



(c) crown copyright

(THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT)

---

S E C R E T .

COPY No.

C A B I N E T . 40 (38).

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on MONDAY, 19th SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

---

AGENDUM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: CENTRAL EUROPE:  
CZECHOSLOVAKIA; CONVERSATIONS WITH REPRESENTATIVES  
OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT.

(Reference Cabinet 39 (38)).

Statement by the Prime Minister.

(Signed) E. E. BRIDGES,  
Secretary to the Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,

18th September, 1938.

SECRET.C A B I N E T 40 (38).

COPY NO. \_\_\_\_\_

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at  
10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Monday, 19th  
September, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

-----

P R E S E N T :-

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.,  
Prime Minister. (In the Chair).

The Right Hon.  
Sir John Simon, G.C.S.I.,  
G.C.V.O., O.B.E., K.C., M.P.,  
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon.  
The Viscount Hailsham,  
Lord President of the Council.

The Right Hon.  
Lord Maugham,  
Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon.  
Sir Samuel Hoare, Bt., G.C.S.I.,  
G.B.E., C.M.G., M.P., Secretary  
of State for Home Affairs.

The Right Hon.  
The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,  
G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., Secretary  
of State for Foreign Affairs.

The Right Hon.  
The Earl De La Warr,  
Lord Privy Seal.

The Most Hon.  
The Marquess of Zetland,  
G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.,  
Secretary of State for India.

The Right Hon.  
Malcolm MacDonald, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for the  
Colonies.

The Right Hon.  
Sir Thomas Inskip, C.B.E., K.C.,  
M.P., Minister for Co-ordination  
of Defence.

The Right Hon.  
A. Duff Cooper, D.S.O., M.P.,  
First Lord of the Admiralty.

The Right Hon.  
L. Hore-Belisha, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for War.

The Right Hon.  
Sir Kingsley Wood, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Air.

The Right Hon.  
John Colville, M.P.,  
Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Right Hon.  
Oliver Stanley, M.C., M.P.,  
President of the Board of Trade.

The Right Hon.  
W.S. Morrison, M.C., K.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Agriculture and  
Fisheries.

The Right Hon.  
The Earl Stanhope, K.G., D.S.O.,  
M.C., President of the Board of  
Education.

The Right Hon.  
Walter Elliot, M.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Health.

The Right Hon.  
Ernest Brown, M.C., M.P.,  
Minister of Labour.

The Right Hon.  
E.L. Burgin, M.P.,  
Minister of Transport.

The Right Hon.  
The Earl Winterton, M.P.,  
Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster.

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C. .... Secretary.

THE INTERNATIONAL  
SITUATION.

Central Europe.

Czechoslovakia.

Deputation from  
the National  
Council of Labour.

1. THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Meeting was held with the primary object of enabling him to give his colleagues an account of the conversations which had taken place on Sunday between representatives of the French Government and British Ministers. He would like, however, first to tell the Cabinet about the deputation from the National Council of Labour (consisting of Sir Walter Citrine, Dr. Hugh Dalton, M.P., and the Right Hon. Herbert Morrison, M.P.) which he and the Foreign Secretary had received on Saturday.

The main object of the Deputation had been to enable the Prime Minister to give them information about the present position. He had asked them what use they would make of information given to them, and had pointed out that it was of the utmost importance that details of his discussions with Herr Hitler should remain secret for the present. Any information given to the Deputation must therefore be given upon that understanding. This had been agreed to.

The Prime Minister had then given the Deputation a summary of his conversations with the Führer. The Deputation had been very conscious of the declaration which the Trades Union Congress had recently made to the effect that the British, French and Russian Governments should combine in telling Herr Hitler very firmly the limits beyond which he must not go. The Prime Minister had explained to the Deputation the present attitude of the French Government, and the position of the French defence forces. This had come as a profound shock to them.

The Deputation had then enquired as to the attitude of Russia. He had informed them that the French Government had made enquiries of M. Litvinoff, who had replied that, under Treaty, the Soviet Government were only bound to come to the aid of France after Czechoslovakia had become involved in war on her behalf. The Russian Government, therefore, proposed to take no action until France had become involved in war, and then to take the matter up at Geneva. This news had come as an even greater shock to the Deputation, who had expressed the view that they had been misled by the public declarations of the French. They had enquired at what period a divergence had become apparent between the views of the French Government as expressed in public and in private, and they had been informed that it had been when the situation had become critical.

The members of the Deputation had then agreed that the Declaration which had been made by the Trades Union Congress put them in an embarrassing position, and that they would not have agreed to it if they had known the true facts.

The Prime Minister said that he had noticed that the Labour Party had since adopted a distinctly mild attitude, and he did not think that they were likely to press for an aggressive attitude on the part of this country. No further suggestion had been made by the Labour Party for summoning the House of Commons.

THE INTER-  
NATIONAL  
SITUATION.

Central Europe.  
Czechoslovakia.

Conversations  
with representatives  
of the French  
Government.

Previous  
Reference:  
Cabinet 39 (38))

FR 41 (38) 1.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER said that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet had flown over early on Sunday morning and that he and three of his colleagues had had a most exhausting day in negotiations that had lasted until after midnight.

The first Meeting had taken place at 11 o'clock, when he had given a full account of his conversation with Herr Hitler. He had also told the French what Lord Runciman had said. Having indicated the position, he had asked them how they viewed the situation and what they thought should be done.

The French Ministers had replied in effect that the Prime Minister's account was of great interest and that they were anxious to hear the views of the British Government, who had by now had some days to deliberate over the position. To this the Prime Minister had replied that, since the French were bound by Treaty obligations and we were not, he thought that it was for the French to express their views first. The French representatives in turn had found some means of passing the ball back into our court, and so matters had continued during the whole morning. Just before lunch, however, M. Daladier had said that the real question at issue was what we could do in order to ensure peace, while saving as much as possible of the Czechoslovak State. The British and French representatives had then adjourned for lunch.

The Prime Minister said that on this occasion, as so often in international discussions, he had found that the darkest hour was before lunch.

A number of useful confidential talks had taken place over that meal. M. Daladier had confided in him that, while he saw the most serious objection to recognising the general principle of self-determination, which would involve other Minorities, he thought that he could get M. Benes to agree to a cession of territory in the particular case of the Sudeten Germans. M. Bonnet had told the Foreign Secretary that the question whether the present difficulty could be solved turned on whether Great Britain was prepared to join in some form of international guarantee of Czechoslovakia.

After lunch, the negotiations had proceeded in a freer atmosphere, and the two ideas mentioned by M. Daladier and M. Bonnet had been developed. The French were wholeheartedly opposed to the idea of a plebiscite, which they thought would plunge all Europe into chaos. (It was worth while remembering that Herr Hitler had never mentioned the word "plebiscite".) From a practical point of view, a plebiscite presented enormous difficulties and a straightforward transfer of territory would be much simpler.

A transfer of territory could, however, only be carried out if some guiding principle were first laid down, and the new frontier then delimited by an international commission on the basis of that principle. The new frontier could not, of course, be drawn by reliance on some rule of thumb formula. The commission would also have to take into account geographical, strategic and economic conditions. Again, even when a new frontier had been laid down, there would remain the problem of the exchange of populations.

The British Ministers had told the French that, if the matter was to be dealt with on this basis, it was necessary to reach some agreement with the Czechoslovak Government as to what the guiding principle should be. It had been suggested that the test should be a simple majority of German inhabitants.

The next question discussed had been the position of Czechoslovakia when shorn of the Sudeten German territories. In particular, what would happen in regard to the other Minorities? The conclusion reached was that the Sudeten German problem must be dealt with as an urgent case on its own particular merits, and not on the basis of some general principle. Both the British and French representatives hoped that the other Minority questions, which did not present difficulties of the same order, might be settled by friendly negotiations.

M. Daladier had said that it was very present in his mind (as indeed it was present in the minds of some members of the Cabinet) that Herr Hitler's real aim was the domination of Central and South-Eastern Europe, and that, for this purpose, he was anxious to secure the total dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. On that assumption something more was required than the assurance of Herr Hitler that he would be satisfied if he secured the incorporation in the Reich of the Sudeten Germans. The French Government, therefore, invited the British Government to give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia.



The Prime Minister said that he had told the French Ministers that, while we would not exclude consideration of the proposed guarantee, it involved a very serious additional liability for this country. He had also pointed out how difficult it would be for us to fulfil the guarantee if Czechoslovakia was invaded. We should also have to consider very carefully exactly what was to be guaranteed.

To this M. Daladier had said that any prospect of getting the Czechoslovak Government to agree to a settlement on the lines proposed turned on obtaining a definite guarantee from this country. It would be useless to offer to consider the proposition. Further, the French Government were not prepared to urge upon the Czech Government their acceptance of the proposals under discussion unless that Government were given some security.

In this connection the Prime Minister explained that, earlier in the discussion, it had been suggested that Czechoslovakia's existing treaties with France and Russia should be replaced by an arrangement which, in effect, was tantamount to the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia; that is to say, that various countries would guarantee Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression, but that Czechoslovakia herself would not be entitled to enter into treaties which called upon her to go to war in the defence of other countries. The French took the view that the neutralisation of Czechoslovakia would diminish French security. If, on the other hand, the British Government were to give a guarantee to the Czechoslovak State, they would thereby assist in forming a bloc between Germany and Eastern

Europe, which would secure that part of Europe against further expansion by Germany. The French representatives had, therefore, pressed for a definite undertaking by the British Government to give a guarantee.

The British Ministers had asked for time to consider the matter, and the meeting had adjourned.

The Prime Minister said that he and his three colleagues had felt that they were bound to take responsibility for an immediate decision in regard to the guarantee. It was of the utmost importance to reach agreement at once with France. Until that had been done no steps could be taken to get the agreement of the Czechoslovak Government, and before that agreement had been obtained it was useless for him (the Prime Minister) to return to Herr Hitler. He and his colleagues had been sustained by the fact that at Saturday's Meeting of the Cabinet none of the Ministers who had referred to this matter had spoken against it except the Foreign Secretary, who had nevertheless reached the conclusion that only by giving a guarantee could a solution be found to the present difficulty.

During the adjournment referred to the British Ministers had proceeded to draft provisional conclusions in the form of a joint message to be sent to President Benes by the French and British Governments. When they had been reasonably satisfied with the document they had given it to the French representatives. There had then been an adjournment for dinner and the French representatives had been asked to return at 9.30 p.m.

The French Minister had returned about 10.15 p.m. They had put forward a number of amendments nearly all of which were concerned with the form and not the substance, of the British draft, mainly with a view to its effect on French public opinion. In the end the draft had been accepted without much difficulty.

∟Copies of the agreed text were then handed to Ministers. This document is attached to these Conclusions as an Appendix.∟

A discussion had then ensued whether the message could be despatched immediately to President Benes. But the French Ministers had taken the view that they must return to France and discuss the matter in the Council of Ministers. It had been arranged that a telegram containing the text of the joint message should meanwhile be despatched to the British and French Ministers in Prague, who would thus be in a position to act on receipt of a telephone message. The French Government had promised a reply in the course of the morning.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had little to add to the Prime Minister's account. M. Daladier had said that he was very doubtful of the attitude of two or three members of his Government to the line of action proposed, from which he seemed fairly certain that the French Government would accept the situation.

He felt considerable misgivings about the guarantee, but he came down in favour of it for the following reasons: first, because of the definition which had been given to it: secondly, because it had been made contingent on the neutralisation of Czechoslovak foreign policy. He was also influenced by the fact that it would have been disastrous if there had been any delay in reaching agreement with the French.

Discussion in regard  
to proposed  
guarantee.  
-----

THE PRIME MINISTER then replied to a number of questions raised by Ministers in regard to the terms of the draft message. It had not been assumed that Germany would be one of the guarantor countries, although the French had had this in mind. It was suggested that the guarantee should be joint and several, but the point had not yet been determined. The significance of the phrase in paragraph 6 "One of the principal conditions ...." was the desire to leave the matter vague, so that it would be open to us to introduce other conditions which might be found desirable on further reflection. It would, of course, be for us to determine what constituted "unprovoked aggression".

THE LORD CHANCELLOR asked whether the guarantee covered territories inhabited by the other minorities.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that such territories were covered, but he pointed out that our guarantee only related to unprovoked aggression. It did not exclude a peaceful solution of any minority question. He also informed the Lord Chancellor that the Poles had already raised the question of the Polish minority in Czechoslovakia. This certainly presented a real difficulty, but he could not feel that it was so serious a difficulty that it ought to stand in the way of a solution of the far more serious problem of the Sudeten Germans.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that he would like, if possible, to add at the end of paragraph 6 words to the effect that the guarantee did not bind any of the guarantor Powers to insist on the integrity of Czechoslovakia in so far as certain minority districts were concerned.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that if this attitude had been adopted on Sunday, it would have been impossible to reach agreement with the French.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that, although he had not yet taken advice on the matter, he thought that difficulties might arise on the question whether the guarantee should be joint or several. If, for example, it was decided to have a joint guarantee, and Germany, being one of the guarantor countries, committed an act of aggression, would the other guarantor countries be excused from coming to Czechoslovakia's help? If, however, the guarantee was several, and other countries failed to fulfil their obligations, this country might find itself alone in supporting Czechoslovakia.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE AND THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER thought that it was of the utmost importance to avoid anything in the nature of the latter contingency.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR thought that the question whether the guarantee was to be joint or several was of the utmost importance. If it was to be several, there was a danger that we might be left alone to carry out an obligation beyond our powers. The nature of a joint guarantee would require close definition. He pointed out, however, that a joint guarantee would not fail because of an act of aggression carried out by a country which was itself one of the guarantors. He thought that the right course was a joint guarantee, with an arrangement that in the event of attack the joint guarantors should meet and decide whether the attack constituted an unprovoked aggression.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS thought that, in the event, the guarantee would be signed by two or three Great Powers. He doubted whether Czechoslovakia would accept the guarantee if a number of lesser Powers were brought in.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he was clear that the guarantee was essential in order to reach a settlement. He also attached importance to the guarantee from the point of view of public opinion. Many people in this country would be deeply disappointed at the idea of a cession of territories and would seek to represent it as a complete capitulation. The guarantee could be set against this, as it showed a determination on our part to resist further aggression.

He thought that normally a guarantee of this kind should not be undertaken, even on behalf of the United Kingdom alone, without prior consultation with the Dominions. In the circumstances the action taken had been inevitable. It would be necessary to inform the Dominions of the position, and he thought that they would raise no objection to the assumption of this guarantee by the United Kingdom.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL said that he had not expressed his opinion on the proposed guarantee on Saturday, in view of the Foreign Secretary's demurrer and the Prime Minister's own summing up on this question. He regretted that this step had been forced on us. He thought that the guarantee would be impossible to carry out, and might make a wedge between us and the Dominions, who would not accept such an obligation. Again, such a guarantee put us in the position that we might become involved in war or troubles deliberately stirred up on the Continent by Germany or Russia. At the same time he recognised that the Prime Minister and his colleagues had been in a most difficult position and that a guarantee was essential to a solution of the present difficulty.

The Lord President concluded that he was prepared to accept his share of the responsibility for it.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR viewed the proposed guarantee with some apprehension. He thought that Czechoslovakia, after the transfer of the Sudeten German areas, would be economically an unstable State. It was difficult to see how it could survive. Further, the position of the country would be strategically unsound, and there was no means by which we could implement the guarantee. How, for example, could we fight the Poles or the Hungarians if they committed an act of aggression against Czechoslovakia? He was afraid that the solution proposed was not really a solution, but a postponement of the evil day, and that there was a risk that we were putting our signature to something which might involve us in dishonour.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was not right to assume that the guarantee committed us to maintaining the existing boundaries of Czechoslovakia. The

guarantee merely related to unprovoked aggression.

He appreciated the difficulty of seeing how we should implement the guarantee. Its main value would lie in its deterrent effect.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he appreciated the force of what the Secretary of State for War had said, but he hoped that we should not go back upon the agreement reached with the French Ministers the previous day. While there was much in the guarantee which he disliked, he thought that it was an essential feature of the only scheme which offered a peaceful solution. One unpleasant feature of the position was that a large number of Germans would be left in Czechoslovakia, and it would always be possible for Herr Hitler to stir up trouble if he so desired. Nevertheless, the prospect of war was so appalling that he agreed that postponement of the evil day was the right course.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that he had little doubt that the Chiefs of Staff would support the point of view put forward by the Secretary of State for War. But it was not fair to assume that if Czechoslovakia was the victim of unprovoked aggression, such aggression would be carried out by a single country whose territories were out of our reach. It was at least as reasonable to suppose that such aggression would be carried out as part of a more general war, in which it would be possible for us to take some effective action.



THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER pointed out that if effect was given to paragraph 6 of the joint message, the position of the present Czecho-Soviet obligations would be of historic interest only. The essence of the proposal in this paragraph was to offer to Czechoslovakia a wholly different position to that which she now occupied. She would be a buttressed State like Belgium, not able to enter into obligations towards other countries.

Some discussion ensued as to the Soviet-Czech Treaty and it was pointed out that the French Ministers had referred to this as a definite Treaty and not, as Lord Runciman had understood from M. Benes, merely an understanding.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND asked if he was right in assuming that the decision to proposed a direct transfer of territory rather than a plebiscite was based on the view expressed by the French Delegation that the Czechs would find the former less difficult to accept. From the point of view of presentation to the public he felt that direct transfer was more difficult to defend than a plebiscite. He thought that the position would be eased if emphasis were laid on the right of individuals to ask for exchange to and from the transferred territories.

~~transferred territories.~~

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER explained that paragraph 2 had been drafted with this point of view. This paragraph pointed out the practical difficulties of a plebiscite and also put upon M. Benes a considerable measure of the responsibility for preferring a transfer to a plebiscite.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL referred to the words in paragraph 3 which laid down as the guiding principle the transfer of territories with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants. He pointed out that not all German inhabitants would be anxious to be transferred to the Reich, and he suggested the substitution of 50 per cent. of the inhabitants belonging to the Sudeten German party.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER pointed out that if effect was given to paragraph 6 of the joint message, the position of the present Czecho-Soviet obligations would be of historic interest only. The essence of the proposal in this paragraph was to offer to Czechoslovakia a wholly different position to that which she now occupied. She would be a buttressed State like Belgium, not able to enter into obligations towards other countries.

Some discussion ensued as to the Soviet-Czech Treaty and it was pointed out that the French Ministers had referred to this as a definite Treaty and not, as Lord Runciman had understood from M. Benes, merely an understanding.

~~THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND said~~ that, from the point of view of presentation to the public at home, direct transfer was more difficult to defend than a plebiscite. He thought that the position would be eased if emphasis were laid on the right of individuals to ask for exchange to or from the ~~transferred territories.~~

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER explained that paragraph 2 had been drafted with this point of view. This paragraph pointed out the practical difficulties of a plebiscite and also put upon M. Benes a considerable measure of the responsibility for preferring a transfer to a plebiscite.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL referred to the words in paragraph 3 which laid down as the guiding principle the transfer of territories with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants. He pointed out that not all German inhabitants would be anxious to be transferred to the Reich, and he suggested the substitution of 50 per cent. of the inhabitants belonging to the Sudeten German party.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that this suggestion would be difficult to apply in practice.

As regards the constitution of the proposed international body, the Prime Minister, in reply to a question by the Secretary of State for Air, said that this matter had not been discussed, except informally at the official lunch, when he had suggested to M. Daladier that it should comprise representatives of this country, France, Germany, Italy and Czechoslovakia, with perhaps Lord Runciman as an impartial chairman. He had informed M. Daladier that he thought it would probably be undesirable to increase the membership by the inclusion of representatives of a number of other Powers.

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT asked whether any estimate had been made of the value of non-Sudeten property in the areas to be transferred. What would happen as regards the property of citizens who wished to leave the transferred areas before the transfer took place?

THE PRIME MINISTER said that this matter had not been discussed in the negotiations with the French, although it had been discussed by the British Ministers and their advisers among themselves. He thought that consideration should

be given to the position of people who wished to move from one area to another, but were unable to do so unless arrangements were made to facilitate the sale of their property. He also mentioned the difficulties of men who wished to transfer from one area to another but who, by so doing, would lose their means of employment.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH referred to the case of the Hungarian optants which had been discussed so often at Geneva. He also asked whether the French had raised any objection to the provision in paragraph 3 which stated that areas with over 50 per cent. of German inhabitants should in general be transferred.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that no objection had been raised. This provision was, in effect, based on what Herr Hitler had told him and he felt that, unless he was in a position to make a settlement on this basis, he might be in an awkward position when he met Herr Hitler. It was of the utmost importance not to give M. Benes any ground for saying later that he would never have accepted this joint proposal if he had known how much he might have to concede. The Prime Minister hoped that, in the event, he would be able to secure more favourable terms by negotiation. He added, in reply to questions, that he had discussed with Herr Hitler two alternative methods of dealing with Minorities, either transfer or suitable safeguards. This, however, was a matter which could not be settled without further examination and would have to be referred to the International Commission.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that he shared the dislike of many of his colleagues in regard to the proposed guarantee. Nevertheless, he felt that there was no alternative to the course proposed, and he would accept his share of responsibility for defending it. ✓

He thought that, as a result of the conversations that had taken place with the French on Sunday, the Cabinet were now called upon to reach a decision of a far more definite character as to the lines of the settlement proposed, than had been the case at Saturday's Meeting. The specific lines of a solution were now proposed. He paid a tribute to the manner in which the Prime Minister had conducted these difficult negotiations, but he would like to set out four conditions which he thought were essential to the forthcoming negotiations.

The first concerned the provision that areas with over 50% of German inhabitants would probably have to be transferred. He thought that this percentage was appropriate for a plebiscite, but wrong for a transfer. It should be assumed that a certain proportion of German inhabitants did not want to return to the Reich, and a higher percentage than 50% was therefore justified.

The second concerned the proper arrangements for the transferred individuals. Germany should be prepared to take her part in these arrangements and in providing any necessary compensation.

The third was that if the present proposals were accepted, and a Border Commission was set up, the German Army should be demobilised.

The fourth was that Herr Henlein's Freikorps should be disbanded.

He regarded the first condition as desirable but not essential, but each of the others as a sine qua non of a reasonable settlement.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he would like to add his impression of the negotiations on the preceding day. The French Ministers on arrival had been somewhat woebegone, but they had gone away with heart and courage restored to them by the Prime Minister. At the same time, any lingering fear that he might have had, that the attitude of this country might have operated to prevent the French Government from fulfilling their obligations had been entirely dispelled by Sunday's Meeting.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER said it was a matter of great satisfaction that there had been no disagreement in the Cabinet in regard to the action to be taken during the present crisis. There was perhaps a certain difference in the views held as to Germany's ultimate aims, but he hoped that any such difference would be bridged in the coming months.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought the difference was one of emphasis only.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND asked what was the significance of the second sentence of the Press Communiqué, which read as follows:-

"The two Governments hope that thereafter it will be possible to consider a more general settlement in the interests of European peace."

THE PRIME MINISTER explained that the French Ministers had desired to insert a paragraph in the joint message to the effect that Great Britain and France had examined various means of providing economic help to Czechoslovakia. He had not been prepared to agree to this paragraph, for two reasons: first, that no such examination had taken place; and, second, that it would afford the Czechoslovak Government an excuse for delay, since they might make awkward enquiries as to what these plans were. The French Government had then asked for the insertion of some general phrase in the Communiqué. The sentence quoted above, which was innocuous, had been agreed to in order to meet the French views.

The Prime Minister then announced that news had been received that the French Government had approved the joint message, and that the necessary instructions had been sent to the British and French Ministers at Prague to deliver it to M. Benes.

Continuing, the Prime Minister said that he had sent a message to Herr Hitler to the effect that he hoped to resume the conversations on Wednesday. He would not make this a definite engagement until he knew what reply was received from the Czechoslovak Government.

In regard to what the President of the Board of Trade had said he undertook to bear his remarks in mind. But he was clear that it was no use returning to Herr Hitler with the intention of imposing conditions. Nothing would be achieved by that procedure. The right plan was that he should say to Herr Hitler that he had proposals to put to him which the latter would regard as meeting his claims. If Herr Hitler assented, the Prime Minister would then say to Herr Hitler that he in turn should do certain things on his side. If things went as he hoped, he trusted that he would be able to obtain satisfactory terms on such matters as, for example, demobilisation of the German Army and Herr Henlein's Freikorps. He might even be able to get Herr Hitler to repeat his declaration that if he obtained incorporation of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich he would be satisfied.

A discussion then ensued about publicity. It was explained that the need for secrecy had been impressed upon the French. Consideration was given to the question whether it was desirable that the Press should now be informed that certain joint proposals had now been submitted by the British and French Governments to M. Benes; but it was decided that, for the present at any rate, this should not be done.



THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS pointed out that the present stage represented a most critical period in the negotiations. Everything now depended upon how the French and British proposals were received in Czechoslovakia. M. Masaryk had told him that morning that he thought the Czechoslovak Government would fight rather than agree to a large surrender of territory. He was not sure, however, whether this answer took into account the proposal to give a guarantee. There was also the danger that the Czechoslovak Army might assume control. If this happened, Herr Hitler would regard it as a catastrophic event and would order his troops to march.

In this connection, some discussion took place as to what action the French would take if M. Benes did not take the advice tendered to him by the British and French Governments and had resort to arms.

THE PRIME MINISTER stated that M. Daladier had said that he regarded such a reply as impossible. He read to the Cabinet an extract from the note of the meeting which had taken place the preceding day.

THE HOME SECRETARY added that he thought it was important that the Cabinet should know that the British Ministers had done as little as possible in the way of pressing their views on the French Government at the negotiations on the preceding day. The Prime Minister had been most successful in ensuring that the decisions taken were joint decisions, for which we could not be saddled with the major share of responsibility.

CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed:-

(Previous reference: Cabinet 39 (38), Conclusion (i)).

- (i) To endorse the attitude which the Prime Minister had taken up in his discussions with Herr Hitler on Thursday, 15th September.
- (ii) To endorse the joint message to President Benes from the British and French Governments, which had been agreed to in the negotiations between British and French Ministers held on Sunday, 18th September.
- (iii) To authorise the Prime Minister to continue his negotiations with Herr Hitler on the basis set out in the joint message to President Benes, bearing in mind the views expressed by his colleagues.
- (iv) That, for the present at any rate, the Press should not be informed that the British and French Governments had submitted joint proposals to M. Benes.

NEXT MEETING  
OF CABINET.

5. No date was fixed for the next Meeting of the Cabinet.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that should President Benes not accept the advice set out in the joint message from the British and French Governments, or should there be any drastic change in the situation, the Cabinet would be called together at short notice.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

19th September, 1938.

APPENDIX.ENGLISH TEXT OF JOINT MESSAGE TO PRESIDENT BENES FROM  
THE BRITISH AND FRENCH GOVERNMENTS, AS AGREED IN THE  
ANGLO-FRENCH CONVERSATIONS HELD ON SUNDAY, 18TH  
SEPTEMBER, 1938.

1. The representatives of the French and British Governments have been in Consultation today 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 areas 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 recognize 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 conversation with Herr Hitler not later than Wednesday, and earlier if possible. We therefore feel we must ask for your reply at earliest possible moment.