

● PSF

Safe: Czechoslovakia

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Paris, September 16, 1939.

Personal and
Confidential

Dear Mr. President:

As you know, Benes arrived in Europe intending to set up a "provisional government of Czechoslovakia". He naturally ran into a series of snags.

In the first place, both the French and British took the position that they had refused to admit that Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist as an independent state, and were still recognizing the competence of the Ministers of Czechoslovakia in both Paris and London. They desired to continue to recognize these Ministers as representing the Czechoslovak State until it should be possible to recreate a Czechoslovak State. They could see no basis for a Benes provisional government, except Benes's desire to place himself at the head of something again.

Moreover,

The Honorable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

President of the United States of America,

Washington, D. C.

Moreover, nearly everyone in political life in both France and England considers that Benes is an utterly selfish small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country.

I have been told that Benes has the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington more or less in his pocket, and I am writing you this letter because I think it is important that our Government should take the same line as the French and British Governments.

There will be a Czech Army formed in France. All the agreements necessary for the setting up of this army will be made and signed by Osusky, the Czech Minister in Paris, who will continue to be recognized as the representative of Czechoslovakia on the principle that Czechoslovakia "is not dead but sleepeth".

I think our Government should take the same line. You will get into endless embarrassment, if you try to recognize a provisional government which has no existence and no authority anywhere. We can and should keep up the fiction that the Czech Minister in Washington represents the Czechoslovak State. If he asks for advice, he should be told that he should cooperate fully with the Czech Minister in France who is organizing the Czech Army and is recognized by the French

Government

Government as the sole representative of the Czechoslovak State.

Incidentally, the Czech Minister in Paris, Osusky, was for seventeen years an American citizen, a highly successful lawyer in Chicago, and during the war, one of my hired men when I was running the information on the enemy in the State Department. Indeed, the reputation I then acquired as a prophet was largely due to my use of Osusky's brains.

Our Military Attaché in Prague used to say that all Czechs could be divided into two classes: 1, Masaryk; 2, just Czechs. Osusky has the advantage of being a Slovak!

Good luck.

Bill

The Honorable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

President of the United States of America,

Washington, D. C.

Safe: Czechoslovakia
back by

Czech

London, July 26, 1941.

Dear Mr. President:

You will doubtless have seen from my telegram No. 3069 of July 18, 10 p.m., to the Department of State the account of the action taken by the British Government in extending formal recognition to the Czechoslovak Government in London. Prior to this action being taken by the British Government, I had discussed the matter very fully along the lines you desired with Mr. Eden and he gave me on July 1st a confidential memorandum setting forth the Government's attitude toward recognition of Czechoslovakia and various considerations which it was felt must form the basis of such recognition, even though they did not fully meet the wishes of Dr. Benes.

The unconditional recognition of Dr. Benes' Government by Russia presented the British with a fait accompli, as they had not been previously

The President,
The White House,
Washington.

consulted, and to a certain degree their hand was forced. Mr. Eden's memorandum is therefore past history, but I thought it would be of interest to the Department of State, and possibly to you, to have it as a part of the record, together with an account of oral explanations given by the Foreign Office. I am therefore enclosing a copy of my despatch No. 1013 of July 24 to the Department, together with a copy of the Foreign Office memorandum.

Respectfully yours,

John S. W. ...

Enclosure:

As stated.

LONDON, July 24, 1941.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

No. 1013

SUBJECT: British Government's Formal
Recognition of the Czechoslovak
Government.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

1/ With reference to my telegram No. 3069 of July 18, 10 p.m. reporting that the British Government had extended formal recognition to the Czechoslovak Government in London, I have the honor to enclose, as of background interest, a copy of a memorandum dated July 1, 1941, given me by Mr. Eden, which deals with the composition of the Czechoslovak Government and the possible form of recognition to be accorded the latter.

This memorandum proceeds from a conversation which

I/

I had with Mr. Eden shortly after my return to London, in which I mentioned the President's interest in the inclusion in the Czechoslovak Government of the four principal minorities of the former Czechoslovak State in order that that Government might be made as representative as possible. While the recommendations with respect to recognition contained in the enclosed memorandum have been superseded by the act of formal recognition which the British Government felt it advisable to extend following the step taken in this regard by the Russian Government, I believe that an account of the interim developments, as given by an official of the Foreign Office, may be of some interest to the Department.

It will be recalled from the Embassy's telegram No. 2214 of May 30, 1941, that in reply to Dr. Benes' wish for complete de jure recognition of his Government, the British Government in its communication of May 26 mentioned its concern that such recognition might force the Hacha Government in Prague to take a stand against Dr. Benes or be ejected from office by the Germans. It will be recalled further that the British Government stated in its communication that it wished to be assured that formal recognition of Dr. Benes would not jeopardize the collaboration at present existing between him and the Hacha Government, and would not be detrimental to the common Allied cause. The Foreign Office informs me
that/

that shortly thereafter Dr. Benes hastened to furnish sweeping assurances in this regard, and that the British Government had then proceeded with a plan for the bestowal of far-reaching formal recognition subject to certain reservations regarding post-war territorial settlements. This plan was submitted to the Dominion Governments which, however, objected to it as going too far, and consequently the British Government withdrew it and substituted the more modest proposals regarding recognition contained in the memorandum attached hereto.

These proposals were still under discussion with the Dominion Governments at the time when the Russian Government bestowed formal recognition on the Benes Government by concluding the agreement mentioned in my telegrams No. 3048 of July 17, 8 p.m. and No. 3049 of July 17, 9 p.m. These developments in a certain sense thus forced the British Government's hand. As mentioned in my telegram No. 3069 of July 18, 10 p.m., the British Government had no opportunity to consult the Dominion authorities but could only inform them of its decision and the steps which it felt should immediately be taken to extend formal recognition. It is believed by the Foreign Office that the Dominions will, however, appreciate the circumstances under which this decision was taken and will likewise not object to the form of the reservations regarding post-war territorial settlements/

settlements and the status of the Czechoslovak Government, concerning which they are understood previously to have entertained certain misgivings.

The text of Mr. Eden's note to Dr. Masaryk, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, which was cited in my telegram No. 3069 of July 18, 10 p.m. has not been published and, as mentioned in that telegram, should be regarded as secret and confidential. Notices appearing in the British Press on July 19 were confined principally to the statement that the British Government had extended "full recognition" to Dr. Benes as President of the Czechoslovak Republic. It was simultaneously announced that Mr. Philip B. B. Nichols, an official in the British Foreign Office, had been appointed British Minister to the Czechoslovak Government with headquarters in London. It is learned that at the present writing the Czechoslovak Government has not yet announced the appointment of a Minister to the British Government.

Respectfully yours,

John G. Winant.

Enclosure:-
1/ as stated.

JDB:MVG

(A copy of this despatch and enclosure is being sent to the President).

COPY/

MEMORANDUM.

~~Confidential~~

After the German entry into Prague in March, 1939, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom continued to recognise the Czechoslovak Legation in London and Czechoslovak Consulates in British territory. Their position has not changed since and His Majesty's Governments in the Dominions have adopted a similar attitude.

2. After the outbreak of war, His Majesty's Government recognised on 20th December, 1939 the Czechoslovak National Committee "as qualified to represent the Czechoslovak peoples and in particular to make arrangements for the reconstruction of the Czechoslovak army in France."

3. One of the main conditions made by His Majesty's Government for further recognition was that Dr. Benes should be able to secure greater unity among the Czechs and Slovaks abroad. This was finally achieved through a reconciliation between Dr. Benes and the Slovak leader and former Czechoslovak Prime Minister, Dr. Hodza, and on 18th July, 1940 a Provisional Czechoslovak Government was recognised. Viscount Halifax's letter to Dr. Benes conveying this recognition contained the following passage: "His Majesty's Government note that the personnel of this provisional Government is intended to be representative of the Czech and Slovak peoples, and/

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and it is understood to be the intention that the National Council (to which Dr. Benes had previously referred) should also be fully representative in character and comprise within its membership recognised Czech and Slovak leaders abroad who are not already included in the provisional Government".

5. A list of the members of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government and of the other members of the National Council is attached. The Slovaks are marked with a cross. It will be seen that six of the thirteen members of the Government are Slovaks.

6. In these negotiations with Dr. Benes nothing was said about the inclusion of a Ruthenian representative in the Czechoslovak State machinery since

(a) it was uncertain whether it would eventually prove desirable to press for the return of Ruthenia from Hungary to Czechoslovakia;

(b) Dr. Benes seemed willing to leave this question in abeyance and

(c) there are no outstanding Ruthenian leaders. It will, however, be seen that one representative of Ruthenia is in fact included in the State Council. His Majesty's Government still consider that it would be wiser to leave the Ruthenian question in abeyance and not to prejudge the future of this relatively small and unimportant community.

7. Much thought has, on the other hand, been
given/

given to the Sudeten problem and discussions between Dr. Benes and Dr. Jaksch, leader of the former Sudeten Social Democratic Party, have been encouraged. Dr. Benes has left open six seats in the National Council for Sudeten representatives and has offered one of the two Vice-Presidencies to a Sudeten. Several talks have taken place between Dr. Benes and Dr. Jaksch, but there is little hope of a satisfactory solution in present circumstances for the following reasons:-

- (i) Dr. Jaksch can only speak for one minority Sudeten Party and not for the Sudeten Germans as a whole.
- (ii) Many Czechs at home would be shocked by concessions to Sudeten Germans, whom they hold largely responsible for their present oppression.
- (iii) Dr. Jaksch does not wish to commit himself on the form of Sudeten association with a Czechoslovak State until the future status and internal structure of such a state can be more clearly foreseen at a later stage of the war. For the present, therefore, His Majesty's Government cannot go beyond the attitude they have hitherto taken up that, pending a solution of the difficulties between Dr. Benes and the Sudeten Democratic leaders, they must reserve the position as regards the Czechoslovak Government's exercise of legislative authority over certain Czechoslovak nationals (i.e. Sudeten Germans and other dissident elements) and their property in this country.

8. The conclusion is that it would hardly be possible/

possible in present circumstances to arrange for a Czechoslovak government and National Council which would be more representative than the administration of Dr. Benes.

9. A further request has now been received from Dr. Benes for full recognition of the Czechoslovak Government on the same basis as other Allied Governments now in England. Dr Benes and his administration already receive in practice almost identical treatment with the other Allied Governments now in the United Kingdom, and there are difficulties in the way of meeting Dr. Benes' request for full recognition. It is however important to give further encouragement to the Czechoslovak population at home and to show them that their leaders in London are regarded as being on the same level with the other exiled national leaders now here. His Majesty's Government are therefore contemplating the following intermediate solution which they understand might satisfy Dr. Benes for the time being,

- (1) The term "Provisional" would no longer in practice be used to describe the Czechoslovak Government, but this would not mean that full recognition had been accorded.
- (2) An official of Ministerial rank would be appointed as "British Diplomatic Representative to the Czechoslovak Government". A "Czechoslovak Diplomatic Representative" would be received in return if the Czechoslovak Government wished to appoint one in addition to or instead of the/

of the present Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires. These Representatives would not present letters of credence, and their appointment would not involve full recognition.

10. When putting this proposal to Dr. Benes, His Majesty's Government would (a) repeat the statement made at the time of the recognition of the Provisional Government that they do not commit themselves to recognise or support the establishment in the future of any particular frontiers in Central Europe: (b) repeat the reservation discussed above regarding the position of Sudeten Germans and other dissident elements: (c) maintain their present attitude of reserve regarding Dr. Benes' claim that there has been no interruption in the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak Republic and to set aside this question for consideration at the appropriate moment.

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

1st July, 1941.

A.- Thirteen Members of the Government.

- M.J. Sramek.
- General S. Ingr.
- x General R. Viest.
- Dr. E. Outrata.
- Dr. H. Ripka.
- x M. Jan Masaryk.
- x M. J. Lichner.
- x Dr. S. Osusky.
- x M. J. Bečko.
- M. F. Nemec.
- Dr. L. Feierabend.
- Dr. J. Nečas.
- x Dr. J. Slavik.

B.- Eleven Former Parliamentary Deputies.

- M. R. Bechyne, Social Democrat.
- x Dr. M. Hořsa, Agrarian.
- x Ngr. Macháček, Slovak People's party.
- Mme. Jurnečková-Vorlova, Social Democrat.
- M. B. Laušman, Social Democrat.
- M. R. Smetanka, National Union party.
- M. F. Uhlir, National Socialist.
- M. Vojta Beneš, National Socialist.
- Professor J. B. Kozak, National Socialist.
- M. V. David, National Socialist.

C.- Eight Experts and Specialists.

- Dr. F. Hala, General Secretary of the Catholic party.
- Professor L. Klecanda.
- Dr. Julius Fuerth, the leading Czech publisher.
- Dr. Friedman, former head of economic section of
Czechoslovak Foreign Office.
- Captain Gustav Kleinberg, Legionary.
- x M. Vido, former member of the Industrial party.
- Dr. Pavel Cibere, representative of Sub-Carpathian
Ruthenia.
- x Dr. Jan Čaplovič, Social Democrat economist.