

R. W. SETON-WATSON'S THREE MEMORANDA  
FROM 1935-1938

*Edited by Christopher Seton-Watson*

*The background and origins of these three memoranda are fully described in the paper by Christopher Seton-Watson, entitled "R. W. Seton-Watson and the Czechoslovaks 1935-1939", which will be published in the proceedings of the Bad Wiessee Tagung of November 1988. The first memorandum had a limited private circulation. A very brief summary of its contents was published by Seton-Watson in 1943 as an appendix to his History of the Czechs and Slovaks. The two other memoranda were privately circulated to all members of the House of Commons and to a select number of peers. Seton-Watson incorporated some of their contents in his Munich and the Dictators, which appeared in March 1939. The full texts are here published for the first time.*

*Memorandum I*

Herr Henlein lectured at Chatham House<sup>1</sup> on Monday, 9 December 1935. I met him at dinner beforehand and had some preliminary conversation, but I also spent the whole of the following evening with him, the only other person present being our host Colonel M. G. Christie<sup>2</sup>, and on this occasion I had with him four hours of exceedingly frank discussion during which it was possible to press him in many directions and to deal with specific points in greater detail than on the previous evening. I ought to say at once – without for one moment committing myself to endorsing the man or his policy – that my general impression was very much more favourable than I had expected. Even allowing for the fact that he was on his very best behaviour in London, and was specially on his guard in conversation with me, I found that he held his own very skilfully, rarely evaded questions, however pointed or embarrassing, and avoided demagogic arguments. He also refrained from personal attacks in a way very unusual among the many politicians with whom it was my fate to talk in the old Monarchy: in some cases this may have been due to his knowledge of my friendly relations with the persons in question, but he habitually refrained in cases where this would not apply.

His address of the previous evening and his interview in the Daily Telegraph formed a natural point of departure for our main conversation, and it is therefore well to begin by summarising their principal contents.

He accepted the existing Constitution, Treaties and Minority Treaty as a basis of an agreement between Czechoslovaks and Sudetian Germans.

He ruled out not only all question of German Bohemia (either as a whole or in part) uniting with Germany, but also admitted the impossibility of separating the Czech and German districts and insisted on the essential unity of the Bohemian Lands throughout history and no less today.

He did not put forward any scheme for the 'Zweiteilung' of the Bohemian Lands.

He expressly declared Revision of Frontiers to be no solution and used language on the subject of minorities which I found to be practically identical with my own published views.

He rejected Pan Germanism and Panslavism as equally catastrophic.

He declared the totalitarian principle to be untenable, and declared in favour of 'an honest democracy'. 'We want a democracy such as is recommended by Masaryk'.

He repudiated anti-semitism, affirmed that there was no Aryan Paragraph in his party programme, and while admitting that many of his followers held the other view, claimed that he had more than once roused their criticism by defending the Jews.

While laying great stress on his general German sympathies, he denied 'Nazism' or 'Hitlerism' to be a doctrine suitable for exportation.

I expressed quite frankly my surprise and satisfaction (shared, I added, by others who were present at Chatham House) at his views as briefly summarised above, and then asked him whether such a programme would not meet with opposition inside his own party, especially in view of the somewhat heterogeneous elements of which it was composed. To this he replied quite unconcernedly that what he had said in London had long been known to, and fully endorsed by, his whole party, and in particular that all the items which caused me surprise and satisfaction were to be found almost verbatim in his big speech of 21 October 1934 at Leipa<sup>3</sup>. He then handed me a reprint of that speech, and I was able to convince myself from it that the points summarised above are actually contained in it.

He then clinched his argument by informing me that he had that very morning telephoned home the sense of his interview in the Daily Telegraph, and that there could be no doubt that his followers would accept its terms.

He also informed me that before delivering the Leipa speech, he had submitted a draft to certain Czech politicians for their opinion, and had been encouraged by them to go on, one of them going so far as to say that such a pronouncement might be an epochmaking event in the history of the Republic. But, he added, though the speech was delivered, none of the Czech leaders reacted, and the result was "gleich Null".

When I asked him why he had not followed up the speech by frank personal discussion with representative Czech and Slovak leaders, he assured me that from that day to this he had never been able to obtain access either to the President or to any member of the Government, though he would welcome such conversations, as indeed the only possible way of clearing the ground. He made no concealment of the fact that the party for which he and his followers had the most sympathy was the Czech Agrarian Party, and in passing he spoke highly of M. Svehla<sup>4</sup> and greatly regretted his premature death. He added that he feared that the main opposition to himself and his party came from Dr. Beneš.

This brought us to a general discussion of foreign policy, and here I had the impression that he was much less *au courant* than in home affairs, and though taking a highly intelligent interest, was not familiar with many details. For instance, when I put to him that from my personal knowledge of the Croatian problem he (Henlein) seemed to me to be very much nearer to Prague than Dr. Maček<sup>5</sup> was to Belgrade, he did not respond – not because he in any way dissented, but, it seemed to me, because he was not very familiar with the subject or even very keenly interested.

On the subject of relations with Germany he was very frank. At the Chatham House debate he had already repudiated so categorically all connection with Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany, and had answered so sturdily (and point by point) a long series of highly offensive questions as to his relations with Krebs<sup>6</sup>, Hassellblatt<sup>7</sup>, Neuwirt<sup>8</sup> and others and as to alleged Nazi support of his party funds, that I could not press him further without insulting him. But he said very frankly that he had been repeatedly pressed to make a public attack on Hitler and the Third Reich, but that this was too much to ask. He was a keen believer in German cultural unity and racial kinship, but repudiated the Pan German idea in any political form and regarded the Nazi programme as unsuited for exportation beyond the frontiers of the Reich.

When he treated Pan Germanism and Pan Slavism as more or less equal dangers, I argued that the latter was dead except as a general underlying sentiment such as would deter any Western or Southern Slav from entering an open conflict with Russia. If (so I argued) he in his turn claimed that to ask the German citizens of a Slav state to fight against Germany would be too much, I personally would accept such a view; but I feared that a new Pan Germanism was forming in the Third Reich which aimed at the conquest of Slav territory. He dissociated himself from such a view, but did not pursue the subject further, and I again felt, not so much that he was evasive, as that he was on unfamiliar ground. The conversation scarcely got onto the Hungarian question at all, and here again I felt he was on unfamiliar ground, though he seemed to have no sympathy whatsoever with Hungarian revisionist claims. As regards the Austrian question, his view was

that it could only be solved by the Austrian people itself by a free vote, but we did not get down to details.

He was very explicit in his opinion that it ought to be possible to reach an agreement between the Czechs and Germans on the basis of the existing Constitution: and it is indeed obvious that once the points summarised above have been conceded, their disagreement reduces itself to a mere matter of bargaining on points of fact and on the extent of possible concessions. No fundamental concession of principle is involved on either side, since he accepts the existing framework of the State and the constitution, while the State has already conceded in theory the full of equality of rights for all minorities.

He argued with both force and earnestness that he was being drawn into an impossible situation; that he had at first given his followers instructions to adopt parliamentary tactics and take part in debates and political work; that they were isolated and virtually boycotted, and that all other parties were concerned to show them that they could attain nothing at all by adopting democratic methods: that though he still had an almost embarrassingly strong hold upon his followers, such a situation could not continue indefinitely, and that they were bound to lose patience; that he himself did not intend to change to another more radical policy, and that if his present efforts failed, he would retire from political life; but that this meant a catastrophic break, because the wilder elements would then come to the surface. He could not understand why responsible statesmen refused to discuss with him, and he asked, where could he turn if they all with one accord rebuffed him? To Germany? He need not explain to me what would be said if he took that course, and he had no desire to do so. To Austria? That would be quite ineffective in present conditions. Where else could he turn? Would Prague shut its eyes to his dilemma? This explained in part the readiness with which he accepted the invitation to London, as he hoped it might draw renewed attention to his aims, and he had, he added, stated his case very moderately and omitted many details with regard to German grievances which he might legitimately have quoted.

He was careful not to put forward any claim for inclusion in the Government, and he definitely disclaimed any idea of insisting on totalitarianism. I suggested to him that the Government was in a somewhat delicate position and could not be expected to throw over its old friends and collaborators among the Germans in order to negotiate with him. He frankly admitted this to be a difficulty, but refrained from the obvious rejoinder that the Government could in the first instance negotiate, or at any rate 'talk', without throwing over its friends or in any way committing itself beforehand.

In one direction I found his answers entirely obscure and unsatisfactory, namely as to his reasons for himself remaining outside Parliament. The story of his reluctance to take an oath of loyalty he was able to brush aside, by pointing out that he had already taken such an oath as an army officer. But a positive answer was not forthcoming.

To sum up my own impression, the whole question resolves itself into one of Confidence. Can Herr Henlein be trusted? Can his assurances be taken at their face value? And if so, can he carry the Germans with him? To my mind, the only possible attitude on the part of the responsible Czech leaders is to put him to the test. To refuse discussion with a man whose public assurances, written and spoken, are so explicit and so far-reaching, would be to place oneself in the wrong. On the other hand a frank exchange of views cannot do harm and may do good, either by removing misunderstandings or by exposing insincerity. The statesmen of Prague have two precedents before them – the South African, in which former enemies accepted the basis of the state and were in the end converted into firm friends, and the Irish, in which the necessary minimum concessions were steadily refused until demands grew increasingly radical and in the end a solution was adopted which did not respect the existing basis of the state.

14th December 1935 [handwritten]

R. W. Seton-Watson [handwritten]

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Institute of International Affairs is located in Chatham House.

<sup>2</sup> Graham Christie, a former Air attaché in Berlin, to whom Henlein had been introduced by the Bohemia Count Khuen-Belasy, was Henlein's contact in London.

- <sup>3</sup> In his speech at Böhmisches Leipa, Henlein made his strongest pronouncement of loyalty so far to the Czechoslovak state. He did however still make a comparison between the Sudeten German Homefront and the National Socialist Movement.
- <sup>4</sup> Antonín Švehla (1873–1933), chairman of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party and Prime Minister (1922–1929).
- <sup>5</sup> Vladimír Mačák (1879–1964), from 1928, chairman of the Croatian Agrarian Party, advocated a federal transformation of the Kingdom of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.
- <sup>6</sup> Hans Krebs (1888–1947), DNSAP secretary in the Sudeten lands (1918–1931), fled to Germany as a result of the so-called Volkssport, later NSDAP Gauleiter.
- <sup>7</sup> Werner Hasselblatt (1890–1958), Baltic German politician, cofounder of the Geneva Nationalities Congress and head of the Verband der deutschen Volksgruppen in Europa (1931–1945).
- <sup>8</sup> Hans Neuwirth (1902–1970), Attorney in Prague, Sudeten German Party deputy in the Czechoslovak Parliament (1935–1938), in 1938, resigned from his political positions and retired from politics.

### *Memorandum II*

Negotiations and decisions of the utmost gravity, affecting the foreign policy and the honour of Britain and the whole future of Europe, have during the last fortnight been taken by the Prime Minister and Cabinet, without either public opinion or Parliament being made acquainted with them, and in such a manner as to present the world with something dangerously like a *fait accompli*. It would seem of vital importance that Members of Parliament, before they listen to the official statements when Parliament reassembles, should be in possession of the essential facts on which to form a judgement as to what has been done in their name. With this object in view, the following brief summary of (1) the joint Franco-British Note to Czechoslovakia, (2) of the Czechoslovak reply, and (3) of the French and British Ministers' demarche in Prague, has been prepared, pending publication of the full texts.

#### I

The British and French Ministers met in London on Sunday 18th September and eventually drew up a joint Note for transmission to the Czechoslovak Government.

This Note stated that after a discussion of the British Prime Minister's report on his conversations with Herr Hitler, and of Lord Runciman's report on his Prague Mission, the two Governments reached agreement on the following eight points.

1. They announce that the two Governments "find themselves forced to conclude" that the maintenance of peace and the protection of Czechoslovakia's vital interests can only be "effectively assured", if "the districts inhabited mainly by Sudeten Germans" are "transferred to the Reich".

2. The desired result, it is argued, could be attained either by direct transfer or by plebiscite, and in view of the difficulty of the latter (and "in particular, the possibility of repercussions on a grand scale" – *répercussions de grand envergure*) it is assumed that the Czechs would prefer the former method.

3. The districts to be transferred would be those containing over 50 per cent of German inhabitants: but "*we have ground for hoping that an adjustment of frontiers could be obtained where necessary (nous avons tout lieu d'espérer d'obtenir)*, and this by way of negotiations under the direction of an international organism, including a Czechoslovak representative".

4. This organism could also deal with a possible exchange of population on the basis of a right of option.

5. "We recognise" that if the Czechoslovak Government accepts, "it is justified in demanding assurances for its future security".

6. The French and British Governments would therefore be disposed, "as a contribution to the pacification of Europe", to associate themselves with an international guarantee of the new frontier against all unprovoked aggression – this guarantee replacing "the treaties actually in vigour".

7. The two Governments recognise the extent of the sacrifices demanded, but hold it to be a common interest of Europe and especially of Czechoslovakia, and an essential condition for maintaining peace.

8. They conclude by asking a reply by Wednesday at latest, and earlier if possible, because Mr. Chamberlain must resume his conversations with Mr. Hitler.

## II

The Czechoslovak Government in reply pointed out that the Franco-British proposals had been drafted without previous consultation of those most vitally concerned, and therefore did not take account of what was possible or impossible. Their execution would be anti-democratic, impossible without reference to Parliament, and tantamount to mutilation: the country's economic life would be completely paralysed. It would destroy the whole balance of power in Central Europe and in Europe as a whole.

While cordially thanking the British Government for its offer of a guarantee, they pointed out that that Government had itself "underlined the fact that a solution should be found within the framework of the Czechoslovak constitution – a basis which not even the Sudeten German Party had rejected during its discussions with Prague".

They appealed to the German-Czechoslovak Arbitration Treaty of 16th October, 1926, which the German Government had on several occasions recognised as still in force.

They concluded with "a supreme appeal" to the two Governments "to reconsider their attitude".

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It will thus be seen that the British Government in particular after subjecting the Czechoslovak Government to many weeks of pressure through the medium of the Runciman Mission (sometimes insisting on greater haste of concession, sometimes holding them back from a decision or from reference to Parliament) suddenly altogether abandoned the whole basis on which that Mission was working (namely, a German-Czech compromise within the framework of the Czechoslovak state) and presented Prague with a real ultimatum involving dismemberment in the event of acceptance and abandonment in the event of rejection. All this without consultation or warning, and in defiance of the elements of democratic practice – with, in effect, a time limit shorter than that accorded by Austria-Hungary in her ultimatum to Serbia in 1914.

It is no exaggeration to describe this as the most formidable demand ever presented by a British Government to a friendly nation: and the Prime Minister may be challenged to produce from the history of our foreign policy any document so humiliating and so contrary of the spirit of the country. There is indeed hardly any attempt to conceal the fact that it was dictated to the Prime Minister by the Führer at Berchtesgaden.

## III

Even this, however, was not held to be enough. The British and French Ministers in Prague received instructions to make an immediate *démarche* to President Benesh *à propos* of the Czechoslovak reply. This *démarche* was made at 2 a.m. on 21st September and was under four heads.

1. Britain and France have the duty to prevent an European War, if humanly possible and thus an invasion of Czechoslovakia.

2. They wish the Czechoslovak Government to realise that if it does not *unconditionally and at once* accept the Anglo-French Plan, it will stand before the world as solely responsible for the ensuing war.

3. By refusing, Czechoslovakia will also be guilty of destroying Anglo-French solidarity, since, *in that event*\*, Britain will under no circumstances march, even if France went to the aid of Czechoslovakia.

4. If the refusal should provoke a war, France gives official notice that she will not fulfil her treaty obligations.

Both Ministers insisted upon immediate and unconditional compliance – in other words, without any possibility of reference to Parliament or public opinion in any form whatsoever.

The form in which this second ultimatum was delivered, appears to have been even more abrupt and wounding than the original Note: and no better proof of its crushing effect can be found than the fact that General Faucher<sup>1</sup>, the distinguished French soldier who had been lent to the Czechoslovak Staff and who was present at the interview, at once declared to President Benesh that he was ashamed to be a Frenchman and desired to be accepted as a Czechoslovak citizen. There are many Britons to-day who fully understand his feelings and share his humiliation.

It remains to be seen whether the Prime Minister will be able to justify before Parliament this abject capitulation to Herr Hitler and the undemocratic method of condemning the victim unheard and committing our own country in advance to fundamental changes in the map of Europe and the balance of world power.

But it is scarcely less important to discover who is responsible for the actual details of the plan forced upon the Czechs – in view of the fact that it is literally incapable of execution and would break down even in the improbable event of an international body being set up for its examination. No one, of any nationality, who has any first-hand acquaintance with conditions in Czechoslovakia or with the historical background of the century-old German-Czech dispute, can fail to agree that it is almost equally objectionable from the political, economic, strategic and administrative point of view, and even racially open to grave objections. The adoption of the entirely arbitrary figure of 50 per cent German districts has no meaning save to produce chaos and open the door of the fortress to the Trojan Horse. The new line would abandon the natural watersheds, cut across the lower reaches of valleys, leave industrial districts in the air, severed from their natural customers. It will dislocate the whole economic life of the state, equally as regards mining and textiles. It will deprive the Czechs of most of their “Maginot Line” and leave them defenceless. It will even cut important railway connections, *e. g.*, between Prague and Brno and Slovakia – a proposal like cutting off London from Manchester and from Scotland.

Under the final ultimatum of Herr Hitler to the Czechs – sent through Mr. Chamberlain as intermediary – the 50 per cent area is to be evacuated by army, police and customs officials by 1st October, *in its present condition* (which means that the fortifications inside the areas must not be dismantled. All Germans in the Czechoslovak army and police are to be at once dismissed and allowed to return home, and all German political prisoners are to be set free (without any reciprocity). In the other zones there is to be a plebiscite by 25th November at latest, under control of an international Commission in which all persons resident in the area before 28th October 1918 are to vote: and during the plebiscite both sides are to withdraw their military forces. In other words the Czechoslovak army is to surrender all its most vital defences and lay its capital open to immediate occupation, without any guarantee whatsoever that discussion of details will thereafter be tolerated by the victorious Führer.

No one would criticise the two Governments for going to great lengths in the exercise of pressure on *both parties* to the dispute, in the interest of the great aim of European peace. But in actual fact their pressure has been entirely one-sided, and Mr. Chamberlain went to Berchtesgaden, but avoided going to Prague to hear the other side.

No one seriously denies that the Germans of Bohemia have just grievances: but it is time, in the name of justice, that our Government, while continuing to urge the redress of these grievances by peaceful means such as those advocated by the Runciman Mission, should at long last publicly acknowledge (on the basis of the ample information in its possession) that the German minority in Czechoslovakia was already infinitely the best treated in all Central and South

\* *i. e.*, presumably, in contradistinction to her attitude in the event of Czech acceptance.

Eastern Europe, and that the further concessions promised by the Hodza Government through the Runciman Mission would have secured to it a position of unequalled privilege.

The Fourth Plan may be criticised as going too far, but not as inadequate. As it is, the British Government, in suddenly abandoning it in favour of a scheme of naked partition, has in its turn yielded to an ultimatum from Germany supported by the full blast of German official press and wireless calumny against the Czechs. This is not the way to secure peace, but merely prepares the way for fresh demands, such as simultaneous cessions to Hungary and Poland and the complete partition of the Czechoslovak state.

#### *Germany's Aims*

Why has the German campaign been concentrated against Czechoslovakia, where the German minority is so much better treated than the German minorities in Italy, Poland, Hungary, Roumania and Jugoslavia?

1. Any good physical map shows Bohemia to be a strategic key of the highest importance – either as a defensive position against German expansion, or as a point of vantage from which Germany can make herself impregnable. Remove it, and Germany can safely concentrate her forces against the West, having wiped out an efficient army of 1 500 000 men with 2000 planes, having possessed herself of some of the largest munition works and steel and iron plants in Europe, and having cut off the Balkan states from their best supply of munitions. In any future conflict, therefore, Germany would be virtually immune from the dangers of blockade and also immune from the danger of being caught up in armament.

2. Czechoslovakia is the last stronghold of democratic government east of the Rhine. Her destruction is therefore desirable, the more so because it would be a severe blow to the democratic forces striving, with reasonable prospects of success, to recover ground in Poland and in the Balkan Peninsula.

3. Czechoslovakia and her President have been consistent supporters of the League of Nations and the principle on which it rests. Their downfall would be a further nail in its coffin, and a warning to all smaller nations.

4. Her abandonment would be a fatal blow to the prestige of the two Western Powers and would leave them to face their fate alone at no distant date.

5. Incidentally, it would endanger the future of Poland (despite her temporary arrangement with Berlin) and probably force the Little Entente and Balkan Entente into the German orbit.

26th September 1938

R. W. Seton-Watson

<sup>1</sup> Louis-Eugène Faucher (1874–1964), Brigadier General, from 1919 with the French military mission in Prague, later chief of the mission (1928–1938), joined the Czechoslovak army in September 1938 and became a citizen of Czechoslovakia.

#### *Memorandum III*

##### *Godesberg and Munich*

The essence of the recent crisis is that the Prime Minister presented the country and Parliament with a *fait accompli* which it was no longer possible to undo. This result was attained first by the steady refusal to allow Parliament to be summoned, and secondly by imposing a settlement upon Czechoslovakia by three successive ultimatums (1) the Anglo-French Plan of 18th September, (2) the Joint British-French *démarche* of 2 a.m. on 21st September, and (3) the demand addressed on the 30th September to the Prague Government from Munich for immediate acceptance of the

Four Power decisions. Be it noted in passing that in each of these cases it was deliberately made impossible for the Czech Government to consult its own Parliament or public opinion; for the time limit for an answer on the first occasion was shorter than the 48 hours granted by Austria-Hungary to Serbia in 1914, and on the third occasion it was only something like 2 hours!

Mr. Chamberlain in his speech of 3rd October in the House of Commons described the Godesberg Memorandum of Herr Hitler as "in fact an ultimatum, with a time limit of 6 days" and as "these unacceptable terms". But he laid great stress on the difference between the Godesberg Memorandum and the Munich Agreement, and even went so far as to argue that "on the difference between those two documents will depend the judgment as to whether we were successful in what we set out to do, namely to find an orderly instead of a violent method of carrying out an agreed decision". No one doubts that the Prime Minister, on his return from Munich, was genuinely persuaded that he had won substantial modifications of, and improvements upon, the Godesberg proposals. None the less anyone who takes the trouble to compare Mr. Chamberlain's own interpretation of Godesberg with the actual settlement drafted in Munich and filled in in detail by the Berlin International Commission, is forced to the conclusion that Munich (or "Munich-Berlin") so far from being an improvement, is in many cases decidedly worse. This can be demonstrated point by point.

(1) The Prime Minister made great play with the fact that Munich was a reversion to the Anglo-French Plan\*, that it laid down the principle of "international supervision" by the Four Powers, and that it provided for German military occupation no longer "in one operation by 1st October", but "in five clearly defined stages" between 1st and 10th October. But both in the Czech answer to the original Plan, and later in the Czech Note criticising the Godesberg Memorandum, it was strongly urged that so short a time limit for evacuation would inevitably involve not merely the surrender of the line of fortifications, but the laying bare of their innermost secrets to the German army. This was, of course, the main reason for Germany's insistence and haste; but so deaf to all reason were the British and French statesmen, that they ignored the warning as to the consequences that such a surrender would have upon France's defence of the Maginot Line (upon which the Czech line was modelled).

Moreover, Czechoslovakia was forced to surrender all its most vital defences before the conditions of the settlement to be imposed upon her by the International Commission could be made known, *i. e.* before the future frontier had been defined, and without any guarantee that a discussion of details would be tolerated.

(2) Mr. Chamberlain in the House admitted that the line laid down at Godesberg "did take in a number of areas which could not be called predominantly German in character". But the Berlin Commission did what Mr. Chamberlain declined to do: it accepted this line and "improved" upon it by assigning to Germany further areas which were predominantly or even purely Czech in character.

For instance, to the numerous Czech communes already demanded by Germany at Godesberg there have now been added such Czech districts as the town of Policka with 6 neighbouring communes (11 739 Czechs and 503 Germans); a large part of the districts of Opava, Břilovec and Příbor, including large and important industrial towns and communication centres such as Svinov (railway junction and broadcasting station, 4319 Czechs and 722 Germans), Trebovice (large modern power station, 1751 Czechs and 71 Germans), Klimkovice (2934 Czechs and 229 Germans), Koprivnice (large railway carriage works and the "Tatra" automobile and aeroplane works, 3968 Czechs and 622 Germans), Stramberk (lime and cement works, 3497 Czechs and 46 Germans) & c. A specially striking example is the town of Krumlov in South Moravia, which together with 4 adjacent communes has been added to the Godesberg area, although it has a large Czech majority (3047 Czechs and 349 Germans) and although the new frontier here now forms a very artificial and unnatural loop.

\* It is necessary to add that the real mischief was done by this highly inequitable "Plan". Mr. Chamberlain skilfully evaded all criticism of it by the dramatic announcement of his proposed flight to Munich: and on his return the Anglo-French Plan could already be treated as a generally accepted basis.



(3) The Berlin Commission, in fixing the Fifth Zone, entirely disregarded the principle of ceding only districts with over 50 per cent of Germans, but justified its action by treating the Czech areas which it ceded as compensation for the German *enclaves* and scattered German population in what remained of Czechoslovakia. In so doing they ignored the existence of similar Czech *enclaves* or minorities in the 50 per cent German districts already ceded according to the principles of the Anglo-French Plan. To sum up, the Berlin decision assigned to Germany in Northern Moravia and Silesia 254 Czech communes with 221044 Czechs and 14565 Germans, and in Southern Moravia 38 Czech communes, with 54287 Czechs and 16559 Germans.

It may be noted in passing that some of these decisions were based on the Commission's acceptance of the German demand that the statistics of the last Austrian census of 1910 should be used (instead of the Czechoslovak Census of 1930 or 1920) although that census was based not upon nationality or mother-tongue, but upon the so-called "*Umgangssprache*" or "language of intercourse".

In view of the Führer's assurance quoted by Mr. Chamberlain in his speech of 28th of September that "he had no wish to include in the Reich people of other races than Germans", it is not clear on what principle the Commission acted, unless economic and strategic interests of Germany were allowed to override Czech national rights.

If the frontier laid down at Berlin should be made permanent, it would mean that Germany would acquire territory containing 2806638 Germans, but also 719127 Czechs, while in the Czech territory left to the Republic there would remain 6476987 Czechs, and 250291 Germans. This is exclusive of the 147000 Germans of Slovakia.

Not the least flagrant feature of the new frontier settlement is its dislocating effect upon the whole railway system of the Republic. The main railway lines connecting Prague with the Moravian capital Brno (Brünn) and both cities with the big industrial area round Moravská Ostrava and with Slovakia as a whole, are now intersected by a whole series of German zones of occupation, which exercise an absolute stranglehold on the country's economic life. Thus:

(1) Prague-Brno-Bratislava line (248 miles)

- (a) 3 miles in the sector Ustí n/O and Dlouhá Třebová
- (b) 19 miles in sector Semanín-Brezová
- (c) 2 miles in Vojkovice sector
- (d) 5 miles in sector Pouzdrany-Popice
- (e) 2 miles in sector Zajecí-Rakvice
- (f) 4 miles at Breclav (Lundenburg). (Breclav is one of the most vital railway junctions of the Republic, where the lines from Vienna and from Bratislava meet on the way to Prague and to Poland and German Silesia. That is the very reason why it has been occupied. Incidentally the racial statistics show the town and its three adjoining communes contain 18120 Czechs and only 1808 Germans).

(2) The Prague-Olomouc-Prerov-Bohumín (Oderberg), (230 miles).

- (a) 3 miles, same as (1-a).
- (b) 40 miles in sector Trebovice-Cervenka.
- (c) 23 miles in sector Belotín-Jistebník.

If the provision of article (6) of the Munich Agreement, authorising the Commission "in certain exceptional cases" to recommend "minor modification in the strictly ethnographical determination of zones which are to be transferred", meant anything at all, it was surely intended for cases such as quoted above, or for such cases as that of the Brno water supply, which is now under German control, the reservoirs being situated just beyond the new frontier north of the town.

(4) In the question of a plebiscite, which the Anglo-French Plan has discarded in favour of "direct transfer" the Munich Agreement accepts the Godesberg Plan, with the only difference that the plebiscite areas are to be defined by the Berlin Commission. Such improvement as

Munich may be claimed to have brought was wiped out, when the Commission subsequently abandoned all idea of holding any plebiscite.

(5) Mr. Chamberlain laid stress on the improved conditions of evacuation, in view of the Godesberg prohibition upon the removal of "food stuffs, cattle or raw material", and said that the conditions were to be laid down in detail by the Berlin Commission. In actual fact only two days elapsed between the announcement of the line of the Fifth Zone and its actual occupation by German troops: and thus on the one hand the population was taken entirely by surprise, and on the other no details were forthcoming from the Commission.

(6) He also appeared to attach great value to the article providing for a right of option into and out of the transferred territories within 6 months of the Agreement. But those acquainted with the methods adopted by the Henlein Free Corps in the occupied districts will dismiss this as almost worthless. Option will not be easy for the occupants of concentration camps or for the many who are being subjected to the same treatment as the Jews of Vienna after the *Anschluss*. Incidentally no provision has been made either under the Munich Agreement or by the Berlin Commission to check terrorism in the districts where option could be exercised. It is not too much to say that the Berlin Commission was made supreme, not subject to any higher instance, but that in practice it was little better than a machine for registering German dictation.

(7) Finally Mr. Chamberlain stressed "the new system of guarantees", as likely to give Czechoslovakia "a greater security than she has ever enjoyed in the past". But if we could not help Czechoslovakia when she possessed a splendidly equipped and disciplined army, almost impregnable defences and firm alliances, it may well be asked how we can hope to help her now that she is almost utterly defenceless and robbed of her many economic resources. The Minister for Defence was right in announcing that the Government felt "under a moral obligation to treat the guarantee as being now in force", and it is already clear that British public opinion is keenly alive to the moral aspect of the whole question. But how the Prime Minister hopes to make this moral guarantee effective in case of further aggression, is more easily asked than answered.

It will thus be seen from the above survey that the much vaunted Munich Agreement, as interpreted by the Berlin Commission, hardly differs in its results from the drastic Godesberg proposals which the Prime Minister himself so indignantly rejected as "unacceptable" and as "an ultimatum rather than a Memorandum".

R. W. Seton-Watson

#### Note

In an earlier Memorandum circulated on 26th September I gave a brief summary of (1) the Anglo-French Note (this was published for the first time next day in *extenso* in the British White Paper), (2) the Czechoslovak Reply (still unpublished), (3) the joined *Démarche* of the British and French Minister at 2 a.m. on 21st September. This third summary was referred to by Sir Samuel Hoare<sup>1</sup> in the House of commons on 3rd October as, "substantially, I may say almost totally, inaccurate": and Mr. R. A. Butler<sup>2</sup>, in reading out to the House the text of Lord Halifax's<sup>3</sup> instruction to Mr. Newton<sup>4</sup> (dated 1.20 a.m. on 21st September) seems to have thought that he was refuting my summary. This rests on a misapprehension, for I was summarising not the instructions to one Minister, but the terms in which the two Ministers actually delivers their

<sup>1</sup> Samuel John Hoare (1880–1959), from 1910, Conservative MP, Home Secretary (1937–1939).

<sup>2</sup> Richard Austen Butler (1902–1985), Parliamentary Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office.

<sup>3</sup> Vicount Halifax (1881–1959), Conservative MP (1910–1925), Lord of the Privy Seal (1935–1938), Foreign Secretary (March 1938–December 1940).

<sup>4</sup> Basil Cochrane Newton (1889–1965), British diplomat: in Berlin (1929–1937), British Minister in Prague (1937–1939).

*Démarche*. The public now has the British instructions, it still has the right to demand (1) the parallel French instructions, (2) the reports of the actual *Démarche* submitted by both Ministers to their Governments, and (3) the report of their demands, as submitted to the Czechoslovak Cabinet. It will then be obvious to everyone why General Faucher, the French member of the Czechoslovak General Staff, asked to be relieved of his French citizenship.

Meanwhile I withdraw nothing.

R. W. S.[eton]-W.[atson]