

11-C-105-



Miscellaneous No. 7 (1938)

# Correspondence respecting Czechoslovakia

September 1938

*Presented by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs  
to Parliament by Command of His Majesty*

LONDON

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

To be purchased directly from H.M. STATIONERY OFFICE at the following addresses:

York House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2; 120 George Street, Edinburgh 2;

26 York Street, Manchester 1; 1 St. Andrew's Crescent, Cardiff;

80 Chichester Street, Belfast;

or through any bookseller

1938

Price 3d. net

Cmd. 5847

CORRESPONDENCE RESPECTING CZECHOSLOVAKIA,  
SEPTEMBER 1938.

No. 1.

Lord Runciman to the Prime Minister.<sup>(1)</sup>

Westminster, S.W. 1,

September 21, 1938.

My dear Prime Minister,

WHEN I undertook the task of mediation in the controversy between the Czechoslovak Government and the Sudeten German party, I was, of course, left perfectly free to obtain my own information and to draw my own conclusions. I was under no obligation to issue any kind of report. In present circumstances, however, it may be of assistance to you to have the final views, which I have formed as a result of my Mission, and certain suggestions which I believe should be taken into consideration, if anything like a permanent solution is to be found.

The problem of political, social and economic relations between the Teuton and Slav races in the area which is now called Czechoslovakia is one which has existed for many centuries with periods of acute struggle and periods of comparative peace. It is no new problem, and in its present stage there are at the same time new factors and also old factors which would have to be considered in any detailed review.

When I arrived in Prague at the beginning of August, the questions which immediately confronted me were (1) constitutional, (2) political and (3) economic. The constitutional question was that with which I was immediately and directly concerned. At that time it implied the provision of some degree of home rule for the Sudeten Germans within the Czechoslovak Republic; the question of self-determination had not yet arisen in an acute form. My task was to make myself acquainted with the history of the question, with the principal persons concerned, and with the suggestions for a solution proposed by the two sides, viz., by the Sudeten German party in the "Sketch" submitted to the Czechoslovak Government on the 7th June (which was by way of embodying the 8 points of Herr Henlein's speech at Karlsbad), and by the Czechoslovak Government in their draft Nationality Statute, Language Bill, and Administrative Reform Bill.

It became clear that neither of these sets of proposals was sufficiently acceptable to the other side to permit further negotiations on this basis, and the negotiations were suspended on the 17th August. After a series of private discussions between the

<sup>(1)</sup> NOTE.—A similar letter was addressed by Lord Runciman to President Benes on September 21, 1938.

CONTENTS.

No.	Page
1. Lord Runciman's letter to the Prime Minister of September 21, 1938 ... ..	3
2. The Anglo-French proposals presented to the Czechoslovak Government on September 19, 1938 ... ..	8
3. The first letter of September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor ... ..	10
4. Letter from the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister of September 23, 1938 ... ..	11
5. The second letter of September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor... ..	14
6. Memorandum handed by the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister on September 23, 1938 ... ..	14
<i>Annex.</i> —Sketch map based on the map annexed to No. 6 ...	<i>At end</i>
7. Letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of September 25, 1938 ... ..	16
8. Letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of September 26, 1938 ... ..	18
9. Letter from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor of September 26, 1938 ... ..	19
10. Letter from the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister of September 27, 1938 ... ..	21

*inv. č. 5706*



Sudeten leaders and the Czech authorities, a new basis for negotiations was adopted by the Czechoslovak Government and was communicated to me on the 5th September, and to the Sudeten leaders on the 6th September. This was the so-called 4th Plan. In my opinion—and, I believe, in the opinion of the more responsible Sudeten leaders—this plan embodied almost all the requirements of the Karlsbad 8 points, and with a little clarification and extension could have been made to cover them in their entirety. Negotiations should have at once been resumed on this favourable and hopeful basis; but little doubt remains in my mind that the very fact that they were so favourable operated against their chances, with the more extreme members of the Sudeten German party. It is my belief that the incident arising out of the visit of certain Sudeten German Deputies to investigate into the case of persons arrested for arms smuggling at Mährisch-Ostrau was used in order to provide an excuse for the suspension, if not for the breaking off, of negotiations. The Czech Government, however, at once gave way to the demands of the Sudeten German party in this matter, and preliminary discussions of the 4th Plan were resumed on the 10th September. Again, I am convinced that this did not suit the policy of the Sudeten extremists, and that incidents were provoked and instigated on the 11th September and, with greater effect after Herr Hitler's speech, on the 12th September. As a result of the bloodshed and disturbance thus caused, the Sudeten delegation refused to meet the Czech authorities as had been arranged on the 13th September. Herr Henlein and Herr Frank presented a new series of demands—withdrawal of State police, limitation of troops to their military duties, &c., which the Czechoslovak Government were again prepared to accept on the sole condition that a representative of the party came to Prague to discuss how order should be maintained. On the night of the 13th September this condition was refused by Herr Henlein, and all negotiations were completely broken off.

It is quite clear that we cannot now go back to the point where we stood two weeks ago; and we have to consider the situation as it now faces us.

With the rejection of the Czechoslovak Government's offer on the 13th September and with the breaking off of the negotiations by Herr Henlein, my functions as a mediator were, in fact, at an end. Directly and indirectly, the connection between the chief Sudeten leaders and the Government of the Reich had become the dominant factor in the situation; the dispute was no longer an internal one. It was not part of my function to attempt mediation between Czechoslovakia and Germany.

Responsibility for the final break must, in my opinion, rest upon Herr Henlein and Herr Frank and upon those of their supporters inside and outside the country who were urging them to extreme and unconstitutional action.

I have much sympathy, however, with the Sudeten case. It is a hard thing to be ruled by an alien race; and I have been left

with the impression that Czechoslovak rule in the Sudeten areas for the last twenty years, though not actively oppressive and certainly not "terroristic," has been marked by tactlessness, lack of understanding, petty intolerance and discrimination, to a point where the resentment of the German population was inevitably moving in the direction of revolt. The Sudeten Germans felt, too, that in the past they had been given many promises by the Czechoslovak Government, but that little or no action had followed these promises. This experience had induced an attitude of unveiled mistrust of the leading Czech statesmen. I cannot say how far this mistrust is merited or unmerited; but it certainly exists, with the result that, however conciliatory their statements, they inspire no confidence in the minds of the Sudeten population. Moreover, in the last elections of 1935 the Sudeten German party polled more votes than any other single party; and they actually formed the second largest party in the State Parliament. They then commanded some 44 votes in a total Parliament of 300. With subsequent accessions, they are now the largest party. But they can always be outvoted; and consequently some of them feel that constitutional action is useless for them.

Local irritations were added to these major grievances. Czech officials and Czech police, speaking little or no German, were appointed in large numbers to purely German districts; Czech agricultural colonists were encouraged to settle on land transferred under the Land Reform in the middle of German populations; for the children of these Czech invaders Czech schools were built on a large scale; there is a very general belief that Czech firms were favoured as against German firms in the allocation of State contracts and that the State provided work and relief for Czechs more readily than for Germans. I believe these complaints to be in the main justified. Even as late as the time of my Mission, I could find no readiness on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to remedy them on anything like an adequate scale.

All these, and other, grievances were intensified by the reactions of the economic crisis on the Sudeten industries, which form so important a part of the life of the people. Not unnaturally, the Government were blamed for the resulting impoverishment.

For many reasons, therefore, including the above, the feeling among the Sudeten Germans until about three or four years ago was one of hopelessness. But the rise of Nazi Germany gave them new hope. I regard their turning for help towards their kinsmen and their eventual desire to join the Reich as a natural development in the circumstances.

At the time of my arrival, the more moderate Sudeten leaders still desired a settlement within the frontiers of the Czechoslovak State. They realised what war would mean in the Sudeten area, which would itself be the main battlefield. Both nationally and internationally such a settlement would have been an easier solution

than territorial transfer. I did my best to promote it, and up to a point with some success, but even so not without misgiving as to whether, when agreement was reached, it could ever be carried out without giving rise to a new crop of suspicions, controversies, accusations and counter-accusations. I felt that any such arrangement would have been temporary, not lasting.

This solution, in the form of what is known as the "Fourth Plan," broke down in the circumstances narrated above; the whole situation, internal and external, had changed; and I felt that with this change my mission had come to an end.

When I left Prague on the 16th September, the riots and disturbances in the Sudeten areas, which had never been more than sporadic, had died down. A considerable number of districts had been placed under a régime called Standrecht, amounting to martial law. The Sudeten leaders, at any rate the more extreme among them, had fled to Germany and were issuing proclamations defying the Czechoslovak Government. I have been credibly informed that, at the time of my leaving, the number of killed on both sides was not more than 70.

Unless, therefore, Herr Henlein's Freikorps are deliberately encouraged to cross the frontier, I have no reason to expect any notable renewal of incidents and disturbances. In these circumstances the necessity for the presence of State Police in these districts should no longer exist. As the State Police are extremely unpopular among the German inhabitants, and have constituted one of their chief grievances for the last three years, I consider that they should be withdrawn as soon as possible. I believe that their withdrawal would reduce the causes of wrangles and riots.

Further, it has become self-evident to me that those frontier districts between Czechoslovakia and Germany where the Sudeten population is in an important majority should be given full right of self-determination at once. If some cession is inevitable, as I believe it to be, it is as well that it should be done promptly and without procrastination. There is real danger, even a danger of civil war, in the continuance of a state of uncertainty. Consequently there are very real reasons for a policy of immediate and drastic action. Any kind of plebiscite or referendum would, I believe, be a sheer formality in respect of these predominantly German areas. A very large majority of their inhabitants desire amalgamation with Germany. The inevitable delay involved in taking a plebiscite vote would only serve to excite popular feelings, with perhaps most dangerous results. I consider, therefore, that these frontier districts should at once be transferred from Czechoslovakia to Germany, and, further, that measures for their peaceful transfer, including the provision of safeguards for the population during the transfer period, should be arranged forthwith by agreement between the two Governments.

The transfer of these frontier districts does not, however, dispose finally of the question how Germans and Czechs are to live together peacefully in future. Even if all the areas where the Germans have

a majority were transferred to Germany there would still remain in Czechoslovakia a large number of Germans, and in the areas transferred to Germany there would still be a certain number of Czechs. Economic connexions are so close that an absolute separation is not only undesirable but inconceivable; and I repeat my conviction that history has proved that in times of peace the two peoples can live together on friendly terms. I believe that it is in the interests of all Czechs and of all Germans alike that these friendly relations should be encouraged to re-establish themselves; and I am convinced that this is the real desire of the average Czech and German. They are alike in being honest, peaceable, hard-working and frugal folk. When political friction has been removed on both sides, I believe that they can settle down quietly.

For those portions of the territory, therefore, where the German majority is not so important, I recommend that an effort be made to find a basis for local autonomy within the frontiers of the Czechoslovak Republic on the lines of the "Fourth Plan," modified so as to meet the new circumstances created by the transfer of the preponderantly German areas. As I have already said, there is always a danger that agreement reached in principle may lead to further divergencies in practice. But I think that in a more peaceful future this risk can be minimised.

This brings me to the political side of the problem, which is concerned with the question of the integrity and security of the Czechoslovak Republic, especially in relation to her immediate neighbours. I believe that here the problem is one of removing a centre of intense political friction from the middle of Europe. For this purpose it is necessary permanently to provide that the Czechoslovak State should live at peace with all her neighbours and that her policy, internal and external, should be directed to that end. Just as it is essential for the international position of Switzerland that her policy should be entirely neutral, so an analogous policy is necessary for Czechoslovakia—not only for her own future existence but for the peace of Europe.

In order to achieve this, I recommend:—

- (1) That those parties and persons in Czechoslovakia who have been deliberately encouraging a policy antagonistic to Czechoslovakia's neighbours should be forbidden by the Czechoslovak Government to continue their agitations; and that, if necessary, legal measures should be taken to bring such agitations to an end.
- (2) That the Czechoslovak Government should so remodel her foreign relations as to give assurances to her neighbours that she will in no circumstances attack them or enter into any aggressive action against them arising from obligations to other States.
- (3) That the principal Powers, acting in the interests of the peace of Europe, should give to Czechoslovakia guarantees of assistance in case of unprovoked aggression against her.

- (4) That a commercial treaty on preferential terms should be negotiated between Germany and Czechoslovakia if this seems advantageous to the economic interests of the two countries.

This leads me on to the third question which lay within the scope of my enquiry, viz., the economic problem. This problem centres on the distress and unemployment in the Sudeten German areas, a distress which has persisted since 1930, and is due to various causes. It constitutes a suitable background for political discontent. It is a problem which exists; but to say that the Sudeten German question is entirely or even in the main an economic one is misleading. If a transfer of territory takes place, it is a problem which will for the most part fall to the German Government to solve.

If the policy which I have outlined above recommends itself to those immediately concerned in the present situation, I would further suggest: (a) That a representative of the Sudeten German people should have a permanent seat in the Czechoslovak Cabinet. (b) That a Commission under a neutral chairman should be appointed to deal with the question of the delimitation of the area to be transferred to Germany and also with controversial points immediately arising from the carrying out of any agreement which may be reached. (c) That an international force be organised to keep order in the districts which are to be transferred pending actual transfer, so that Czechoslovak State police, as I have said above, and also Czechoslovak troops, may be withdrawn from this area.

I wish to close this letter by recording my appreciation of the personal courtesy, hospitality and assistance which I and my staff received from the Government authorities, especially Dr. Benes and Dr. Hodza, from the representatives of the Sudeten German party with whom we came in contact, and from a very large number of other people in all ranks of life whom we met during our stay in Czechoslovakia.

Yours very sincerely,  
RUNCIMAN OF DOXFORD.

No. 2.

*The Anglo-French Proposals presented to the Czechoslovak Government on September 19, 1938.*

THE representatives of the French and British Governments have been in consultation to-day on the general situation, and have considered the British Prime Minister's report of his conversation with Herr Hitler. British Ministers also placed before their French colleagues their conclusions derived from the account furnished to them of the work of his Mission by Lord Runciman. We are both convinced that, after recent events, the point has now been reached where the further maintenance within the boundaries of the

Czechoslovak State of the districts mainly inhabited by Sudeten Deutsch cannot, in fact, continue any longer without imperilling the interests of Czechoslovakia herself and of European peace. In the light of these considerations, both Governments have been compelled to the conclusion that the maintenance of peace and the safety of Czechoslovakia's vital interests cannot effectively be assured unless these areas are now transferred to the Reich.

2. This could be done either by direct transfer or as the result of a plebiscite. We realise the difficulties involved in a plebiscite, and we are aware of your objections already expressed to this course, particularly the possibility of far-reaching repercussions if the matter were treated on the basis of so wide a principle. For this reason we anticipate, in the absence of indication to the contrary, that you may prefer to deal with the Sudeten Deutsch problem by the method of direct transfer, and as a case by itself.

3. The area for transfer would probably have to include areas with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants, but we should hope to arrange by negotiations provisions for adjustment of frontiers, where circumstances render it necessary, by some international body, including a Czech representative. We are satisfied that the transfer of smaller areas based on a higher percentage would not meet the case.

4. The international body referred to might also be charged with questions of possible exchange of population on the basis of right to opt within some specified time-limit.

5. We recognise that, if the Czechoslovak Government is prepared to concur in the measures proposed, involving material changes in the conditions of the State, they are entitled to ask for some assurance of their future security.

6. Accordingly, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would be prepared, as a contribution to the pacification of Europe, to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression. One of the principal conditions of such a guarantee would be the safeguarding of the independence of Czechoslovakia by the substitution of a general guarantee against unprovoked aggression in place of existing treaties which involve reciprocal obligations of a military character.

7. Both the French and British Governments recognise how great is the sacrifice thus required of the Czechoslovak Government in the cause of peace. But because that cause is common both to Europe in general and in particular to Czechoslovakia herself they have felt it their duty jointly to set forth frankly the conditions essential to secure it.

8. The Prime Minister must resume conversations with Herr Hitler not later than Wednesday, and earlier if possible. We therefore feel we must ask for your reply at the earliest possible moment.

## No. 3.

*The First Letter of September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor.*

My dear Reichskanzler, Godesberg, September 23, 1938.

I THINK it may clarify the situation and accelerate our conversation if I send you this note before we meet this morning.

I am ready to put to the Czech Government your proposal as to the areas, so that they may examine the suggested provisional boundary. So far as I can see, there is no need to hold a plebiscite for the bulk of the areas, *i.e.*, for those areas which (according to statistics upon which both sides seem to agree) are predominantly Sudeten German areas. I have no doubt, however, that the Czech Government would be willing to accept your proposal for a plebiscite to determine how far, if at all, the proposed new frontier need be adjusted.

The difficulty I see about the proposal you put to me yesterday afternoon arises from the suggestion that the areas should in the immediate future be occupied by German troops. I recognise the difficulty of conducting a lengthy investigation under existing conditions and doubtless the plan you propose would, if it were acceptable, provide an immediate easing of the tension. But I do not think you have realised the impossibility of my agreeing to put forward any plan unless I have reason to suppose that it will be considered by public opinion in my country, in France and, indeed, in the world generally, as carrying out the principles already agreed upon in an orderly fashion and free from the threat of force. I am sure that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle, and very shortly afterwards by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force.

Even if I felt it right to put this proposal to the Czech Government, I am convinced that they would not regard it as being in the spirit of the arrangement which we and the French Government urged them to accept and which they have accepted. In the event of German troops moving into the areas as you propose, there is no doubt that the Czech Government would have no option but to order their forces to resist, and this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force.

It being agreed in principle that the Sudeten German areas are to join the Reich, the immediate question before us is how to maintain law and order pending the final settlement of the arrangements for the transfer. There must surely be alternatives to your proposal which would not be open to the objections I have pointed out. For instance, I could ask the Czech Government whether they think

there could be an arrangement under which the maintenance of law and order in certain agreed Sudeten German areas would be entrusted to the Sudeten Germans themselves—by the creation of a suitable force, or by the use of forces already in existence, possibly acting under the supervision of neutral observers.

As you know, I did last night, in accordance with my understanding with you, urge the Czech Government to do all in their power to maintain order in the meantime.

The Czech Government cannot, of course, withdraw their forces, nor can they be expected to withdraw the State Police so long as they are faced with the prospect of forcible invasion; but I should be ready at once to ascertain their views on the alternative suggestion I have made and, if the plan proved acceptable, I would urge them to withdraw their forces and the State Police from the areas where the Sudeten Germans are in a position to maintain order.

The further steps that need be taken to complete the transfer could be worked out quite rapidly.

I am,

Yours faithfully,  
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

## No. 4.

*The Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister.*

(Translation.)

Your Excellency,

Godesberg, September 23, 1938.

A THOROUGH examination of your letter, which reached me to-day, as well as the necessity of clearing up the situation definitely, lead me to make the following communication:—

For nearly two decades the Germans, as well as the various other nationalities in Czechoslovakia, have been maltreated in the most unworthy manner, tortured, economically destroyed, and, above all, prevented from realising for themselves also the right of the nations to self-determination. All attempts of the oppressed to change their lot failed in the face of the brutal will to destruction of the Czechs. The latter were in possession of the power of the State and did not hesitate to employ it ruthlessly and barbarically. England and France have never made an endeavour to alter this situation. In my speech before the Reichstag of the 22nd February, I declared that the German Reich would take the initiative in putting an end to any further oppression of these Germans. I have in a further declaration during the Reich Party Congress given clear and unmistakable expression to this decision. I recognise gratefully that at last, after twenty years, the British Government, represented by your Excellency, has now decided for its part also to undertake steps to



put an end to a situation which from day to day, and, indeed, from hour to hour, is becoming more unbearable. For if formerly the behaviour of the Czechoslovak Government was brutal, it can only be described during recent weeks and days as madness. The victims of this madness are innumerable Germans. In a few weeks the number of refugees who have been driven out has risen to over 120,000. This situation, as stated above, is unbearable, and will now be terminated by me.

Your Excellency assures me now that the principle of the transfer of the Sudeten territory to the Reich has, in principle, already been accepted. I regret to have to reply to your Excellency that as regards this point, the theoretical recognition of principles has also been formerly granted to us Germans. In the year 1918 the Armistice was concluded on the basis of the 14 points of President Wilson, which in principle were recognised by all. They were, however, in practice broken in the most shameful way. What interests me, your Excellency, is not the recognition of the principle that this territory is to go to Germany, but solely the realisation of this principle, and the realisation which both puts an end in the shortest time to the sufferings of the unhappy victims of Czech tyranny, and at the same time corresponds to the dignity of a Great Power. I can only emphasise to your Excellency that these Sudeten Germans are not coming back to the German Reich in virtue of the gracious or benevolent sympathy of other nations, but on the ground of their own will based on the right of self-determination of the nations, and of the irrevocable decision of the German Reich to give effect to this will. It is, however, for a nation an unworthy demand to have this recognition made dependent on conditions which are not provided for in treaties nor are practical in view of the shortness of the time.

I have, with the best intentions and in order to give the Czech nation no justifiable cause for complaint, proposed—in the event of a peaceful solution—as the future frontier, that nationalities frontier which I am convinced represents a fair adjustment between the two racial groups, taking also into account the continued existence of large language islands. I am, in addition, ready to allow plebiscites to be taken in the whole territory which will enable subsequent corrections to be made, in order—so far as it is possible—to meet the real will of the peoples concerned. I have undertaken to accept these corrections in advance. I have, moreover, declared myself ready to allow this plebiscite to take place under the control either of international commissions or of a mixed German-Czech commission. I am finally ready, during the days of the plebiscite, to withdraw our troops from the most disputed frontier areas, subject to the condition that the Czechs do the same. I am, however, not prepared to allow a territory which must be considered as belonging to Germany, on the ground of the will of the people and of the recognition granted even by the Czechs, to be left without the protection of the Reich. There is here no international power or agreement which would have the right to take precedence over German right.

The idea of being able to entrust to the Sudeten Germans alone the maintenance of order is practically impossible in consequence of the obstacles put in the way of their political organisation in the course of the last decade, and particularly in recent times. As much in the interest of the tortured, because defenceless, population as well as with regard to the duties and prestige of the Reich, it is impossible for us to refrain from giving immediate protection to this territory.

Your Excellency assures me that it is now impossible for you to propose such a plan to your own Government. May I assure you for my part that it is impossible for me to justify any other attitude to the German people. Since, for England, it is a question at most of political imponderables, whereas, for Germany, it is a question of primitive right of the security of more than 3 million human beings and the national honour of a great people.

I fail to understand the observation of your Excellency that it would not be possible for the Czech Government to withdraw their forces so long as they were obliged to reckon with possible invasion, since precisely by means of this solution the grounds for any forcible action are to be removed. Moreover, I cannot conceal from your Excellency that the great mistrust with which I am inspired leads me to believe that the acceptance of the principle of the transfer of Sudeten Germans to the Reich by the Czech Government is only given in the hope thereby to win time so as, by one means or another, to bring about a change in contradiction to this principle. For if the proposal that these territories are to belong to Germany is sincerely accepted, there is no ground to postpone the practical resolution of this principle. My knowledge of Czech practice in such matters over a period of long years compels me to assume the insincerity of Czech assurances so long as they are not implemented by practical proof. The German Reich is, however, determined by one means or another to terminate these attempts, which have lasted for decades, to deny by dilatory methods the legal claims of oppressed peoples.

Moreover, the same attitude applies to the other nationalities in this State. They also are the victims of long oppression and violence. In their case, also, every assurance given hitherto has been broken. In their case, also, attempts have been made by dilatory dealing with their complaints or wishes to win time in order to be able to oppress them still more subsequently. These nations, also, if they are to achieve their rights, will, sooner or later, have no alternative but to secure them for themselves. In any event, Germany, if—as it now appears to be the case—should find it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation, is determined to exhaust the other possibilities which then alone remain open to her.

ADOLF HITLER.

No. 5.

*The Second Letter, September 23, 1938, from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor.*

My dear Reichskanzler, Godesberg, September 23, 1938.

I HAVE received your Excellency's communication in reply to my letter of this morning and have taken note of its contents.

In my capacity as intermediary, it is evidently now my duty—since your Excellency maintains entirely the position you took last night—to put your proposals before the Czechoslovak Government.

Accordingly, I request your Excellency to be good enough to let me have a memorandum which sets out these proposals, together with a map showing the area proposed to be transferred, subject to the result of the proposed plebiscite.

On receiving this memorandum, I will at once forward it to Prague and request the reply of the Czechoslovak Government at the earliest possible moment.

In the meantime, until I can receive their reply, I should be glad to have your Excellency's assurance that you will continue to abide by the understanding, which we reached at our meeting on the 14th September and again last night, that no action should be taken, particularly in the Sudeten territory, by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.

Since the acceptance or refusal of your Excellency's proposal is now a matter for the Czechoslovak Government to decide, I do not see that I can perform any further service here, whilst, on the other hand, it has become necessary that I should at once report the present situation to my colleagues and to the French Government. I propose, therefore, to return to England.

Yours faithfully,  
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

No. 6.

*Memorandum handed by the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister on September 23, 1938.*

(Translation.)

REPORTS which are increasing in number from hour to hour regarding incidents in the Sudetenland show that the situation has become completely intolerable for the Sudeten German people and, in consequence, a danger to the peace of Europe. It is therefore essential that the separation of the Sudetenland agreed to by Czechoslovakia should be effected without any further delay. On the

attached map<sup>(2)</sup> the Sudeten German area which is to be ceded is shaded red. The areas in which, over and above the areas which are to be occupied, a plebiscite is also to be held are drawn in and shaded green.

The final delimitation of the frontier must correspond to the wishes of those concerned. In order to determine these wishes, a certain period is necessary for the preparation of the voting, during which disturbances must in all circumstances be prevented. A situation of parity must be created. The area designated on the attached map as a German area will be occupied by German troops without taking account as to whether in the plebiscite there may prove to be in this or that part of the area a Czech majority. On the other hand, the Czech territory is occupied by Czech troops without regard to the question whether, within this area, there lie large German language islands, the majority of which will without doubt avow their German nationality in the plebiscite.

With a view to bringing about an immediate and final solution of the Sudeten German problem the following proposals are now made by the German Government :—

1. Withdrawal of the whole Czech armed forces, the police, the gendarmerie, the customs officials and the frontier guards from the area to be evacuated as designated on the attached map, this area to be handed over to Germany on the 1st October.

2. The evacuated territory is to be handed over in its present condition (see further details in appendix). The German Government agree that a plenipotentiary representative of the Czech Government or of the Czech Army should be attached to the headquarters of the German military forces to settle the details of the modalities of the evacuation.

3. The Czech Government discharges at once to their homes all Sudeten Germans serving in the military forces or the police anywhere in Czech State territory.

4. The Czech Government liberates all political prisoners of German race.

5. The German Government agrees to permit a plebiscite to take place in those areas, which will be more definitely defined, before at latest the 25th November. Alterations to the new frontier arising out of the plebiscite will be settled by a German-Czech or an international commission. The plebiscite itself will be carried out under the control of an international commission. All persons who were residing in the areas in question on the 28th October, 1918, or were born there prior to this date will be eligible to vote. A simple majority of all eligible male and female voters will determine the desire of the population to belong to either the German Reich or to the Czech State. During the plebiscite both parties will withdraw their military forces out of areas which will be defined more precisely.

<sup>(2)</sup> See at the end of this Paper a sketch map based upon the original.



The date and duration will be settled by the German and Czech Governments together.

6. The German Government proposes that an authoritative German-Czech commission should be set up to settle all further details.

*Godesberg, September 23, 1938.*

---

APPENDIX.

The evacuated Sudeten German area is to be handed over without destroying or rendering unusable in any way military, commercial or traffic establishments (plants). These include the ground organisation of the air service and all wireless stations.

All commercial and traffic materials, especially the rolling-stock of the railway system, in the designated areas, are to be handed over undamaged. The same applies to all utility services (gas-works, power stations, &c.).

Finally, no food-stuffs, goods, cattle, raw materials, &c., are to be removed.

---

No. 7.

*Letter handed by the Czechoslovak Minister to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs on September 25, 1938.*

Sir,

*September 25, 1938.*

My Government has instructed me just now, in view of the fact that the French statesmen are not arriving in London to-day, to bring to His Majesty's Government's notice the following message without any delay:—

The Czechoslovak people have shown a unique discipline and self-restraint in the last few weeks regardless of the unbelievably coarse and vulgar campaign of the controlled German press and radio against Czechoslovakia and its leaders, especially M. Benes.

His Majesty's and the French Governments are very well aware that we agreed under the most severe pressure to the so-called Anglo-French plan for ceding parts of Czechoslovakia. We accepted this plan under extreme duress. We had not even time to make any representations about its many unworkable features. Nevertheless, we accepted it because we understood that it was the end of the demands to be made upon us, and because it followed from the Anglo-French pressure that these two Powers would accept responsibility

for our reduced frontiers and would guarantee us their support in the event of our being feloniously attacked.

The vulgar German campaign continued.

While Mr. Chamberlain was at Godesberg the following message was received by my Government from His Majesty's and the French representatives at Prague:—

“We have agreed with the French Government that the Czechoslovak Government be informed that the French and British Governments cannot continue to take the responsibility of advising them not to mobilise.”

My new Government, headed by General Syrový, declared that they accept full responsibility for their predecessor's decision to accept the stern terms of the so-called Anglo-French plan.

Yesterday, after the return of Mr. Chamberlain from Godesberg, a new proposition was handed by His Majesty's Minister in Prague to my Government with the additional information that His Majesty's Government is acting solely as an intermediary and is neither advising nor pressing my Government in any way. M. Krofta, in receiving the plan from the hands of His Majesty's Minister in Prague, assured him that the Czechoslovak Government will study it in the same spirit in which they have co-operated with Great Britain and France hitherto.

My Government has now studied the document and the map. It is a *de facto* ultimatum of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposition to a sovereign State which has shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe. Not the smallest trace of such readiness for sacrifices has as yet been manifested by Herr Hitler's Government. My Government is amazed at the contents of the memorandum. The proposals go far beyond what we agreed to in the so-called Anglo-French plan. They deprive us of every safeguard for our national existence. We are to yield up large proportions of our carefully prepared defences, and admit the German armies deep into our country before we have been able to organise it on the new basis or make any preparations for its defence. Our national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of Herr Hitler's plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight on the part of those who will not accept the German Nazi régime. They have to leave their homes without even the right to take their personal belongings or, even in the case of peasants, their cow.

My Government wish me to declare in all solemnity that Herr Hitler's demands in their present form are absolutely and unconditionally unacceptable to my Government. Against these new and cruel demands my Government feel bound to make their utmost resistance, and we shall do so, God helping. The nation of St. Wenceslas, John Hus and Thomas Masaryk will not be a nation of slaves.

We rely upon the two great Western democracies, whose wishes we have followed much against our own judgment, to stand by us in our hour of trial.

I have, &c.  
JAN MASARYK.

No. 8.

*Letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.*

Sir, *London, September 26, 1938.*

I HAVE communicated to my Government the Prime Minister's question which he put to me yesterday afternoon and for which he wished an answer. This question of the Prime Minister's, as I understood it, I transmitted to Prague as follows:—

“Although Herr Hitler did say that the memorandum handed to the Czechoslovak Government by His Majesty's Government was his last word, and although Mr. Chamberlain doubts very much that he could induce Herr Hitler to change his mind at this late hour, the Prime Minister may, under circumstances, make a last effort to persuade Herr Hitler to consider another method of settling peacefully the Sudeten German question, namely, by means of an international conference attended by Germany, Czechoslovakia and other Powers which would consider the Anglo-French plan and the best method of bringing it into operation. He asked whether the Czechoslovak Government would be prepared to take part in this new effort of saving the peace.”

To this question I have now received the following answer of my Government:—

“The Czechoslovak Government would be ready to take part in an international conference where Germany and Czechoslovakia, among other nations, would be represented, to find a different method of settling the Sudeten German question from that expounded in Herr Hitler's proposals, keeping in mind the possible reverting to the so-called Anglo-French plan. In the note which Mr. Masaryk delivered to Mr. Chamberlain yesterday afternoon,<sup>(3)</sup> mention was made of the fact that the Czechoslovak Government, having accepted the Anglo-French note under the most severe pressure and extreme duress, had no time to make any representations about its many unworkable features. The Czechoslovak Government presumes that, if a conference were to take place, this fact would not be overlooked by those taking part in it.”

(<sup>3</sup>) No. 7.

My Government, after the experiences of the last few weeks, would consider it more than fully justifiable to ask for definite and binding guarantees to the effect that no unexpected action of an aggressive nature would take place during the negotiations, and that the Czechoslovak defence system would remain intact during that period.

I have, &c.  
JAN MASARYK.

No. 9.

*Letter from the Prime Minister to the Reichschancellor.*

My dear Reichskanzler, *London, September 26, 1938.*

IN my capacity as intermediary I have transmitted to the Czechoslovakian Government the memorandum which your Excellency gave me on the occasion of our last conversation.

The Czechoslovakian Government now inform me that, while they adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten-German areas on the lines discussed by my Government and the French Government and explained by me to you on Thursday last, they regard as wholly unacceptable the proposal in your memorandum for the immediate evacuation of the areas and their immediate occupation by German troops, these processes to take place before the terms of cession have been negotiated or even discussed.

Your Excellency will remember that in my letter to you of Friday last I said that an attempt to occupy forthwith by German troops areas which will become part of the Reich at once in principle and very shortly afterwards by formal delimitation, would be condemned as an unnecessary display of force, and that, in my opinion, if German troops moved into the areas that you had proposed, I felt sure that the Czechoslovakian Government would resist and that this would mean the destruction of the basis upon which you and I a week ago agreed to work together, namely, an orderly settlement of this question rather than a settlement by the use of force. I referred also to the effect likely to be produced upon public opinion in my country, in France and, indeed, in the world generally.

The development of opinion since my return confirms me in the views I expressed to you in my letter and in our subsequent conversation.

In communicating with me about your proposals, the Government of Czechoslovakia point out that they go far beyond what was agreed to in the so-called Anglo-French plan. Czechoslovakia would be deprived of every safeguard for her national existence. She would have to yield up large proportions of her carefully prepared defences and admit the German armies deep into her country before it had

been organised on the new basis or any preparations had been made for its defence. Her national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of the German plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight.

I learn that the German Ambassador in Paris has issued a communiqué which begins by stating that as a result of our conversations at Godesberg your Excellency and I are in complete agreement as to the imperative necessity to maintain the peace of Europe. In this spirit I address my present communication to you.

In the first place, I would remind your Excellency that as the Czechoslovakian Government adhere to their acceptance of the proposals for the transfer of the Sudeten-German areas there can be no question of Germany "finding it impossible to have the clear rights of Germans in Czechoslovakia accepted by way of negotiation." I am quoting the words at the end of your Excellency's letter to me of Friday last.<sup>(4)</sup>

On the contrary, a settlement by negotiation remains possible and, with a clear recollection of the conversations which you and I have had and with an equally clear appreciation of the consequences which must follow the abandonment of negotiation and the substitution of force, I ask your Excellency to agree that representatives of Germany shall meet representatives of the Czechoslovakian Government to discuss immediately the situation by which we are confronted with a view to settling by agreement the way in which the territory is to be handed over. I am convinced that these discussions can be completed in a very short time, and if you and the Czechoslovakian Government desire it, I am willing to arrange for the representation of the British Government at the discussions.

In our conversation, as in the official communiqué issued in Germany, you said that the only differences between us lay in the method of carrying out an agreed principle. If this is so, then surely the tragic consequences of a conflict ought not to be incurred over a difference in method.

A conference such as I suggest would give confidence that the cession of territory would be carried into effect, but that it would be done in an orderly manner with suitable safeguards.

Convinced that your passionate wish to see the Sudeten-German question promptly and satisfactorily settled can be fulfilled without incurring the human misery and suffering that would inevitably follow on a conflict I most earnestly urge you to accept my proposal.

I am,

Yours faithfully,  
NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

<sup>(4)</sup> No. 4.

No. 10.

*Letter from the Reichschancellor to the Prime Minister.*

(Translation.)

Dear Mr. Chamberlain,

*Berlin, September 27, 1938.*

I HAVE in the course of the conversations once more informed Sir Horace Wilson, who brought me your letter of the 26th September, of my final attitude. I should like, however, to make the following written reply to certain details in your letter:—

The Government in Prague feels justified in maintaining that the proposals in my memorandum of the 23rd September went far beyond the concession which it made to the British and French Governments and that the acceptance of the memorandum would rob Czechoslovakia of every guarantee for its national existence. This statement is based on the argument that Czechoslovakia is to give up a great part of her prepared defensive system before she can take steps elsewhere for her military protection. Thereby the political and economic independence of the country is automatically abolished. Moreover, the exchange of population proposed by me would turn out in practice to be a panic-stricken flight.

I must openly declare that I cannot bring myself to understand these arguments or even admit that they can be regarded as seriously put forward. The Government in Prague simply passes over the fact that the actual arrangement for the final settlement of the Sudeten German problem, in accordance with my proposals, will be made dependent not on a unilateral German petition<sup>(5)</sup> or on German measures of force, but rather, on the one hand, on a free vote under no outside influence, and, on the other hand, to a very wide degree on German-Czech agreement on matters of detail to be reached subsequently. Not only the exact definition of the territories in which the plebiscite is to take place, but the execution of the plebiscite and the delimitation of the frontier to be made on the basis of its result, are in accordance with my proposals to be met independently of any unilateral decision by Germany. Moreover, all other details are to be reserved for agreement on the part of a German-Czech commission.

In the light of this interpretation of my proposals and in the light of the cession of the Sudeten population areas, in fact agreed to by Czechoslovakia, the immediate occupation by German contingents demanded by me represents no more than a security measure which is intended to guarantee a quick and smooth achievement of the final settlement. This security measure is indispensable. If the German Government renounced it and left the whole further treatment of the problem simply to normal negotiations with Czechoslovakia, the present unbearable circumstances in the Sudeten German territories which I described in my speech yesterday would continue to exist for a period, the length of which cannot be foreseen. The Czechoslovak Government would be completely in a position to drag out the negotiations on any point they liked, and thus to delay the

<sup>(5)</sup> ? decision.

final settlement. You will understand after everything that has passed that I cannot place such confidence in the assurances received from the Prague Government. The British Government also would surely not be in a position to dispose of this danger by any use of diplomatic pressure.

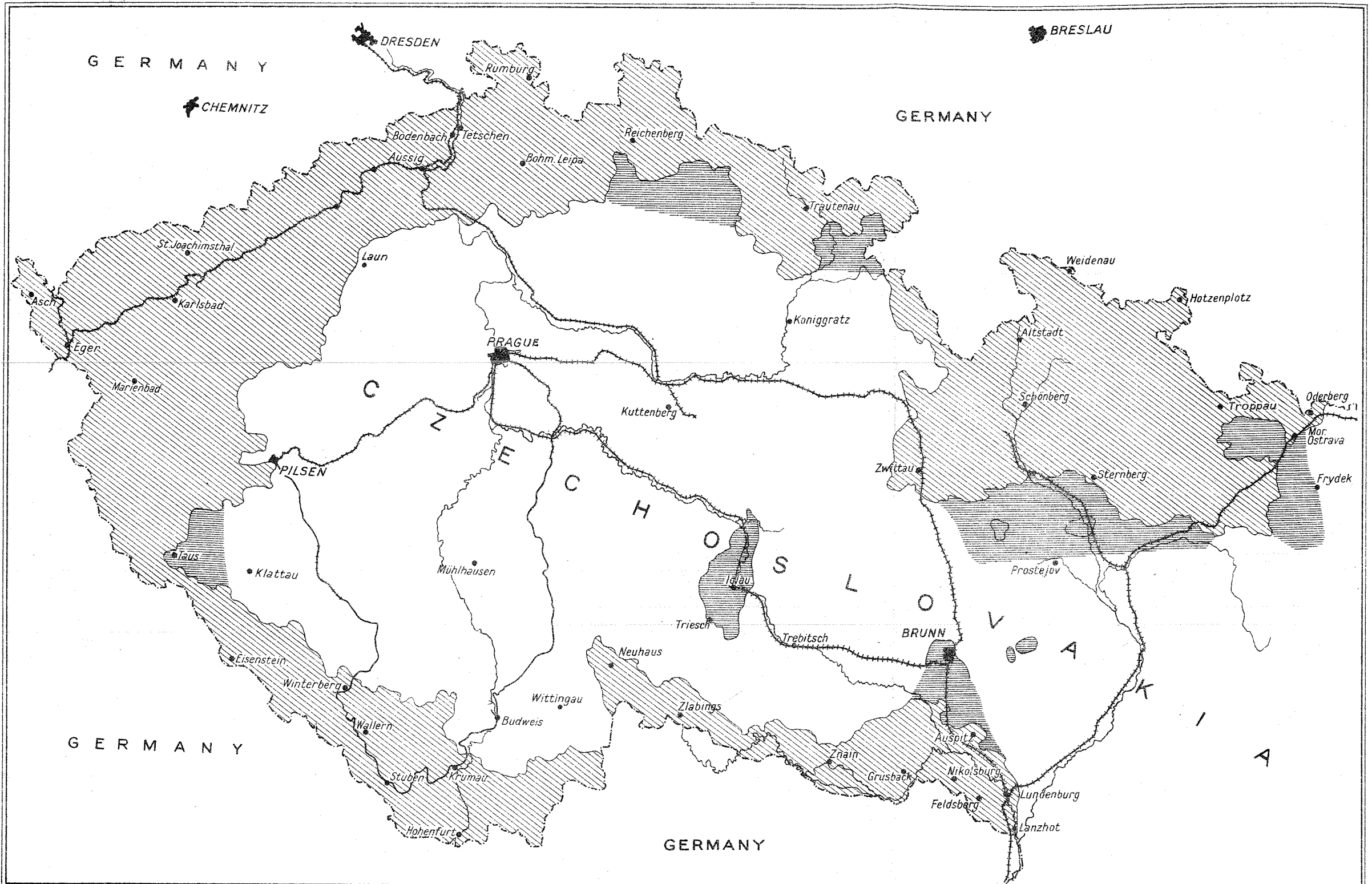
That Czechoslovakia should lose a part of her fortifications is naturally an unavoidable consequence of the cession of the Sudeten German territory agreed to by the Prague Government itself. If one were to wait for the entry into force of the final settlement in which Czechoslovakia had completed new fortifications in the territory which remained to her, it would doubtless last months and years. But this is the only object of all the Czech objections. Above all, it is completely incorrect to maintain that Czechoslovakia in this manner would be crippled in her national existence or in her political and economic independence. It is clear from my memorandum that the German occupation would only extend to the given line, and that the final delimitation of the frontier would take place in accordance with the procedure which I have already described. The Prague Government has no right to doubt that the German military measures would stop within these limits. If, nevertheless, it desires such a doubt to be taken into account the British and, if necessary, also the French Government can guarantee the quick fulfilment of my proposal. I can, moreover, only refer to my speech yesterday in which I clearly declared that I regret the idea of any attack on Czechoslovak territory, and that under the condition which I laid down I am even ready to give a formal guarantee for the remainder of Czechoslovakia. There can, therefore, be not the slightest question whatsoever of a check to the independence of Czechoslovakia. It is equally erroneous to talk of an economic rift. It is, on the contrary, a well-known fact that Czechoslovakia after the cession of the Sudeten German territory would constitute a healthier and more unified economic organism than before.

If the Government in Prague finally evinces anxiety also in regard to the state of the Czech population in the territories to be occupied, I can only regard this with surprise. It can be sure that, on the German side, nothing whatever will occur which will preserve for those Czechs a similar fate to that which has befallen the Sudeten Germans consequent on the Czech measures.

In these circumstances, I must assume that the Government in Prague is only using a proposal for the occupation by German troops in order, by distorting the meaning and object of my proposal, to mobilise those forces in other countries, in particular in England and France, from which they hope to receive unreserved support for their aim and thus to achieve the possibility of a general warlike conflagration. I must leave it to your judgment whether, in view of these facts, you consider that you should continue your effort, for which I should like to take this opportunity of once more sincerely thanking you, to spoil such manœuvres and bring the Government in Prague to reason at the very last hour.

ADOLF HITLER.

Sketch Map based on the Map annexed to the Memorandum handed to the Prime Minister by the Reichschancellor on September 23, 1938.



(Red) To be handed over on October 1.

(Green) Additional plebiscite area.