche of reaffirming support in — Geneva of the League while making it clear that the League will not become a bloc opposed to other states (Geneva's telegram No. 1, January 5, 5 p.m.). (END GRAY)

(b) Diplomatic circles here are not inclined to attach any outstanding significance in terms of immediate results

to

-3- #19, January 19, 5 p.m., from Berlin.

to the Yugoslav visit. It is felt that it can to a degree be accounted for by the considerations discussed in the second paragraph of this telegram. There is understandably nevertheless a general tendency here to construe the visit as illustrative of a cooperative attitude on the part of the Yugoslav Government and perhaps an indication of its receptivity to the furtherance of German influence in southern Europe, a trend of affairs which could easily suggest eventual political developments of great importance. I am informed, however, by particularly interested circles here that they do not interpret the happening as necessarily leading to that result. I learn from representatives of the states concerned that Stoyadinovich was asked by the Soviet Ambassador and the Czechoslovak Minister to meet during his stay here with representatives of the Balkan Entente and the Little Entente, their aim being to obtain from him a general exposé of his policy. He pleaded, however, that his program was too full to afford him time for such a meeting. While these representatives took some exception to Stoyadinovich's not acceding to their request, they tell me that they feel satisfied from the individual conversations which they had with him that he does not contemplate any special tie up with Germany but rather that the Berlin visit represents

-4- #19, January 19, 5 p.m., from Berlin,

represents an "offset" to Yugoslav relations with France and even to some extent with Italy and may be regarded as an indication that the present Yugoslav Government is determined insofar as may be possible to follow an independent policy between the great powers.

(GRAY) The German official communique states that these conversations "which were conducted in an atmosphere of sincere friendship and complete understanding of mutual political views, confirmed anew that the premises exist for permanent friendship and cooperation between the two nations which would serve the peace of Europe". It is understood also that occasion was taken to impress the Yugoslavs with German industrial developments with a view to stimulating commercial relations with Yugoslavia from which Germany would like to procure increased foodstuffs. Whether or not any specific commercial arrangements were set on foot is not yet apparent.

GILBERT

KLP:TC

LMS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

Berlin

Dated February 11, 1938

Rec'd 2:58 p. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

49, February 11, 4 p. m.

One. In quarters here which feel that the new German Government will embark on a radical course in foreign affairs as described in my 48, February 11, noon, paragraph four, immediate apprehensions largely center in the "Austrian question".

762 3
The Military Attache reported through telegram No. 11, February 5, 1 p. m., from the American Legation at the Hague the army's "belief" concerning the Italian angle in the question. The Embassy is unable to obtain anything more definite on that score nor is it able to substantiate that German activity respecting Austria is in prospect. It can only take note of expressions of belief to this effect.

Two. In this connection it may be said that the circumstance that Ribbentrop is apparently of the radical school as reported in my telegram under reference does not, however, necessarily (repeat necessarily) imply that Germany will immediately embark

on

LMS 2-No. 49, February 11, 4 p. m., from Berlin.

on "radical" courses in external affairs. It is pointed out here that a feature of Ribbentrop's appointment is that as a recognized party man he is more free in expressions of policy especially those of a moderate character than was his predecessor Neurath who could not enjoy that luxury but was compelled in many ways to be "more royalist than the King". On this score there is an expression of belief here that as an "answer" so to speak to the foreign press and perhaps in line with a non-antagonistic attitude toward Great Britain and France for reasons discussed in my previous telegrams and which Hitler may still have in mind Ribbentrop may at the outset at least adopt a policy of moderation which may indeed find expression in the Chancellor's speech to the Reichstag on February 20 which many forecast will for tactical reasons be moderate in tone.

I am not myself as yet prepared to express an opinion on the foregoing but submit it as one of the important items of current Berlin speculation.

GILBERT

EMB:RGC

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (3)

FROM Berlin

Dated February 16, 1938

Rec'd 11:45 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

February 16, 3 p.m. (GRAY)

Embassy's 55, February 14, 6 p.m.

A second communique as follows with respect to the recent conversations between the Fuhrer and the Austrian Chancellor was published last night by the DNB.

One. "In the conversation which took place on February 12 between the Fuhrer and Chancellor and the Federal Chancellor Dr. Schuschnigg on the Obersalzburg near Birchtasgaden all the questions of the relations between the German Reich and Austria were subjected to detailed discussion.

The aim of this conversation was to settle the difficulties which had arisen in the execution of the agreement of July 11, 1936. There resulted agreement that both parties are determined to adhere to the principles of this agreement regarding it as the starting point for a satisfactory development of the relations between the two states. In this spirit both parties after the conversation of February 12, 1938, decided on the immediate execution.

762.63/432

FILED

ET 17 1938

-2- #58, February 16, 3 p.m., from Berlin.

execution of measures which offer a guarantee that such close and friendly relations between the two states will be established as correspond to the history and total interests of the German nation.

Both statesmen are convinced that the measures determined upon by them are at the same time an effective contribution to the pacific development of the European situation.

The Austrian Government has issued a similar "communiqué".

There is entire absence of any information or comment as to the details of the arrangement in the German press which has confined itself to general observations of its effect as a contribution to European peace and as evidence of the unity of Austria and the Reich (END GRAY).

Two. It is assumed here that further elucidation of this matter will await the Chancellor's speech on February 20. It is nevertheless generally taken to preclude for the immediate future any German aggression against Austria from the outside, which has been the subject of recent apprehensions.

The arrangement is considered however as making a progressive control of Austria by Germany. To what extent

it

-3- #58, February 16, 3 p.m., from Berlin.

it had possessed prior concurrence of Italy and what
its effect may be on the Berlin-Rome axis remains obscure.

GILBERT

WCS

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

REB

1-1386

FROM

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

BERLIN

Dated February 18, 1938

Rec'd 3:21 p. m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

62, February 18, 6 p. m.

The Military Attache reports that as a result of numerous conversations and discussions with army sources he is convinced that the agreement reached with Austria as a result of the Hitler-Schuschnigg conversations contains military clauses providing for the gradual "assimilation" of the Austrian army into the German.

Presumably this military agreement covers: (one) unification of tactical doctrine through adoption of similar text books, (two) Austrian adoption of German military organization, (three) gradual introduction of uniform weapons, (four) coordination of war plans.

The Military Attache believes that within the relatively near future there will be evidence of a military alliance through the appointment of standing military missions by each country to the other country.

As



762.63/453

G-3

FEB 21 1938

FILED

REB

2-#62, From Berlin, Feb. 18, 6p.m.

As a corollary of the foregoing it is believed here that further changes in the Austrian Government will be announced shortly which will include the appointment of a "pro-German" Chief of Staff of the Austrian army.

GILBERT

SMS

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



REB

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

FROM BERLIN

Dated February 18, 1938

Rec'd 4:25 p. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

63, February 18, 7 p. m.

762.63

The British Counselor discussed with me this morning the British Embassy's views on the Austrian development and brought me up to date on the matter of current Anglo-German relationships. The following is thus largely in continuation of my 56, February 14, 7 p. m.

He said that the British Ambassador on his recent visit to London was himself "commissioned" to "continue the Hitler-Halifax conversations" and had brought back with him detailed instructions to this effect. The Counselor said that he regretted that he could not tell me the nature of these instructions inasmuch as they were being kept absolutely secret, the Ambassador in fact being empowered to reveal them only to the Chancellor. He characterized them nevertheless as being specific rather than general and designed to be "a step forward".

It

762.63/453

G-1

REB

2-#63, From Berlin, Feb. 18, 7 p.m.

It had been the intention of the Ambassador to see the Chancellor prior to the latter's Reichstag speech in order to work out ^{if possible} some "adjustment" in the terms of the speech.

It appears to be uncertain whether the Chancellor was personally aware of this British intention. In any event the unexpected intervention of the Austrian development produced at least a changed and presumably a less auspicious situation for the contemplated conversations with the Chancellor.

On the occasion of the Chancellor's dinner to the diplomatic corps on February 15 the second German communique having just been issued (my 59, February 16, 3 p. m.), Henderson informally expressed to the Chancellor Great Britain's "interest in Austria". The Chancellor responded in no uncertain terms to the effect that "Austria was solely a German concern".

In respect of the foregoing I commented that this German position is based on the principle of "Germans being solely a German concern". It thus under certain conditions might be applied to the Czechoslovak, the Danzig and the Corridor questions. The British Counselor agreed with me in this but did not believe that Germany would adopt a similar position respecting other Eastern European matters.

Henderson

REIT

3-463, From Berlin, Feb. 18, 7p.m.

Henderson is now under instruction from London formally to express Great Britain's interest in Austria. He feels however these instructions are awkward to fulfill inasmuch as he had already received a "rebuff" on the same point. He must however carry out these instructions in view of certain pertinent announcements having been made in London.

The Counselor said that the French Ambassador had received similar instructions and that he understood that Bonnet had seen Ribbentrop last evening on that score. The British Embassy was not as yet informed as to what took place. The Counselor stated that while he understood the British and French action in this respect was parallel it was definitely not joint action.

The Counselor expressed his belief that what had taken place was undoubtedly a first step to complete anschluss. Commenting on the Italian angle he said that he understood from Rome that the Italians were given advance notification of the German action respecting Austria but that he was inclined to feel that the Italians are now somewhat disconcerted by the lengths to

REB

4-#63, From Berlin, Feb. 18, 7p.m.

762.65
to which Germany has gone. He felt that the Rome-Berlin axis was as strong as ever if not stronger but agreed with me that the long range effect of Germany at the Brenner might be a different matter.

763.0
The Counselor stated that from the British point of view there were three courses which could be followed at this juncture, vis a vis, Germany, (A) Germany could be told that Great Britain would defend Austrian independence by arms if necessary, (B) Germany could be told that Great Britain did not approve of Germany's action and would reserve its position. In other words London could take the position that Austria was an issue between the two Governments. (C) The British could express their "interest" in Austria. He said that the latter course had evidently been chosen as presumably the only feasible one but that it was in effect meaningless.

The British Embassy is completely at a loss as to what line Hitler may take in his February 20 speech.

762.4
The Counselor and I speculated respecting the effects of the developments on Austria's international position and were inclined to believe that Austria would in due course be compelled to become a party to the
the

REB

5-#63, From Berlin, Feb. 18, 7p.m.

the anti-comintern pact. Whether Austria could be a party to that pact and retain membership in the League or whether in any event Austria would be permitted to remain in the League was felt to be problematical.

GILBERT

CSB

REB

GRAY

Berlin

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

February 25, 1938

Rec'd 4:10 p. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

FROM

79, February 25, 6 p. m.

The German press in its summary of Hitler's speech in Munich before the "old guard" of the party on the occasion of the eighteenth anniversary of National Socialism stressed his attacks on foreign press "incitement" against Germany which he menacingly attributed to Jewish sources. Referring to an article in the London NEWS CHRONICLE Hitler asserted "here was to be seen once more how the Jewish international poison brewers invented and disseminated lies". "We can" the Fuhrer declared "draw a lesson therefrom. We will at any rate proceed energetically against the Jewish inciters in Germany. We know that they are the representatives of an Internationale and we will treat them all accordingly."

The press summary stated Hitler presented an uncompromising demand for the return of German colonies and equal rights. Referring to the Hitler building program he stated that on account of these projects Germany "desired nothing more longingly than peace and conciliation but it must be peace with honor."

GILBERT

CSB

FILED
FEB 23 1938

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

MB.
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (B)

FROM Berlin

Dated February 26, 1938

Rec'd 11:00 a.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

83, February 26, 1 p.m.

One. Nothing definite yet emerges here respecting German official reaction to the Schuschnigg speech. That the tone of the speech is still regarded with surprise by the rank and file of party members is evident. In diplomatic and German circles comment centers on the apparent divergencies between the temper of the speech, and in particular Schuschnigg's insistence on Austrian sovereignty and freedom from external interference, and what had been understood to be the spirit and terms of the Berchtesgaden arrangements. Speculation turns on causes as deriving from the internal situation in Austria or possibly in response to some developments in great power politics.

Two. From military and other contacts here the Military Attache derives the belief that Hitler is aiming ultimately at a complete amalgamation of Germany and Austria. His sources are not agreed, however, as to the tempo with which he will proceed to complete this amalgamation.

His

762.63/473

GWL

2- No. 83, February 26, from Berlin.

His information is that in recent weeks Hitler has effected a rather thoroughgoing reorganization of the National Socialist Party in Austria, ousting certain local leaders such as Leopold and concentrating all party authority in the hands of Seyss-Inquart. It would seem that Hitler's purpose in these changes is to create a clear-cut channel of authority in Austrian matters from himself direct to Seyss-Inquart and to rule out all possibilities of lesser German party leaders, especially those of Prussian origin, meddling in Austrian affairs, thereby injuring Hitler's chances of bringing about the anchluss.

While the exact arrangements between Mussolini and Hitler with regard to Austria are unknown, it is felt by Austrian Nazis in Berlin that Hitler intends to lose no time in securing such a strong position in Austria that even if a sudden diplomatic shifting of fronts should occur Italy could not retrace her steps. His sources feel that further important steps towards anchluss will be taken not later than May, among these steps being the ousting of Dr. Kienbold from the presidency of the Austrian National Bank as being too close to France.

The background opinion of these sources is that whereas up to now time has been working for Hitler in Austria the opposite became true as soon as Hitler showed his hand.

3- No. 83, February 26, from Berlin.

hand in the Berchtesgaden meeting. Unless Hitler's assurances from Mussolini are very strong he must now definitely fear that a British-Italian accord might either slow down or completely check his attempt to amalgamate Germany and Austria. It appears logical, therefore, from Hitler's standpoint that he should press on without delay to his goal and complete his ascendancy in Austria before the Spanish civil war has ended and before Great Britain and Italy can have had time to reach an understanding. The National Socialist Party in Berlin apparently feels that they have already a safe majority for anschluss were a plebiscite to be taken in Austria in the next few months but that this present majority is not impressive nor indeed as large as the party could make it could they obtain several months' delay for organization and propaganda.

There are some indications here that religious matters were discussed in Berchtesgaden. There is a belief in Berlin that the recall of Papen, the most prominent Catholic layman in Germany, from Vienna is connected with a desire by Hitler to use him in negotiations with the Vatican. The question as to whether Hitler actually has made a complaint to Schuschnigg in Catholic religious matters can still not be answered but if this is assumed it could partly

explain

4- No. 83, February 26, from Berlin.

explain Schuschnigg's change of front at Berchtesgaden. Many indications suggest that Hitler is now seeking possibly at Mussolini's request a general all round settlement of the German religious disputes. Such a settlement in Germany would fall in with Hitler's Austrian plans and if effected would almost overnight greatly strengthen the German position in Austria.

Three. By reason of his familiarity with German affairs and his numerous contacts here the foregoing information from the Military Attache and the opinions regarding German plans in the Austrian and church questions are believed to merit consideration.

It may be added that in respect of the main thesis outlined above it is the general consensus of opinion in all Berlin circles that Hitler's ultimate aim is the absorption of Austria.

It might be emphasized, however, that the actual plans of the Chancellor in these matters are known only to himself and an extremely small circle of his intimates in governmental affairs to whom no outsider known to the Embassy has as yet established a relation of confidential access.

GILBERT

GW:HPD

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

Berlin

FROM Dated March 9, 1938

Received 10:10 a.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.



98, March 9, 9 a.m.

(SECTION TWO)

(B) British Counselor: The Counselor stated that
Hitler's statements to Henderson could be described as
a brief reaffirmation of the various points of his speech
of February 20. On the political side the "Germanic"
feature of the Austrian and Czechoslovak questions were
portrayed virtually as a matter of fundamental world
outlook and thus creating dominant and righteous urge.
The Counselor feels that the "taking over" of Austria as
entirely Germanic is a definite German determination. In
respect of Czechoslovakia he is inclined to believe that
should the Sudeten Germans be given what Berlin describes
as "fair treatment" within the Czechoslovak state (which
might involve autonomy) Germany might take no action.
If this not be done he feels that German action in some
form is ultimately inevitable. Very little was said in
the conversation respecting "colonies".

The Counselor stated that the chief impressions
from the conversations were Hitler's demonstration in
private

FW 741.62/242

FILED

6-11-38

-2- #99, March 9, 9 a.m. (SECTION TWO) from Berlin.

private and thus not for public consumption of a fervid feeling for the "rights" of Germans and his extreme sensitiveness to press misapprehension, to press "intervention" in internal German affairs and to "caricature" of personalities. The Counselor's feelings on these points are that regardless of certain inconsistencies in the German positions anyone who desires to deal with Germany in any rational manner must take into account the two characteristics which have been mentioned and which furthermore should not be regarded as improper or wrong per se.

The Counselor stated that this conversation most definitely formed merely comprises conversations which will be continued. To what extent Ribbentrop's visit to London will be an occasion for such a continuance remained to be seen.

A definite result of the conversation was that Chamberlain will make an effort looking to the British press being more restrained respecting Germany. He believes could this be accomplished, taking into consideration Hitler's personality, the conciliatory effect would be very great. He stated that this was the only immediate action envisaged and that he knew of

nothing

-3- #99, March 9, 9 a.m. (SECTION TWO) from Berlin.

nothing else being definitely contemplated.

Incidentally it may be said that competent British and American journalists here having taken note of Hitler's strictures concerning the British press in his February 20 speech are of the opinion that the British Government could indeed "control" the British press by an appeal as being in the public interest. It is questioned how long such a control could continue but it is felt that a surcease of attacks against Germany in the British press extending even for a month might attain the political objectives desired.

(END SECTION TWO)

WILSON

CSR

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



1-1336

FROM

SMS

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

Berlin (Part air)

Dated April 28, 1938

Rec'd 9:30 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

205, April 28, 6 p.m.

CONFIDENTIAL.

The German press has been building up day by day the Czechoslovak situation. Each day the facts and arguments used tend to show the unbearable plight of the Sudeten Germans, the justification of the demands of Henlein and that the only conceivable reason for the refusal of Henlein's suggestions would be hostility to Germany. As a result the public mind is prepared for almost any eventuality, even perhaps for action similar to that which happened in Austria.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that such action is contemplated. The German press in its handling of the Czechoslovak question has characteristically operated in waves, no doubt inspired by a desire to exert each time some particular form of pressure. It is thus equally arguable that the attitude

760F.62/224

CONFIDENTIAL FILE

GML

sms 2 - No. 205, April 28, 6 p.m. from Berlin

attitude of the German press can be explained by a desire to put pressure on Benes to acquiesce as far as possible in Henlein's demands.

The Consul General at Cologne has reported unusual activity among the Rhineland units of the army and rumors have reached us of military activity in the neighborhood of Czechoslovakia. It is felt, however, that this, if it exists, may either be a further form of pressure or may be relatively normal troop movements which the anxieties of the time tend to construe as ominous.

Henlein's speech of April 24 is popularly referred to here as an "ultimatum". However, it is pointed out that the employment of somewhat ambiguous language and general terms in Henlein's demands may have been intentional in order to leave the door open for negotiations. In this connection it is significant that Henlein did not mention the word "autonomy".

There is also some talk here that Henlein went further than Berlin would have wished. The best opinion nevertheless concurs that in view of the nature

of

sms 3 - No. 205, April 28, 6 p.m., from Berlin.

of the long standing relationship between Hitler and Henlein the Chancellor was in full agreement with both the timing and the content of the speech.

The Czechoslovak Minister told me that he believed that what is under consideration is a development of the principle of the unity of the German race, wherever it may be found, under the direction of national socialism. He advances the thesis that this so to speak spiritual preparation will be undertaken in various quarters and when the necessary state of mind has been brought about geographical rearrangements will follow. He thinks, however, that this is a long way off. Whether this may be as definitely true as the Minister states is, of course, an open question. It can be understood, however, that the Czechs would desire to spread such a concept in order to awaken sympathy for Czechoslovakia by reason of a common danger.

It is consistently stated from Praha that the Czechs would fight. Again, however, this is the tactically sound position for the Czechs to take in order to give Germany pause and to claim outside assistance. With all sympathy for the Czechs and their
gallant

page 4 - No. 205, April 28, 6 p.m., from Berlin.

gallant impulse toward armed resistance, the vital question is whether such resistance would provoke a general war.

The Czechoslovak Minister stated that he felt the situation to be most serious. He said that he had urged Benes for a long time to come immediately to an agreement with Henlein. Unfortunately it had been too long delayed; it should have been made before the Austrian affair at any price. He nevertheless hoped that an understanding could be reached now. No time was to be lost. He nevertheless feared very much that the Czechoslovak Government might look upon Henlein's demands as a maximum while here in Germany they were obviously regarded as a minimum.

The Minister stated that he hoped strongly that the Chancellor's visit to Rome would result in moderation in respect of Czechoslovakia. It would be to Italian interest regarding the Danubian basin to influence the Chancellor in this sense.

In respect of the immediacy of any German action concerning Czechoslovakia, Hitler's proposed visit to Rome and his absence over a period of some days is reassuring.

sms 5 - No. 205, April 28, 6 p.m., from Berlin

reassuring.

The attitude of the British Ambassador and of the French Charge d'Affaires as expressed to us is that an opportunity may yet be seized, and should be seized, to obviate the possibility of a general war. It is felt that the fundamental British policy is the prevention of such a war and if it is not so already that this is tending to become a French policy. Important developments in French policy are expected as a result of the current Franco-British conversations at London.

As advanced by the two embassies here the general thought is to reach such an understanding with Berlin, with the assistance of an understanding with Rome, that German desires or even German unshakable intentions may be so to speak "canalized" in a manner to maintain the general peace. The basic policy in accomplishing this is seen to rest (a) on Germany's own desire to avoid war; (b) on the psychological factor of a deep seated German ambition to achieve the esteem of other states and peoples and especially (c) on the declared policy of friendship with Great Britain.

In

sms 6 - No. 205, April 23, 6 p.m., from Berlin.

In its more immediate application this policy is described as (a) "capitalizing" Hitler's public declarations that he is opposed in principle to minorities; thus it is hoped to avoid the complete breaking up of the Czechoslovak state through action by Hungary or Poland which might create new minorities; (b) that time is necessary in order that British and French public opinion may be informed respecting the true situation in Czechoslovakia, in particular that of the Sudeten Germans, and thus lessen the strain upon the French due to their alliance with Czechoslovakia in the event that something happens; (c) to avoid at all costs a clash either initiated by the Germans or by the Czechs.

The French Charge d'Affaires was especially strong in asserting that public opinion should be brought to realize that in the same circumstances other strong countries would take a position similar to that being taken by Germany with respect to the Sudeten Germans and that the attitude of other governments should be predicated on this realistic concept.

I naturally do not know to what extent the foregoing reflects the attitude of London or Paris.

Unless

sms 7 - No. 205, April 28, 6 p.m., from Berlin.

Unless some swift change should intervene any immediate developments in this affair will undoubtedly depend on three factors, (a) whether or not internal disturbance develops in Czechoslovakia; (b) on the degree of conciliation shown by Benes, and (c) the decision of Hitler alone.

I expect to see Goering today and Ribbentrop tomorrow but I should be much surprised if I learn anything more definite than the foregoing.

Copies air mailed Praha, Paris, Rome, London, Brussels.

WILSON

KLP

GW



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 123

Berlin, May 2, 1938.

~~PAID~~

Subject: The German-Czechoslovak
Situation - Memoranda of
Conversations with the
Czechoslovak Minister and
the French Chargé d'Affaires

A close-up photograph of a document, likely a passport or official form. A rectangular stamp is visible, containing the text "Fall 1998" in a stylized font, with "11 1998" and "DEPARTMENT OF STATE" partially visible below it. A signature in dark ink is written across the stamp and the document. The background of the document is light-colored with some faint, illegible text.

938 MAY 10 PM 2 15

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

SYNOPSIS: CONFIDENTIAL

Distribution Interactions

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

✓
DIVISION OF POLITICAL RELATIONS
MAY 14 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Sir:

- 1/ I have the honor to enclose herewith memoranda
2/ of conversations with the Czechoslovak Minister at
Berlin, and the French Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin,
which took place on April 27 and April 28, respec-
tively.

Respectfully yours,

H. R. Wilson.
Hugh R. Wilson.

Enclosures:

1. Memorandum of Conversation with the Czechoslovak Minister;
2. Memorandum of Conversation with the French Chargé d'Affaires.

800
PG-87W

MAY 17 1996

ИЗДАНИЕ

760F.62/249

G/HO

4 71

MEMORANDUM

OF CONVERSATION WITH DR. MASTNÝ, CZECHOSLOVAK MINISTER
April 27, 1938.

The Minister told me that naturally the situation is dangerous and serious. He, however, does not believe that active intervention by Germany is to be expected at this time. He thinks that what is going on is an endeavor by Germany to bring about a state of mind among all Germans abroad whereby they feel themselves spiritually a part of the Reich and whereby they accept direction from the Reich. Eventually, continued the Minister, when this state of mind has been brought about abroad, the geographical rearrangements will be undertaken, but he thinks that this is a long way off.

He then continued: Czechoslovakia is fighting the battle of all the states which have German minorities, since the Germans desire all over the world that those of German blood should accept the domination of the Reich and the direction from Berlin. He believes that the type of compromise or arrangement which will be worked out in Czechoslovakia will be the one demanded by all other minorities of German blood - (and while I have full sympathy with the Minister in this unhappy situation, the foregoing was obviously in the nature of propaganda to awaken sympathy in the United States over a common danger).

I said that I had come to see him because I felt sympathy for the situation in which he was placed. I knew of no man who had greater responsibility on his shoulders for the advices that he was giving in this dangerous and critical moment.

The Minister replied that indeed this was so. He had urged Benès for a long time to come instantaneously to an agreement with Henlein. Unfortunately it had been too long delayed; it should have been made before the Austrian affair, at any price. Nevertheless, he hoped it could be made now, although the demands in Henlein's speech were, some of them, incapable of being accepted and were against the Constitution of Czechoslovakia. For instance, no Czechoslovak Government could promise to change its foreign policy. This was a matter which appertained to the Parliament and could not be done by the Government alone. He feared very much that the Czechoslovak Government would look on these demands as a maximum, while here in Germany they were obviously regarded as a minimum.

He then said he hoped strongly that the Führer's visit to Rome would result in moderation in respect to Czechoslovakia. He felt that after all Italian interests in the Danube Basin were such that Mussolini would not look with favor on the obliteration of all German resisting elements in the Basin, and he believed that Mussolini would exert a moderating influence on Hitler in
respect

respect to Czechoslovakia.

Finally he said that above all things the Czechs must keep cool in this situation. It was not exceedingly desperate, provided they could keep their heads. I replied that reports from Czechoslovakia showed that Benes and Krofta were evidently keeping their heads. The Minister agreed and said happily this was so.

H. R. W.

HRW-gw

MEMORANDUM

OF CONVERSATION WITH COMTE MONTBIS, FRENCH CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES
APRIL 28, 1938.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

The French Chargé d'Affaires, in discussing the Czechoslovak question, confidentially stated that the incorporation of the Sudeten Germans into the Reich is undoubtedly a basic German desire and was almost definitely to be expected ultimately to take place. This had become even more true since the Austrian happening and the consequent exalted temper of the German people which in a sense placed pressure on Hitler. He believed that the German tactics were that the Henlein "demands" of April 24 were only the first of a series of demands whereby Germany and the Sudeten Germans would move toward their ultimate objective. He felt, although the Czechoslovak press might appear to be resistive to the Henlein position, that the Government was behind the scenes working for a compromise. He said that he had definite knowledge that the Czechoslovak Minister here was urging such a course on his Government, feeling that in such a policy lay the best chance for the survival of his state.

The Chargé was nevertheless not inclined to believe that matters would move as swiftly as some people felt, but rather that the German Government wanted affairs

to move slowly and thus if possible peacefully. He said that he believed that the chief preoccupation of Hitler was not the Sudeten Germans, which could be taken over into Germany at almost any time, but rather (a) the Slovak and the Polish and Hungarian minorities problem, and (b) popular attitudes in Great Britain and France. In any sudden movement at this time the Czechs might fight. This was being said in Prague, and many people believed it. While he himself was not inclined to believe that the Czechs would offer armed resistance in view of their naturally not being able to count upon the German elements of the population, in view of the uncertain loyalty of the Slovaks, and the exceedingly vulnerable military position of Czechoslovakia along the new German frontiers in Austria, there always remained the possibility of a serious clash. He felt that Hitler was anxious to avoid any shock which might involve trouble in Slovakia and perhaps action by Poland and Hungary, first because this would leave the Czechs isolated and he was opposed to the creation of new minorities in Eastern Europe, and second because no one could tell where a conflict might lead. He felt that Hitler might be willing that there should be some "adjustment" in the Polish and Hungarian minorities questions, but he believed that Hitler desired both on principle and for strategic reasons that the Czechs and

Slovaks

Slovaks should remain together in a single state. He felt that Hitler further believed that through a delay in developments the British and French public would slowly become informed as to the situation in Czechoslovakia and would favor a "peaceful" settlement.

While he did not know what the British might be saying to the Germans, he believed that the fundamental British policy was the prevention of a war and that their aim was thus to "canalize" certain "inevitable" developments along peaceful lines, and that this was the objective of British policy as explicit at Prague. He said that he did not know what his own country might do in the event of an armed clash in Czechoslovakia, but he felt that French fundamental policy lay also in the avoidance of a war and that, while Paris was undoubtedly at present taking a position in accordance with its treaty relations with Czechoslovakia, much depended in respect of French policy on the current Franco-British conversations at London.

Respecting Russia, he said that the French military authorities did not believe that Moscow would move to the aid of Czechoslovakia without France, and that even if France moved, Russia would not give more than a "token" assistance, employing only its air force. The estimate of the French General Staff was in effect that while the Russian Army would undoubtedly be strong on the defensive, it could not readily be used on the
offensive

offensive and that in any event Moscow would not wish to do anything which would involve war with Poland or Rumania.

The Chargé stated that, while he naturally could not vouch for all of the foregoing, it nevertheless reflected his considered estimate of the situation.

P. G.

PG-gw

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



HM **

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone (C)

FROM Berlin

Dated May 5, 1938

Rec'd 1:50 p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

223, May 5, 4 p.m.

Embassy's 205 April 28, 6 p.m.



The British Embassy informs us in strict confidence that they received today from London certain pertinent details of the recent Franco-British conversations at London together with information respecting "parallel" demarches which the British and French are about to make at Praha with a view to suggesting a "peaceful solution" of the Sudeten German question.

The British Ambassador is instructed to inform Goering in particular concerning the nature of the Franco-British general staff arrangements and concerning the prospective demarche at Praha. The general thought is that in conjunction with imparting this information an effort will be made to influence Germany to the end that no action on its part would jeopardize the maintenance of peace.

It would

760F.62/236

FILED

MAY 5 1938

G/HC

-2- 223, May 5, 4 p.m. from Berlin

It would appear that the British line of approach here will be not (repeat not) directly to combat the German thesis that the Sudeten German affair is a matter between Germans which does not concern third parties, but to base British contentions on a legitimate and unequivocal interest in the maintenance of the general peace.

I gather that possible future developments in British German relationships in this matter will depend upon the nature and degree of Goering's response to this approach. Henderson is apparently preparing for his action with great care.

It is interesting to note that the London instructions specifically directs that this demarche be undertaken with Goering. There is no de jure justification for this. It is on the other hand a tacit recognition that Goering is de facto the No. 2 man in Germany and in Hitler's absence in Rome the chief personage in Germany. Incidentally on the tactical side it will be recalled that it was Goering who during the Austrian happening gave to the Czechoslovak Minister oral assurance at that time that no action would be undertaken by Germany in Czechoslovakia.

WILSON

CSB

HRE

This telegram must be
closely paraphrased
before being communicated
to anyone. (B)

BERLIN

Dated May 6, 1938

Rec'd 5:50 p.m.

Secretary of State
Washington



225, May 6, 6 p.m.

760f.62
760f.62
760f.62

In a conversation with the Russian Charge
d'Affaires who has just returned from a trip through
the Sudeten German area, he stated that, disagreeable
as the admission was to him, at present undoubtedly 90
percent of the Sudeten Germans favored union with the
Reich. He said, however, that this was almost entirely
depressed
due to the / economy of the area, that he regarded
proposals examined during the Franco-British
conversations at London that Great Britain employ
economic means to offset German influence in Central
Europe as the most valuable feature of the conversations,
and that if Great Britain would purchase Sudeten-German
products to a degree sufficient to create Sudeten-
German prosperity the urge to unite with Germany would
disappear. This view is nevertheless discounted by
others here familiar with the situation who feel that
the issues and sentiments have grown beyond the problem
of economics.

760f.61

In respect of the possible role of Russia in
Czechoslovak affairs the Charge d'Affaires stated that
Russia would under no circumstances move to the military
assistance of Czechoslovakia unless France moved.

he

760f.62/239

FILED

MAY 10 1938

FP

HRE

2-#225 From Berlin May 6, 6 p.m.

He added that French action in turn certainly depended on British action. He said furthermore that Russian military support of Czechoslovakia was complicated by the attitude of Poland and Rumania especially the former, which was that the passage of troops over her territory would be regarded as a cause for war. He trusted, however, that the attitudes of these two states could be overcome provided a general common action were joined against Germany.

WILSON

NPL:EMC

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

REB

This telegram must be **FROM**
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

BERLIN

Dated May 6, 1938 ✓

Rec'd 4:30 p. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

226, May 6, 7 p. m.

With reference to the Embassy's telegram No. 223,
May 5, 4 p. m., the French Embassy confirms that France
and Great Britain will make parallel demarches at Praha.
According to the French the chief feature of these will
be a statement to the Czechoslovak Government that up
to the present sufficient concessions have not been made
to the Sudeten Germans. It was explained that the back-
ground of this position is that France cannot give
blanket guarantees of assistance to Czechoslovakia to
be operative under all conditions and that any concept
of assistance carries with it the right to advise
respecting a situation which might lead to war.

The French will not make a demarche here. They will
be "covered" by an agreement that the British Ambassador
will say to the Germans that "Great Britain recognizes
that France is in a special position respecting

Czechoslovakia

760F.62/238

MAY 10 1938

FILED

REB

2-#226, From Berlin, May 6, 7 p. m.

Czechoslovakia and that Great Britain cannot be indifferent to any matter whatsoever which affects French interests."

It was stated that the concept back of the foregoing is that a degree of unity in French and British action backed by the arrangements for general staff conversations will serve to strengthen the diplomatic positions of both of the two powers.

The French Embassy understands, however, that the cardinal policy of the British both in Praha and in Berlin is the employment of every effort and device to avoid a general war.

The French Embassy also expressed the hope that Mussolini may likewise exercise an influence on Hitler during the Rome visit to restrain Germany from taking action inimical to the general peace.

WILSON

CSB

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

FS

GRAY

FROM

Berlin

Dated May 7, 1938

Rec'd 10:30 a.m.

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MAY 9 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Secretary of State,
Washington.

229, May 7, 1 p.m.

The press is playing up the various events of Hitler's visit to Italy to a phenomenal degree with emphasis on the military displays from which the inference seems to be drawn editorially that Italy is ready to support with arms if necessary the joint policy of Italy and Germany as represented by the axis.

Despite intense preoccupation with this subject, ample space is nevertheless being devoted to continuing to inveigh against conditions in Czechoslovakia, featuring in part increasingly numerous assaults alleged to have been made by the police and the Czechoslovak population on Sudeten Germans and Czech plots to discredit Henlein's party. It is intimated that only the discipline and self control of the Sudetens have prevented widespread disorders.

GW:WWC

WILSON

762.65/429

FILED

MAY 9 - 1938

ED G

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

VM
This message must be _____
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

FROM

Berlin

Dated May 14, 1938

Rec'd 10:20 a.m., 15th

Secretary of State

Washington



246, May 14, 8 pm.

7604.62
not
8604.00
1247
In the final paragraph of Embassy's telegram No. 230, May 9, 4 p.m. was reported the intention of the British Ambassador to see the German Foreign Minister in respect to the Sudeten German question after the latter's return from Rome.

Henderson informs me that he has seen Ribbentrop and that (a) he told him that the British Minister at Praha had been instructed to urge Benes to meet, as far as he possibly could, the demands of Henlein and to show a spirit of conciliation, and (b) he requested Ribbentrop to instruct the German Minister at Praha in the same sense. Ribbentrop replied that the British demarche in Praha would be "heartily welcome" but as for (b) the German Government considered that this was a matter between Sudeten Deutsch and the Czechoslovaks and one in which the German Government should not intervene.

Ribbentrop gave full assurances that Germany had no intention of violating Czechoslovak territory or

engaging

7604.62/263

FILED

MAY 18 1938

2- VM No. 246, May 14, 8 pm from Berlin

engaging in war against Czechoslovakia, except under one condition. This condition was that no attack should be made by the Czechoslovaks on Sudeten Germans. Should, however, such an attack occur or should the Sudeten Germans suffer extensive violence at the hands of the Czechoslovaks, the German Government would have no recourse but to endeavor to protect the Sudeten Germans by force of arms.

Henderson was greatly pleased at the reception accorded him by Ribbentrop and of his recognition of a British interest in the matter. As I have previously reported it had been greatly feared here that in any approach to the German authorities by the British or by any other government, the Germans would take the position, as they did in the case of Austria, that the Sudeten German problem was entirely a case between Germans and was thus not the concern of third parties.

Henderson made a like disclosure to Poncet as to what had taken place in his conversation with Ribbentrop. The Counselor of the French Embassy in discussing the matter with a member of the staff of this office stated that Poncet was likewise greatly pleased at the Germans' willingness to discuss the question with the British and is hopeful that it means a continuance of such discussions.

It seems

3- No. 246, May 14, 8 p.m. from Berlin.

It seems that when Henderson saw Woermann, as reported in the Embassy's telegram under reference, he requested the latter to transmit his demarche to Ribbentrop who was then in Rome. Poncet feels that Woermann must have taken this action and that Ribbentrop's seeing Henderson immediately after the Rome visit meant that he had taken up the question with Hitler and that thus what he had to say fully represented Hitler's position. Poncet regards this as especially auspicious.

At the same time the German reservation that they would move against Czechoslovakia in case the Czechs

offer violence to the Sudeten Germans causes Poncet the gravest anxiety. He feels that this is a not unexpected and, perhaps a not unreasonable attitude on the part of the Germans but that it is none the less dangerous for that reason. He is afraid that some provocative incident may be initiated by the Czechoslovaks. In this he does not mean that it will be necessarily inspired by the Czechoslovak Government but that it may be something which Praha will be unable or unwilling to control. He fears that certain elements in the Czechoslovak Government feel that now is the most favorable time for a war before Germany grows stronger.

He fears

4- VM No. 246, May 14, 8 p.m. from Berlin

He fears ~~furthermore~~ that perhaps Paris and London do not believe that Germany would fight. He considers this to be a most dangerous belief to entertain. He thus not only welcomes the German readiness to discuss the matter with the British but, in a sense, also welcomes the clear statement of the German position in that the danger lying in both the Czechs and the German attitudes can more readily be seen.

Weizsaecker with whom I have just had an exhaustive conversation shares the apprehensions expressed by Poncet. He is deeply troubled lest a conflict within Czechoslovakia cause such an outburst in Germany that Hitler will be obliged to intervene to protect the Sudeten Deutsche. He stated further that their reports show that a number of members of the Czech Cabinet are in favor of conciliating Henlein but that Benes is obdurate. This may be explained he thinks by the fact that Benes feels that if a crash comes it is better now than later, since now he can count on the help of France, perhaps some from Russia, and perhaps that of England through the French engagements and that such may^{not} be the fact in six months.

The best informed members of the Diplomatic Corps

share

5- VM No. 246, May 14, 8 p.m. from Berlin

share this apprehension and I, myself am gravely concerned at the situation. It is not that I fear so much that any man will consciously precipitate a war, as that an unhappy accident resulting in a clash in Czechoslovakia may bring it on in spite of reluctance on the part of the leading statesmen.

The situation is such that only the most skillful and well-prepared diplomacy can find a peaceful course. I am consoled by the fact that the relatively disinterested power of Great Britain is taking an active part in the matter and endeavoring to act as a sort of mediator between Benes and Hitler. If the waters are not too much troubled by an unfortunate accident, and provided that other powers exercise restraint, the British may bring the matter to a successful conclusion.

WILSON

PEG



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Berlin, May 16, 1938

No. 154

Subject: The Sudeten-German Question-
Conversations with the Czecho-
slovak Chargé d'Affaires and
with the Counselor of the
French Embassy.

1938 MAY 27 PM 1 00

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

DIVISION OF
EUROPEAN AFFAIRS
MAY 27 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

ADVISER ON POLITICAL RELATIONS
MR. DUNN
JUN 2 1938
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Guides for	Instructions
---------------	--------------

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose copies of memo-
randa of conversations between the Counselor of
this Embassy and the Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires
at Berlin, and the Counselor of the French Embassy
at Berlin, dated respectively May 10th and May 13th,
1938, on the Sudeten-German question, with special
reference to the positions of Czechoslovakia and
Germany.

Respectfully yours,

Frederic C. Gilbert
Frederic C. Gilbert,
Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

Enclosures:
1 and 2. Memoranda
of Conversations.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
JUN 3 - 1938
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

800
PG-gw

4 Carbon Copies
Received

760F.62/352

FILED

G/HC

MEMORANDUM

of Conversation with the Czecho-
slovak Chargé d'Affaires, May 10,
on the Subject of the Sudeten-German
Question.

Early in my conversation with Schubert, I said to him that there had been some criticism in the press of Prague's handling of the Sudeten-Germans, and I asked him what he thought about it. He replied that Prague had made a number of errors in the past, that Prague had granted so much to the Sudeten-Germans that the Czechoslovak Government was now left in the tactically weak position of having nothing further to grant. He said that the Czechoslovak Government should at the very outset have repressed the use of German in the Sudeten-German area and that, had it done so, it would have been a point upon which it could now make a concession.

The Chargé d'Affaires asserted the intention of the Czechs to fight, should their territory in any way be interfered with. He said that the fortifications on the German border were, as is well known, exceedingly strong. He added that beginning January last they had been engaged in fortifying the Austro-Czechoslovak border, which was now also in a strong position for defense. The Chargé stated that Czechoslovakia's readiness to fight was at present the chief factor in

the

the maintenance of European peace. He stated that France would certainly come to the aid of Czechoslovakia, that Great Britain would necessarily support France, and that Russia would likewise lend full military assistance. I asked him whether he thought Russia would try to cross Poland or would try to cross Rumania, and what the attitude of these two powers would be in such an eventuality. He replied that they undoubtedly would permit Russian forces to cross their area and he believed that both would very possibly join in a war against Germany.

Schubert based his contention that the Czechs' readiness to fight was in maintenance of the European peace, on his allegation that Germany not only did not wish a war but would be afraid to provoke a war. He added that the reason Germany would be unwilling to fight was that the National Socialist régime was in too shakey a position in Germany to engage in such combat.

* * * * *

In respect of the foregoing I may say that it does not appear to conform to the views generally expressed by the Czechoslovak Minister. It so happens that Schubert is Chargé d'Affaires at the moment in view of Mastný's being in Prague, discussing this very problem with his Government. It is of course difficult to tell in many cases as to what extent representatives

reflect

reflect the views of their own governments. It may be said nevertheless that Schubert stated a point of view which is frequently expressed by a number of Czechoslovak officials.

Prentiss Gilbert.

PG-gw

MEMORANDUM

of Conversation with the Counselor
of the French Embassy, May 13, on the
Sudeten-German Question.

The Counselor said that Sir Neville Henderson had described his conversation with Ribbentrop to François-Poncet in the following terms.

The British Ambassador had told Ribbentrop that he introduced the subject of the Sudeten-German problem on the basis of an appropriate British interest in the maintenance of peace. Ribbentrop, in response, in no way rejected the British advance, but definitely welcomed it.

Ribbentrop gave full assurance that Germany had no intention whatsoever of violating Czechoslovak territory or in engaging in war against Czechoslovakia, except under one condition. This condition was that no attack should be made by the Czechs on the Sudeten-Germans. Should, however, such an attack occur, the German Government would have no recourse but to endeavor to protect the Sudeten-Germans by force of arms.

I said to the Counselor that, aside from anything specific which Ribbentrop had to say, the extremely important element in this recital was that the German Foreign Minister was willing to discuss the problem with the British, it having been feared that Germany might maintain the position that the problem was one

solely

solely between Germans and was thus not the concern of third parties. The Counselor agreed with me in this.

The Counselor said that Poncet was greatly pleased with the result of Henderson's action. On the score nevertheless of the possibilities of a war, he felt that the position of the Germans that they would enter Czechoslovakia in case of trouble in the Sudeten-German area was extremely disquieting. Poncet felt that Ribbentrop had gone even farther than he had expected on the side of being amenable to discussing the matter, but that he was apprehensive that some trouble might break out between the Czechs and the Sudeten-Germans, which might precipitate a war. He feared that Czech elements might indeed initiate trouble for the very purpose of bringing France into the affair. He expressed himself as being extremely anxious over the current situation.

In discussing the British action here with the French Counselor, I recalled to him that Poncet had been annoyed that (as described in this Embassy's telegram to the Department) Henderson had taken the matter up with Woermann instead of with Göring. I said that Ogilvie-Forbes had discussed this very point with me. The British Counselor had stated that Henderson had felt that taking the matter up with Göring in the absence of Ribbentrop (especially as the latter was with Hitler in Rome) might

have

have greatly prejudiced his position with the German Foreign Minister. Had Göring proved to be intransigent, nothing would have been gained. Had Göring proved to be conciliatory, it would not necessarily have meant that he represented Hitler's views. In either event his future relations with Ribbentrop might have been jeopardized.

The Counselor said frankly that events had proved Henderson's tactics to be wise. He said that Henderson, in his talk with Woermann, had requested that Woermann communicate what he had said direct to Ribbentrop in Rome and likewise to ask Ribbentrop for an appointment immediately upon his return. It appears that Ribbentrop in fact saw Henderson almost immediately after his arrival from Rome. The Counselor believes that Ribbentrop must have discussed the matter with Hitler inasmuch as when Henderson finally saw Ribbentrop, the latter was able to give him an immediate answer without, as might have been expected, saying that he would have to refer the question to the Chancellor. Foncet felt this circumstance to have been auspicious.

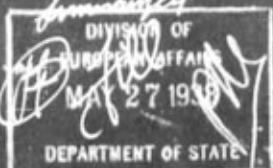
Prentiss Gilbert.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Berlin, May 18, 1938.

No. 156



Subject: Sudeten-German Question -
Appraisal of the Current
Situation from the Berlin



STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Grade for	Section Instructions
	✓

RECEIVED
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

1938 MAY 27 PM 1 00

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.



Sir:

I have the honor to state that, after going into the matter to the extent I find possible here, I am inclined to believe the following to be a reasonable analysis of the issues in the Sudeten-German affair as expressed confidentially here by the representatives of the states chiefly concerned.

While I do not wish to be alarmist, I cannot but feel that elements in the immediate situation are disquieting. Moreover, an atmosphere of anxiety pervades Berlin diplomatic circles.

1. The

EU
PAID
A-M

760F.62/353

FILED

G/H/C

JUN 13 1938

1. The British view is (a) that the attitude and practice of Prague vis-à-vis the Sudeten-Germans is largely responsible for the present situation, in particular that the Czechs from the beginning made the vital error of regarding and treating the German elements as a minority and not as an integral part of the Czechoslovak state; (b) that the consequent situation has presumably developed beyond the possibility of a reconciliation between the Czechs and the Sudeten-Germans, and that, both for this reason and because of the German urge for unity expressed on both sides of the border, possibly the only solution giving promise of permanent peace is the incorporation of the Sudeten area into the Reich. On this last score, while supporting the idea of Sudeten autonomy within the Czechoslovak state, the British must contemplate in their policy the probable ultimate transfer of this territory to Germany.

With what they term the ethical factor of the Czech treatment of the Sudeten Germans as discussed in (a) above in mind, but animated by the cardinal desire to prevent a general war, the British are frankly endeavoring to essay in effect the rôle of mediator between Berlin and Prague.

They perceive, however, that to make even a beginning in any such rôle, two difficulties must first be overcome, (1) that both Berlin and Prague

be

be brought to the active admission that a war conducted with no matter what allies, and no matter which side might be victorious, would constitute the worst possible evil for both states; (2) that both Berlin and Prague be brought to disclose either publicly or privately the minimum which they will accept in order that at least some footing, no matter how difficult, be found for mediatory negotiations.

In respect of (1) it is felt that Germany's position of being definitely desirous of avoiding a war and that it would only employ armed force should the Sudetic Germans be subjected to extensive violence on the part of the Czechs, constitutes an exceedingly valuable first step. The Czechs are in many respects more difficult to handle than the Germans. The precise Government position is not clear; but there are elements among the Czechs who feel that the chances of victory in Czechoslovakia's fighting now are better than they would be in the future, in that they believe that at present they can count on the support of France, which would draw in Great Britain, of Russia, and also ultimately of the United States. In any event, Prague appears to feel that the adoption of an outward position that such support is assured will operate as a definite de-

terrent

terrent to Germany's taking military action. In all this the British do not know to what extent the Czech or the French or the Russian positions may be employed as a bluff. They feel nevertheless that any bluff of such a character is an extremely dangerous game to play and that this should be brought home to the responsible officials in particular in Prague and in Paris.

In respect of (2), the current effort is to bring both Berlin and Prague to make their demands and policy more precise. This is obviously a difficult thing for both capitals to do, as many elements and sentiments are involved, both national and international, and there naturally is exhibited the characteristic tactics of all governments under similar circumstances to stand on their maximum positions. Berlin takes refuge in the obvious evasion that the details of settlement are matters solely between Henlein and Prague. In this respect again, the pressure to be brought on Prague constitutes the greater difficulty, inasmuch as under the terms of a solution as discussed above, it is Prague which ostensibly must do most of the giving away.

On this score the immediate practical tactics of the British is to obtain some firm undertaking from Berlin as to the precise limits of their intentions combined with an understanding that Berlin will hold particularly Budapest, and also if necessary Warsaw,

back

back from any material action against Czechoslovakia, pending a reasonable and just settlement of their irredentist claims. Should they be able to achieve the foregoing in Berlin, the British would be in a position to put pressure on Prague within the precise limits of the German undertakings. The appeal to Germany in all this would be based on the Chancellor's pronouncements against war and that he is opposed to the existence of minorities and in particular is opposed to the creation of further minorities. The British feel that Benes should realize that only by an acceptance of the principle of a peaceful settlement and that of the right of self-determination of peoples lies perhaps the sole hope of his saving any part of the Czechoslovak state.

While naturally the British policy as outlined does not provide for the future in respect of such menaces as might be felt to exist in the growing power of Germany, it is the immediate avoidance of a war which is felt to be the paramount consideration.

Pending possible developments along the lines outlined above, the immediate concern is that no incident take place between the Czechs and the Sudeten-Germans which would provoke open warfare. The responsibility for this, inasmuch as the Sudeten-Germans are unarmed and relatively helpless, is seen to rest chiefly with Prague and it is felt that Prague must be brought to prevent such incidents at all costs.

2. The French see the picture much as the British, and, while feeling that the British are in a better position vis-a-vis both Berlin and Prague to take the lead in a settlement along the lines outlined, they are ready to render the British support in these endeavors.

3. The situation is confused aside from the action of the Governments by the attitude, on the one hand, of extremists in Germany and, on the other hand, by the obvious encouragement given Prague by Leftist elements of all complexions, both in Europe and in America, to hold out against any compromise with Germany.

The struggle of the reasonable and practical elements in the British and French Governments as seen from here is to avoid a general war, which they perceive as not only disastrous in itself but one in which under present circumstances there is no certainty whatsoever but that Germany might be victorious.


4. As I have said above, I share the anxiety, which is almost universal throughout the Diplomatic Corps in Berlin, that the situation is dangerous. I by no means presume that I have presented the entire picture. I am only giving the aspects of it as apparent here.

Respectfully yours,


Hugh R. Wilson.

800
PG-gw

Copies by pouch to American Missions at London, Paris, Brussels, Rome, Prague, Warsaw, Moscow, Budapest, and Belgrade.

4 Carbon Copies
Received 

HRE

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

FROM

BERLIN

Dated May 24, 1938

Rec'd 11 p.m.



Secretary of State

Washington

265, May 24, 7 p.m.

Weizsaecker asked me to call this evening and told me that he desired to talk with me about the anxious days we had passed in respect to Czechoslovakia.

He then went over some of the information which I have already telegraphed and which need not be repeated. He added that the fact that the Czechs had moved troops to the border and had called reserves to the colors had caused and still caused him grave concern. I inquired whether during this period the Czechoslovak and German Governments had been in direct contact. He replied that the Czechoslovak Minister had called on him on Friday last and that the German Minister had been in touch with Hodza on Saturday. I inquired whether an explanation had been given by the Czechs for calling their reserves to the colors. Weizsaecker hesitated and then sent for his book of telegrams and handed me a telegram from the German Military Attache in Praha, sent late on the night of Saturday the 21st.

The telegram stated that the attache had made three inquiries of the military authorities in regard to the Czech

760f.62/332

FILED

MAY 25 1938

G/HC

Czech movement of troops to the border and the calling of the reserves. The answer to the first inquiry had been that the reserves were to be called for practice. The answer to the second inquiry was that the reserves had been called and the troops moved for the maintenance of order among the Sudeten Deutsche. The third inquiry he made in person to the Chief of the General Staff who informed him that these military activities had two purposes: (a) the maintenance of order in the areas, and (b) to resist a threatened German attack based on the fact that "eight to ten German divisions were preparing to march toward Czechoslovakia and were gathered in Saxony" I inquired of Weizsaecker how he saw the future and mentioned the fact that Henlein and Hodza were apparently getting together. Weizsaecker replied that perhaps there was some reassurance to be had from this conversation nevertheless he preferred to see deeds rather than words. He felt that the situation could not remain as it was; the Czechs must recall their troops from the frontier, dissolve the class called to the colors and thus reestablish the previous situation. Also it would be infinitely preferable if regulations were issued granting a measure of autonomy and self government to the Sudeten Deutsche rather than the mere entering into negotiations which could be prolonged interminably. I inquired whether the German Government

HRE

3-#265 From Berlin May 24, 7 p.m.

had made plain to the Czechoslovak Government its insistence for the reestablishment of the military status quo ante. Weizsaecker replied that they had not but that he had informed Henderson and hoped that the British Government would take it up in Praha.

He reminded me that when we had talked before he had expressed apprehension as to the attitude of certain elements among the Czechs which seemed determined to provoke a crisis, relying on outside assistance. The fact that the Chief of General Staff who unquestionably was well informed should make an assertion that eight or ten divisions were concentrated in Saxony when he must have known the contrary, seemed to give justification for his apprehension. I said I knew little about internal affairs of Czechoslovakia and inquired whether the army played an important role in political decisions. He replied that unfortunately they played a predominant role and that while Krofta and Hodza might be willing to make concessions Benes seemed to be siding with the intransigent army attitude.

Repeated to Praha, London, Paris.

WILSON

EMB:RGC

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

REB

1-1835

FROM

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

BERLIN

Dated May 24, 1938

Rec'd 5:35 p. m.



Secretary of State,

Washington.

266, May 24, 8 p. m.

The French Ambassador today told me that he had called on Ribbentrop on May 19 and had warned him not to make any mistake; that France was in honor bound to come to the aid of Czechoslovakia in the case of German aggression and would carry out its word of honor whatever the cost.

The French Ambassador stated that Ribbentrop had replied that 75,000,000 Germans could not tolerate the mistreatment of 3,500,000 Germans on their borders; that if it was to be war it was to be war.

Repeated to Paris.

WILSON

RGC

EMB

FILED
MAY 25 1938

760F.62/333

G/HC

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



EC
PA-D

lw

1-1200

FROM

Berlin (Part Air)

Dated May 25, 1938

Rec'd 7:15 a.m., 26th

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)



Secretary of State

Washington

267, May 25, 1 p.m.

The Italian Ambassador Attolico, upon his return from Rome, expressed today to the Counselor of the Embassy his views on the German-Czechoslovak situation. The conversation was of such striking nature that I repeat it at length.

The Ambassador took no pains throughout to disguise Italy's disquiet over increasing power of Germany, emphasized as respects Italy, by the annexation of Austria. He felt, nevertheless, that war would be the greatest possible catastrophe for everyone and that its avoidance should be earnestly sought.

Respecting Czechoslovakia, the Ambassador began by saying that although Germany was in special relations with Italy, the Germans were by no means telling him everything and he did not believe that he was substantially better informed than other diplomats in Berlin.

He

760F.62/342

FILED

MAY 31 1938

G/HC

760F.62

762.65

lw -2- No. 267, May 25, 1 p.m. from Berlin

He trusted, furthermore, that what he had to say would be kept strictly confidential.

He stated his view that one of the great difficulties in the Czechoslovak situation was that the matter was confused by general apprehensions over an increase in German territory or strength and that the immediate issue through ignorance and propaganda was dangerously and irritatingly misunderstood. In respect of the Sudeten Germans, it had been evident to him when he was an official of the League that their treatment by Praha had not even approximated the ideals of Geneva. It is basically untenable, both in theory and in practice ^{in a State} like Czechoslovakia, composed of large national groups, to regard any one of them as a "minority"; but even considering them as a minority the Sudeten Germans had not been fairly treated and while Germany was then too weak to protest and had no champion the influence of Benes had ~~been~~ in Geneva the Sudeten German complaints. He asserted that even a cursory unprejudiced examination of the situation could not but bring agreement with what he had said. He believed that it might not be too late even now to place the several nationalities

lw -3- No. 267, May 25, 1 p.m. from Berlin.

nationalities in Czechoslovakia on an equitable basis and there was reason at least to hope should this take place that Germany would not act. He feared however that provocative incidents might multiply and that Praha would move too slowly to forestall drastic developments. One must therefore presumably contemplate the ultimate taking over of the Sudeten area in some manner by the Reich or at least an attempt to that end.

If the powers desired to fight Germany on the clear cut basis of "stopping" her growing power, that was one thing. It was a theory which might be defended in the realm of great power politics especially if the powers concerned were sure they could win. But if they did not wish to go to war he could only say that the popular attitude in various states toward the Sudeten German issue was ill-timed and dangerous in that it was provocatively biased. The road apparently being pursued was certainly not along the lines of appeasement.

The immediate circumstances into which the situation had developed made him exceedingly anxious as he felt that a danger of war really existed. He was convinced that the leaders of Germany did not desire a war.

Laying

lw -4- No. 267, May 25, 1 p.m. from Berlin

Laying aside any moral considerations there was the practical one of which he was certain that Germany did not feel prepared for war either militarily or economically. Whatever might be the ultimate rights and wrongs in the complicated situation on which there were doubtless many views there remained nevertheless the unspeakable danger of a war evoked against the will of the nations concerned through some incident or a series of incidents. Naturally he did not believe all that he read in the German press concerning Czech provocation on German territory, et cetera, but he referred to an account in the PARIS TEMPS of the apology of Krofta to the German Minister at Praha for an attempt by Czech soldiers to blow up a bridge in Germany. This obviously substantiated the German account of the happening. He likened Czechoslovakia to a child which relying on its parents for protection could be exceedingly provoking and dangerous-- the British, French and American press playing the role of the indulgent parent by their encouraging support of the Czechs regardless of the merits of the case. Despite what might be privately said at Praha by the Governments

the

lw -5- No. 267, May 25, 1 p.m. from Berlin

the popular Czech view was that this press reflected the attitude of the peoples concerned and the praise and support therein gave them a ~~sort~~ of license which perhaps Praha found difficult to control. He said that should the Germans have endeavored to blow up a Czech bridge one could imagine the outcry. The result might easily have led to immediate hostilities. He added that he had been so anxious on this score that he had sent his Military Attache on a circuit of the German-Czechoslovak frontier and that the General had just reported to him that although there was under way a seasonal change in German troop locations unless he was blind there were no unusual troop dispositions.

As to French action in the event of an actual outbreak of hostilities between the Germans and the Czechs he was convinced that the French nation, so to speak, did not desire to fight; but he believed that the French Government would in such a case be impelled "to do something" and that that "something" would lead by irrefragable steps to a general war.

The Ambassador said that the tragic thing about it was that no one wanted a war. He was sure that the

United

lw -6- No. 267, May 25, 1 p.m. from Berlin

7/11/00
the
United States would not wish a war to occur in Europe.
He wondered whether the United States could say some-
thing to Praha and naturally to Berlin as well stressing
perhaps the extreme urgency and importance of avoiding
provocative incidents. He felt that such action by the
United States as a completely disinterested power would
have a unique effect perhaps greater in some respects
than that of Great Britain or France.

WILSON

HPD

HRE

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone (C)

BERLIN

Dated June 4, 1938

Rec'd 2:20 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington



292, June 4, 3 p.m.

One. Highly placed reliable estimate of the current German-Czechoslovak situation largely reflecting German conservative and army opinion is substantially as follows:

The issues are deep and involved. From a purely politico-economic point of view it would be to the advantage of Germany to maintain an independent Czechoslovakia. It is felt that a complete break up of Czechoslovakia might easily serve to augment the strength of two already powerful states, Poland and Hungary, which are potential allies in resistance to German expansion. "Human interests and sentiments" are, however, the largely dominant factors. In army circles it is believed that the use of force in some stage the development of the question appears almost inevitable. An internal reconstruction of Czechoslovakia might conceivably take place which would obviate armed conflict. The picture in Praha, nevertheless, gives little promise of such a happening. German authorities have little faith even in the existence of a serious nationality

760F.62/392

G/HC

2-#292 From Berlin June 4, 3 p.m.

nationality statute or if such a project exists it is believed that it is of such a trivial nature as not to go to the heart of the problem. Aside from outside pressure and apart from any question of the moral issues, it is believed that a state in a situation like that of Czechoslovakia, which is ruled by a racial "minority," cannot indefinitely sustain its own political integrity. This matter is naturally augmented by outside pressure.

751.60
751.62
The considered opinion of the German General Staff is that in the case of armed conflict France would go to the aid of Czechoslovakia. It is admitted of course that that opinion is not susceptible to prior verification. In this circumstance, however, lies the danger of a general war. An immediate factor in the danger of a conflict is the possibility of the control in Czechoslovakia passing to the army which is notably intransigent respecting internal reform.

It is felt that the Chancellor himself is gravely reluctant to project Germany into a war. The conservative element definitely believes that time in this matter is working on the side of Germany. Their influence is thus thrown on the side of German restraint. Their policy is not only that a delay is generally favorable to Germany but that by such delay an armed conflict might

HRE

3-#292 From Berlin June 4, 3 p.m.

might be entirely avoided.

There is naturally no assurance that the foregoing views will prevail.

Two. The French Embassy's point of view as brought out in confidential conversations perceives the danger of conflict through the army gaining political ascendancy in Czechoslovakia. Their opinion is that Benes tends toward the army attitude while Hodza and Krofta are endeavoring to construct a realistic compromise. The French Legation at Praha has repeatedly given warning that should the army take over the control in Praha France would immediately be compelled to withdraw her support. The British supported by the French are continuing to urge Praha to satisfy the desires of the nationalities throughout the state and it is believed that this urging is now having definite effect and that the projected nationality statute is a reality. Whether the statute will go far enough to meet the real situation remains to be seen. It will be noted that there are certain elements of similarity in French Embassy thought with that expressed by Weizsaecker (see my 265 May 24, 7 p.m.)

The French Embassy has gone deeply into the question of the alarm which manifested itself over the week end of May 21 which was chiefly based on allegations of the concentration

HRE

4-#292 From Berlin June 4, 3 p.m.

concentration of German forces on the Czechoslovak frontier. This is naturally a matter of vital importance to France almost more than any other state. The Military Attache of the French Embassy made a personal examination of the frontier at the time and from his observations as well as from other competent sources the French Embassy is convinced that no troop concentrations took place. The Czechs here admitted to the French that these reports emanated from Praha but stated that the original source was London. "London" does not of course necessarily mean the British Government. The French are unable to substantiate the exact origin of these rumors beyond their having emanated from Praha. It is noted that Praha has more recently sought to substantiate these original allegations by stating that the German forces have now "withdrawn" from the frontier.

The propaganda value of such allegations are obvious. This is entirely apart from the technical circumstance that should Germany strike at Czechoslovakia German troops could effectively move from their regular garrisons and such action would probably not be preceded by border concentrations. Whether the political purpose of such allegations gained the desired objective is an open question. Mobilization of troops has in the past,
however

HRE

5-#292 From Berlin June 4, 3 p.m.

HOWEVER, often been a casus belli and thus the French feel that to spread a belief that mobilization or concentration has taken place is obviously an extremely dangerous move.

Repeated to Praha.

WILSON

EMB:ROW



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

No. 183

Berlin, June 15, 1938.

EU PAID
Agile

Subject: Transmitting Memorandum from Military
Attaché regarding Rumored German Troop
Movements Along the Czechoslovak Frontier.

1938 JUL 5 PM 3 47

DIVISION OF
COMMUNICATIONS
AND RECORDS



Grate for	Distribution Instructions D. H. I. M. I. P. JUL 12 1938
-----------	---------------------------------------------------------------

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.



Sir:

I have the honor to transmit as of possible
interest to the Department a copy of a Memorandum
prepared at my request by the Military Attaché of
this Embassy with regard to rumored German mili-
tary concentration and troop movements along the
Czechoslovak frontier.

Respectfully yours,

Hugh K. Wilson
Hugh K. Wilson.

Enclosure:
Copy of Memorandum
as above.

820

DRH:EM

FILED
JUL 15 1938

760F.62/461

G-J

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
A-M/C
JUL 9 - 1938
ASSISTANT SECRETARY
OF STATE

760F.62

(COPY)

June 14, 1938.

Memorandum for the Ambassador,
American Embassy,
Berlin.

Enclosure No.1 to despatch
No.183 of June 15, 1938, from
American Embassy, Berlin,
Germany.

The continued prevalence in the world of rumors to the effect that important German military "concentrations" and "troop movements" occurred during the week-end of May 20th and 21st and that these "concentrations" were directed against Czechoslovakia, requires once again that this Embassy marshal all evidence in the case.

It is contrary to the fundamental strategic doctrine of the German Army to concentrate troops on frontier areas prior to an attack on a hostile country. Such a method was used neither in the Rhineland nor in Austria. Troops move directly from their interior garrisons into the hostile country, the higher units concentrating while moving toward their objective. This is also the whole tenor of the method of strategic concentration taught in the Kriegsakademie. It is also the method so successfully used at Liege in the first days of the World War.

The only indications which a foreign observer in Germany is likely to perceive prior to the crossing of the hostile frontier by the German Army are:

- (a) Requisitioning of civilian motor traffic.
- (b) Calling up of a small number of reservists to complete the supply units of active divisions.
- (c) Actual troop movements towards hostile country.

In a German operation against Czechoslovakia, the actual areas where German troop movements will be directed, are well known to military men.

The Germans will strike northward from the direction of Vienna and southwestward from Silesia. There will also be a subsidiary attack southward from Saxony. On the contrary, the Böhmerwald on the Czechish western frontier will not be a principal theater of operations. Therefore if German troop movements or concentrations occurred, it is these three areas, Silesia, Austria and Saxony, which military men would examine for evidence.

On Sunday May 21st:

The U. S. Consul in Breslau examined the area south of Breslau along the Czechish frontier. Neither in Breslau nor in the border districts was there the slightest evidence of troop concentrations or troop movements.

The U. S. Consul in Vienna examined the area north and northeast of Vienna along the Czechish frontier without observing the least indication of a German troop movement or concentration.

The U. S. Consul in Dresden examined the area south of Dresden on the Czechish frontier with similar negative results.

The

The British Military Attache in Berlin and his assistant both travelled extensively in Saxony and Thuringia during the week-end May 20-21st, searching for the rumored troop concentration of the "eleven German divisions". It was their opinion that normal week-end leaves were being given German soldiers in many Saxon garrisons.

The Italian Military Attache, who likewise searched Saxony on this week-end, made similar negative observations.

Normal week-end leave was given soldiers of the III (Berlin) and I (Hamburg) Corps during the week-end, May 20-21st.

During the critical week-end, troop units were in many instances far away from their normal garrisons or troop training grounds. Thus the 8th Infantry from Frankfurt-am-Oder was at Hummelberg near Würzburg in Bavaria. Under the German mobilization system this regiment would have to return to Frankfurt before embarking on active military operations. The 1st Tank Brigade stationed in Thuringia appears also to have been at a training ground near Hamburg on May 20th. This latter is a unit which would almost certainly participate in any operation against Czechoslovakia.

The War Ministry states that on May 20th, three specially organized "Training Bns" were sent by motor from North Germany over Leipzig to Vienna to serve as model units for the Austrian Army. There was also a certain amount of transfers of units between training camps and permanent garrisons, as occur every week-end between May 1st and August 1st.

No positive evidence of unusual troop movements or concentrations anywhere in Germany other than those noted in the preceding paragraphs, have been obtained.

As a result of the consideration of the above-noted positive and negative evidence, it is concluded:

No concentrations and no unusual troop movements occurred in Silesia, Saxony or Austria, the three critical military areas bordering Czechoslovakia.

No evidence, either positive or negative, exists with regard to the "uncritical" area between Hof and Regensburg in Eastern Bavaria.

No evidence of troop concentrations, curtailments of leave, calling up of reserves or requisitioning of civil motor vehicles, was observed by any observer in the border or interior corps areas.

Truman Smith, Major, G.S.,
Military Attache.

JR

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

A portion of this telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. FROM (C)

Berlin (part a1)

Dated June 29, 1938

Rec'd 9:10 a.m. 30th



Secretary of State,

Washington.

334, June 29, 4 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.



760F.62/455

The relative calm of the German press in respect to Czechoslovakia has allowed this problem to slip from the foreground. This does not mean, however, that the question is any the less immediate and dangerous.

Henderson tells me that his Government has gone all out in an endeavor to find a peaceful solution to this problem and are accepting responsibility of trying to mediate at least between Hitler and Benes although not, I understand, between Benes and Henlein. Henderson has reminded the Germans that they have frequently stated that their greatest desire was to develop an harmonious relationship with Great Britain and that now is the opportunity for them to show forbearance while Great Britain exercises its influence on Benes to persuade him to work out a satisfactory solution with Henlein. Whether due to this

JUL 3 1938

FILED

GHC

760F.62
not

-2- #334, June 29, 4 p.m., from Berlin.

this intervention or not the violence of the German press has been diminished since this suggestion. Henderson is of the opinion, however, that this restraint will not be exercised much longer and that unless Benes acts with exceeding rapidity in effecting a solution the reverberations and thunder will begin again with the accompanying nervousness of the world at the spectre of war.

Francois Poncet is of the opinion that Hitler has adopted the motto "delenda est Czechoslovakia". HOWEVER, Hitler was impressed on May 21 with the adherence of France to its treaty obligation, the resolute intervention of Great Britain and the state of hostility shown in the public mind in the United States. Furthermore, the Rhine fortifications are not completed, therefore, says Francois Poncet, while an attack on Czechoslovakia is almost inevitable it will be a period of months and perhaps years until full preparation can be made. Very confidentially he says that the only hope he sees of an eventual peaceful solution is an immediate and temporary solution of the Sudeten problem to be followed by a proposal from Great Britain to neutralize Czechoslovakia. He feels that his own Government under pressure from Great Britain could acquiesce in such a suggestion and

-3- #334, June 29, 4 p.m., from Berlin.

and thus the thorny question of the Soviet-Czech treaty could be dissolved as well as the bonds between France and Czechoslovakia which have become of such profound danger to France. Both Henderson and Francois Poncet, whose views seldom coincide, are agreed in their apprehension lest Benes whom they describe as "stubborn" should unduly prolong this situation which calls for the utmost expedition on his part.

In this connection I have had a conversation with one of Hitler's closest associates whose name I am not in a position to divulge but who speaks with authority. He tells me that Hitler would feel that his policy has been a failure if he has to shed German blood to accomplish it. He has been through the war and knows what war is and has no illusions as to anybody being the gainer therefrom. This does not mean that he is not ready and that Germany is not ready to fight if it is unavoidable; if for instance there is a massacre of Sudeten Germans by Czech troops. The German frontier fortifications near France while not completed are sufficiently advanced to be held by a small section of the army and as for Czechoslovakia

it

751.62
862.20

741.62
562.014
-4- #334, June 29, 4 p.m., from Berlin.

it presents "no military problem at all." Apart from this immediate question of Czechoslovakia my informant stated that Hitler's dearest wish remains to work out a friendly understanding with Great Britain. Germany would be a "satisfied power" once this Sudeten Deutsche problem was solved--"and it must be solved"--and certain concessions in colonies have been made to it. (My informant did not say so but the official view of a "solution" in the Czech problem is autonomy on the Swiss model and the denunciation of the Russian treaty). Surely, he felt, this is but a small price to pay for having a great nation like Germany among the "satisfied powers". It had been difficult and remained difficult to persuade the British that this was all that Germany needed to reach such a situation, nevertheless this was true.

My own impression is that unless Benes acts with considerable rapidity we will have a recurrence of German press attacks, perhaps with intervals between them. I am inclined to think that Hitler, who can control his own Government with such ease, is hammering on the nerves of France and England to try to get them in a state of mind where they will desire passionately any solution which seems to be peaceful rather

-5- #334, June 29, 4 p.m., from Berlin.

rather than endure this continuous tension. Already Flandin has publicly questioned whether France should enter a suicidal war for Czechoslovakia, and the British papers carry suggestions for a plebiscite and other solutions among the Sudeten Germans. Hitler is playing a very dangerous game but neither he nor his nation are deterred by danger. But it is a game which may perhaps be carried through without bloodshed.

WILSON

KLP:GW

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



JR

A portion of this telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone.
(B)

Berlin (part air)

Dated July 16, 1938

Rec'd 9:45 a.m., 18th.

Secretary of State,
Washington.



349, July 16, 1 p.m.

One. (GRAY) The European press widely featured Daladier's "conciliation speech" of July 12 of which the chief points from the viewpoint of Germany were his ascribing the avoidance of a "catastrophe" in the "May crisis" to the "response of Germany to the pacific determination of Great Britain and France" and his statement that "the French Government has complete confidence in the pacific aspirations which the Chancellor of the Reich has always manifested in public."

The inspired German press greeted these statements with satisfaction recalling that the immediate reaction of the foreign press to the May episodes had been exceedingly irritating to Germany inasmuch as the credit for the avoidance of serious difficulties had been claimed as due solely to the firmness of the democratic powers. With reference to Daladier's estimate of the good will of the three major powers, the DDPK comments, however, that such good will must primarily be demanded of "that fourth power which, through

762.00/202

GE

-2- #349, July 16, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

through the disregard of promises given at the time of the founding of the nation, gave rise to the present unbearable condition." This is, of course, an obvious reference to Czechoslovakia (END GRAY).

Two. In the course of a conversation Weizsaecker mentioning Daladier's speech said to me that the cordial wish for better relations inherent in the statements found the liveliest echo in Germany. Nevertheless he could not but regret that in such a gesture Daladier had not found it possible to be a little more explicit as to how better relations could be achieved. The Chancellor had said some years ago that there were no problems between France and Germany. This remained true except that a problem had arisen in the Sudeten German area by which the French alliance stood in reality between France and Germany. It was inconceivable to enter conversations which did not at the same time envisage some manner of settling this difficulty. For example, would it be possible to guarantee the neutrality of Czechoslovakia? This could only be answered by Germany with foreknowledge of how the Czechs themselves were going to handle the Sudeten German problem. Could Germany count on a form of autonomy similar to Switzerland for making such

-3- #349, July 16, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

such a guarantee? This was the type of thing concerning which Germany had to have some foreknowledge before the conversation with France could lead anywhere. Weizsaecker strongly emphasized that he had the liveliest welcome for such expressions of good will and of belief in Germany's good faith; he was not minimizing such expressions but he did wish that something more explicit had been stated.

Three. The French Charge d'Affaires informed the Counsellor of Embassy that following Daladier's speech, Paris telephoned the Charge to suggest to the German Foreign Office the usefulness of its being accorded a favorable reception. The Charge pointed out to the Foreign Office that while France had reaffirmed its obligations under its treaty with Czechoslovakia this should not be construed as a threat but considered in association with the statements respecting Germany (as outlined above). He pointed out that Daladier's action was courageous in view of French public opinion and that outside support would assist him to maintain his policy. The Charge said that the German press reaction which the Foreign Office had undoubtedly instigated was generally satisfactory and that he had not asked for and did not expect any further answer.

The

-4- #349, July 16, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

741.65
The Charge said that his strictly confidential opinion was that Daladier's speech was in response to an understanding with Chamberlain; that in view of the obstacles in his Italian policy Chamberlain might be thinking of turning again towards Berlin and that Daladier's speech might be a trial balloon. He added that now that Great Britain had settled the Austrian debt question, London might consider the moment propitious for such a move.

He said that the Czechoslovak problems gave continuous anxiety. He added that the entire problem turned at the present time on the attitude and action of Praha and that the French and the British were unremittingly urging the Czech Government to make all possible concessions. They had as yet, nevertheless, obtained no satisfactory response and were more or less in the dark as to what was really going to happen. The Charge said that Praha's delay was dangerous in itself but should the Czech solution of the "minority" problem not be satisfactory to the Sudeten Germans and Germany a most dangerous situation might immediately ensue. While he believed the Chancellor and in general the German Government wished to avert catastrophe the

frame

-5- #349, July 16, 1 p.m., from Berlin.

frame of mind of many party members might force them along violent lines.

Cipher text to London, Praha and Paris.

WILSON

KLP:CSB

TELEGRAM RECEIVED



EG FROM

This message must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (B)

Berlin

Dated July 23, 1938

Rec'd 11:09 a.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

357, July 23, 1 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.

560f62
Due partly no doubt to the frank admission in private conversations by German governmental and military authorities that the work of fortification on the French frontier was being speeded up and expanded, Berlin has been full of rumors these past 48 hours that military action against Czechoslovakia was imminent. Doubtless these rumors have been reflected in the foreign press. Military and civilian authorities consulted state that these rumors are unfounded. From the information I have been able to obtain I should summarize the situation today as follows:

One. The German army is setting up on August 1st reserve divisions ostensibly for the autumn maneuvers. Wiley has reported that summonses have gone out for this purpose. The Military Attache had advised

760F/62/504

Orthogonal Filed GE

JUL 27 1938

-2- #357, July 23, 1 p.m. from Berlin

advised me previously that such action would be taken.

Two. Both military and civilian authorities seem to feel that for the moment the tension is relaxed, that Hitler is in a more friendly frame of mind towards France and Great Britain. In this connection it is reported that Wiedemann carried to Halifax a message from Hitler to the effect that he could give reassurances as to the determination of the German Government to avoid war in respect to Czechoslovakia and a further intimation that the German Government still entertained the hope of having the best and most cordial relations with Great Britain, that nevertheless the course of events in Czechoslovakia was still far from satisfactory.

Three. The army is giving furlough to soldiers on application to return to their farms for the harvest.

All this would seem to indicate that we have a breathing spell before us at least until the harvest is in, approximately August 15.

Cipher text repeated to Paris, Praha, London.

WILSON

GW:HPD

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (C)

FROM

Berlin (part air)

Dated August 13, 1938

Rec'd 7:30 a.m. 15th.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

383, August 13, 11 a.m.

Strictly confidential. Little fact and ample rumor have characterized the last few days in respect to the Czechoslovak question. The common people of this country are now aware of the intense activity in the Rhineland fortifications, and the calling to the colors of reserve forces for "maneuvers" and as a result popular apprehension is mounting.

The fundamental point at issue between the Czechs and the Sudeten German seems to be the formation of provincial racial units with as much autonomy as the Swiss cantons. The Czechs are apparently willing to grant large autonomy to the communes and "bezirke", for which perhaps "counties" is the best translation. They are not (repeat not) willing to grant geographical autonomy to the larger provincial unit. Such autonomy is a fundamental demand on the part of the Sudeten Germans.

Apparently

760F.62/563

FP

-2- #383, August 13, 11 a.m., from Berlin.

Apparently both the French and British continue to advise the Czechoslovak Government to use every means at their disposal to reach a solution. In this connection the Rumanian Minister here told me most confidentially that the other members of the Little Entente had warned Benes that he must make every effort to solve this problem. They felt that as allies they had a right to express their view that the Sudeten problem should not be allowed to lead to war. The Rumanian Minister is unaware of the exact wording of the message given Benes but believes that the foregoing is the sense.

The German press maintains its hostile and menacing tone emphasizing every incident and distorting its meaning. This in spite of the express desire of the British that outside pressure should be abandoned in order to create a state of mind which would facilitate Runciman's mission.

My British colleague has handed me a confidential paper prepared in the Foreign Office which discusses the possibility of a plebiscite among the Sudetens and reaches the conclusion that such a plebiscite would be impracticable, inconclusive, and might perhaps provoke that very disorder and excuse for

German

-3- #383, August 13, 11 a.m., from Berlin.

German intervention which it is in the general interest to obviate. Henderson tells me that the British Embassy at Washington has given you a copy of this paper. No one who has not studied the question deeply on the spot is capable of expressing a considered ^{opinion} ~~statement~~ as to whether a plebiscite would be advantageous or not. Nevertheless the suggestion arises more and more frequently not only among foreign diplomats but among Germans that the political implications of a plebiscite are calculated to appeal to the democratic conception and might reduce this particular problem to a local issue rather than to one which threatens the peace of Europe.

WILSON

HPD

(*) Apparent omission.

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR
This telegram must be
closely paraphrased be-
fore being communicated
to anyone. (C)

FROM

Berlin (part air)

Dated August 13, 1938

Rec'd 7 a.m., 14th.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

384, August 13, 1 p.m.

Strictly confidential.



I am supplementing my 383, August 13, 11 a.m.,
by reporting a portion of a conversation I have just
had with Francois Poncet. He declares that he
encountered Coering two nights ago and the latter
said to him: "We are going to await the result of
Runciman's work. We are convinced that the Czechs
will sabotage this work and that because of the
Czech attitude Runciman cannot meet with success.
We want to see then what the attitude of the British
and French will be before taking any decision in the
premises."

WILSON

HPD

760F.62/562

FILED
AUG 15 1938

Confidential File

G/FP

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

EDA

GRAY

1-1286

FROM BERLIN

Dated August 29, 1938

Received 12:40 p.m.

Secretary of State

Washington

407, August 29, 5 p.m.



During the last few days an intensification of the press campaign against Czechoslovakia has become noticeable.

760F
Over the weekend local papers carried abundant editorial comment adversely criticising Simon's speech of Saturday. Briefly summarized the general line taken was that the speech added little to Chamberlain's remarks before the House on March 24 and that in failing to treat the "demands" of the Sudeten Germans, Simon was strengthening the stubbornness of the Czechs and was encouraging the bellicose element among them. Such a development could only aggravate the situation and "thus drive events into the whirl of a conflict".

GILBERT

WWC:RR

AUG 30 1938

FILED

760F.62/617

CLG

TELEGRAM RECEIVED

JR

This telegram must be closely paraphrased before being communicated to anyone. (D)

Berlin

FROM

Dated September 8, 1938

Rec'd 2:48 p.m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

425, September 8, 6 p.m.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.



Impressions of the situation obtained from numerous conversations in Nuremberg are somewhat contradictory.

One. The rank and file of the party, including some of the leading members not connected with foreign affairs, were unprecedentedly outspoken in their apprehension and in their condemnation of the folly of bringing on a war over this question.

Two. Members of the Foreign Office, including Ribbentrop, von Weizsaecker, Dieckhoff, all spoke with grave apprehension of danger and believed that the situation was graver than it had been a few weeks ago.

Three. Goebels, however, said that he was reassured, that he had been very apprehensive two weeks ago but that now he no longer felt so uneasy and regarded the future with confidence. Goering as well spoke reassuringly to Henderson though not so specifically.

Hitler

76CF:62/701

GDG

-2- #425, September 8, 6 p.m., from Berlin.

Hitler himself in his encounters with myself and other diplomats gave not the slightest inkling of his thought on this matter.

I left Nuremberg more than ever impressed with German ~~solidarity the determination to achieve~~ desired results, and the danger above all of this mighty power completely obedient to one man.

WILSON

KLP