

The route to Munich. Czechoslovakia in the eyes of American diplomats in 1938

American policy toward interwar Czechoslovakia has not to date been the subject of much interest in the Czech specialized historical literature.¹ However, State Department documents deposited at the National Archives and Record Administration at College Park in Maryland² indicate that the American Embassy in Prague closely monitored political developments in Czechoslovakia from the end of the 1920s and endeavoured to analyse the main problematic issues in its reports.

These included the question of nationalities, which American diplomats considered to be, along with the Czech-Slovak relationship, one of the key internal problems of the Czechoslovak Republic (ČSR).³ Nevertheless, it was clear that at least after Hitler's accession to power this question attained a stronger international dimension and that the Great Depression made the situation worse in the 1930s. It was also for this reason that U.S. diplomats monitored and analysed it carefully.⁴ The reports of American representatives in Prague (chargé d'affaires a.i. Francis White, James Webb Benton, Joshua Butler Wright, General Consul Frank C. Lee and later envoy Wilbur John Carr) followed in detail the path leading from the efforts of the Hodža government⁵ to resolve the minority question⁶ to the Czechoslovak crisis of 1938.⁷ Given

- 1 Project on legal, historical and social aspects of new and traditional minorities in the Czech Republic financed by the Czech Ministry of Culture.
- 2 See more HEDGES, John H.: *Diplomatic Records. A Select Catalog of National Archives Microfilm Publications*. National Archives Trust Fund Board, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C. 1986.
- 3 It was naturally interested not only in the German but also the Hungarian minority in Slovakia and also the Polish minority in relation to Czechoslovak-Polish relations. See e.g., the report by J. Webb Benton from 7 November 1933 on the Hungarian minority. *National Archives and Record Administration*, Washington (hereafter referred to as NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 27, 860f.401/5. See also the fact the Embassy asked for a synoptic report on the nationality composition of Czechoslovakia from a historical perspective from 1 June 1934 from General Consul F. C. Lee (Ibid., 860f.401/6) and the results of the census of 1930, appendix to the report from 28 January 1932 (Ibid., 860f.401/7).
- 4 See for instance the report of the American Legation from 20 May 1933 on language policy towards the German minority elaborated by General Consul F. Lee (Ibid., No. 704, 860f.4016/20), the extensive report by J. Butler Wright on the nationality policy of the CSR from 15 February 1933 (Ibid., No. 96, 860f.4016/23) or his further lengthy report on the minority issue from 10 April 1937 (Ibid., No. 677, 860f.4016/30).
- 5 Milan Hodža (1878–1944), 1935–1938 Prime Minister of Czechoslovak Government.

that the American diplomats' information came from discussions with Czechoslovak politicians (especially Prime Minister Milan Hodža and President Edvard Beneš⁸) and diplomats from the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other missions in Prague and from analysis of the press and official governmental publications (e.g., the series *Czechoslovak Sources and Documents*⁹), as well as discussions with representatives of the German minority and from journeys to the borderlands, they provide an analytical external view from the outside and represent an important source on this subject. Moreover, the American Embassy received copies of important reports on related questions from the U.S. diplomatic missions of neighbouring states and from the metropolises of the Great Powers.

Aggressive Nazi policy towards Czechoslovakia openly exploited the minority question, especially from the beginning of 1938. As early as February 1938, the German chancellor, Adolf Hitler, declared his plan "to protect" 10 million Germans who, as a consequence of post-World War I peace treaties, remained outside the borders of the Third Reich.

In that regard American diplomats acquired an interesting addendum from a discussion between Stanley Hawks from the U.S. Embassy in France and Prince Max Hohenlohe,¹⁰ in which the Sudeten-German politician also handed over a special memorandum requesting a solution to the Sudeten-German problem, although for the time being ruling out a demand for secession.¹¹

The situation worsened further after the Anschluss of Austria in early March 1938. The German nationality minority in Czechoslovakia then became Hitler's instrument for breaking up the country. This was regardless of the endeavours of the Czechoslovak government to resolve the nationality question in Czechoslovakia, particularly through a so-called nationality statute, which was to transform national minorities' status in the country. A meeting between the representative of the German minority in Czechoslovakia Konrad Henlein (1898–1945), leader of the Sudeten-German Party (Sudetendeutsche Partei – SdP), supported by roughly nine-tenths of Czech Germans, and the German chancellor in Berlin at the end of March became decisive in this regard.

6 On that, see the lengthy report by W. J. Carr from 1 November 1937 on the policy of Hodža's government on the minority question elaborated on the basis of Hodža's statements and speeches. NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 31, 860f.4016/38.

7 For more detail, see the study by both authors on that theme: KUKLÍK, Jan – NĚMEČEK, Jan: Národnostní problematika v Československu očima americké diplomacie (1933–1938) /The nationality issue in Czechoslovakia in the eyes of American diplomacy (1933–1938)/. *Moderní dějiny*, 2011, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 183–218.

8 Edvard Beneš (1884–1948), 1935–1948 president of the Czechoslovak Republic.

9 In 1936, the study came out as Number 14 by CHMELÁŘ, J: *The German problem in Czechoslovakia*, which the American Embassy subsequently commented on in a report by J. Butler Wright from 6 October 1936 (NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 563, 860f.4016/27) and compared with J. Webb Benton's reports on the social situation in the borderlands from August 1936.

10 Maximilian Egon Maria Erwin Paul Prinz zu Hohenlohe-Langenburg (1897–1968), mediator between the Sudeten-German Party and Czechoslovak government.

11 Report by U.S. diplomat in Paris Edwin Carleton Wilson from 28 February 1938. NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 1821, 860f.4016/41.

By an irony of fate, on precisely the same day that Czechoslovak Prime Minister Hodža announced on the radio the drafting of the nationality statute, Henlein accepted very clear instructions from the German Reich's leadership in Berlin on 28 March 1938: *We must then always demand so much that we can never be satisfied.*¹²

Everything that followed, weeks and months of negotiations involving the Czechoslovak government and president on ever-growing German demands in the shadow of the British policy of appeasement, was all a mere game, successfully launched in Berlin with a single aim: to break up the Czechoslovak state. It was a game into which other nationality minorities in Czechoslovakia were also dragged; however, they merely played the role of sparring partner for Henlein.

Naturally, American diplomats' reports could hardly, based on their sources, have captured the core of German policy towards Czechoslovakia. Nevertheless, U.S. officials did map secondary manifestations of this process, placing them in the international political context as well as evaluating them from the perspective of developments they had been monitoring since the 1920s.

This primarily concerned the disbanding of the German activist camp: under the influence of the Anschluss of Austria in the spring of 1938, the German Agrarian Party (Svaz zemědělců – Bund der Landwirte), German Trade Party (Německá živnostenská strana – Deutsche Gewerbeartei) and German Christian-Socialist Party (Německá křesťanskosociální strana lidová – Deutsche christlichsoziale Volkspartei) voluntarily dissolved and called on their members to transfer to the SdP; in the majority of cases they did so. German activist ministers also quit the Czechoslovak government and deputies from the activist parties joined the SdP's parliamentary group. The growing influence of the SdP on the German minority and its disputes with the activist camp accounted for a significant portion of American reports from Czechoslovakia from as early as the second half of 1935.¹³

A report by Carr dated 23 March 1938 informed headquarters of the decision of the German agrarians to leave the coalition and merge with the SdP, also stating that the Christian Socialists were preparing a similar step. However, despite this move the majority coalition government was to remain in power. According to a report by Wilson from Berlin, the German press commented that the SdP already represented a German minority unified "almost to the last man". The Czechoslovak idea of a minority state thus took a significant blow and the Germans could now demand the position of speaker of Parliament.¹⁴ Another report by Carr built on this, referring to the changes in the government and developments in the last remaining activist party, the German Social Democrats (Německá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická – Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei), where a battle between Ludwig Czech

12 ČELOVSKÝ, Bořivoj: *So oder so. Řešení české otázky podle německých dokumentů 1933–1945* /So oder so. Resolution of the Czech question according to the German documents 1933–1945/. Tilia, Šenov u Ostravy 1995, p. 145.

13 See the report by J. Butler Wright from 4 December 1935 on the SdP's disputes with German agrarians. NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 344, 860f.4016/26.

14 Ibid., roll 14, No. 43, 860f.00/461. See document No. 1.

and Wenzel Jaksch over leadership and place in government continued. The core issue was the possibility of creating a common Sudeten-German political front.¹⁵ Two days later Carr informed Washington of the culmination of the unification process, when the German Christian Socialists decided, following the agrarians, to dissolve the party and thus the SdP became the strongest party in Parliament.

Warnings of gathering clouds over Czechoslovakia also came from American military circles: on 25 March 1938 the U.S. chargé d'affaires a.i. to Austria, John Cooper Wiley, sent a telegram to Washington about a conversation between a American military attaché and a Hungarian colleague, according to whose information Czechoslovakia would fall apart (be destroyed) within six months, even without a war in view of economic and social problems, with similar demands to those of the Germans being made at the same time by the Poles and Hungarians. This report precisely anticipated subsequent developments. The deputy of the Hungarian military attaché also confirmed that Hungary was beginning an intensive campaign regarding its minority and according to press reports had already launched it.¹⁶

No less concerning reports came from Poland, from where on 5 April 1938 the U.S. ambassador in Warsaw, Anthony Drexel-Biddle Jr., reported that the German ambassador, Hans Adolf von Moltke, had told Polish representatives that the Czechoslovak government would have to concede to the SdP in the demand for autonomy. At that time, according to Drexel-Biddle's report, there was a widespread belief in Poland that the Sudeten areas would be joined to the Reich as Hitler had proclaimed a policy of unifying the German population; even autonomy need not be an acceptable compromise and would only serve as a temporary measure.¹⁷ These reports followed on from an account from 23 November 1937 of the visit to Warsaw of the U.S. ambassador to France William Bullitt, whom the Polish minister of foreign affairs Józef Beck had told that Germany would soon attack Czechoslovakia on the back of an instigated uprising of Czechoslovak Germans.¹⁸

The Americans also received alarming reports from the domestic political scene. Envoy Carr received reports on possible unrest in the Sudetenland from nongovernmental circles: the SdP was dissatisfied with the unconstructive approach of the Czechoslovak government towards their demands and was boosted by the success of the Anschluss of Austria. Carr also received information that the police in the borderlands had been instructed to avoid bloodshed, even at the cost of not intervening.¹⁹

Before the Easter holidays, Parliament instructed Hodža to continue negotiating with the SdP but not to accede to the demand for territorial autonomy or change the country's foreign policy orientation. It also called for state unity and a reduc-

15 Ibid., No. 104, 860f.00/472, Report from 23 March 1938. See document No. 2.

16 Ibid., No. 144, 860f.00/462. See document No. 3.

17 Ibid., No. 51, 860f.00/466, Report by U.S. Ambassador in Warsaw Anthony Drexel-Biddle Jr. from 5 April 1938.

18 Ibid., No. 123, 860f.00/455, Report by U.S. Ambassador in Paris William Bullitt from 23 November 1937.

19 Ibid., No. 43, 860f.00/467, Report by U.S. Ambassador in Warsaw Anthony Drexel-Biddle Jr. from 5 April 1938.

tion in domestic and foreign propaganda. In his report from 29 March 1938 on Hodža's speeches on 4 March (at the National Assembly) and 28 March (on the radio) – which were attached to the report²⁰ – Carr observed that it was in fact Prime Minister Hodža and not President Beneš or Minister of Foreign Affairs Kamil Krofta²¹ who was chiefly responsible for the presentation of Czechoslovakia at that time. According to Carr, Hodža was more popular than Beneš and as an agrarian was closer to the people. Nevertheless, he pointed out that although Hodža spoke of the minority problem as an internal Czechoslovak affair, it could shortly, according to the envoy, become an international question – as subsequent events were soon to show.²² On 5 and 6 April, Carr sent dispatches relating to parliamentary and political debates on domestic policy as regards the minority question, as well as reactions in the press.²³

In response to the latest reports from Prague, the European Division of the State Department on 27 April stated that the minority problem in Czechoslovakia seemed to be escalating, especially because of the unification of the German minority under the SdP and the declarations of other minorities, the Hungarians and Poles, who accused the government of de-nationalization and demanded autonomy, including autonomy for Slovakia and Sub-Carpathian Ruthenia, which Hlinka's Slovak People's Party (Hlinkova slovenská ľudová strana – HSĽS), in a stand against centralization, also joined. However, even if the HSĽS had joined with the SdP and the parties of the other minorities, this still represented ca 2,400,000 votes against the 5.8 million citizens loyal to the republic, and American diplomats estimated (based on articles in the newspaper *Prager Presse*) that as many as two-thirds of the population were against the radical demands of the HSĽS in Slovakia.

U.S. Embassy officials naturally did not fail to grasp the fundamental turning point in negotiations on the minority question, which was Henlein's declaration of the so-called Karlovy Vary demands of the SdP on 24 April 1938,²⁴ the intention of which was absolutely clear. They were so radical that the Czechoslovak government could not accept them. Doing so would be to risk the loss of part of its territory

20 In English: *The New European Situation and Czechoslovakia. Speeches by Dr. Milan Hodža, Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak sources and documents, No. 24.* Orbis, Prague 1938.

21 Kamil Krofta (1876–1945), 1935–1938 Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs.

22 NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 108, 860f.00/473. See document No. 4.

23 Ibid., roll 19, Nos. 117 and 121, 860f.4016/49-50, reports by U.S. Envoy in Prague Wilbur J. Carr from 5 and 6 April 1938.

24 *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtiges Amtes* (PAAA), Berlin, Büro des Staatssekretär, Akten betreffend Tschechoslowakei; R 29765; Vom Oktober 1937 bis 30. Juni 1938; eight demands by K. Henlein, announced in Karlovy Vary. Telegram from Berlin to German Embassy in London, 19 July 1938. See report of W. J. Carr from 25 April 1938 (NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 139, No. 151, 860f.00/495) with a short version of these demands: [...] *the Sudeten Germans think that the order of the State must be constructed on the following lines: 1) Full equality between Czechs and Germans; 2) Guarantee of this equality by recognition of Sudeten Germans as a legal personality; 3) Determination and legal recognition of the German regions within the state; 4) Full self-government for these German regions; 5) Legal protection for every citizen living outside the region of his own nationality; 6) Removal of injustices inflicted upon the Sudeten Germans since 1918 – reparation of the damages thereby incurred; 7) Recognition of the principle within the German regions German officials and realization of this principle; 8) Full liberty to profess German nationality and the German political philosophy...*

settled by the German minority. Alongside autonomist elements (full equality of the German national group with the Czech nation, recognition of the Sudeten-German national group as a legal entity), these demands would have not only have given the German minority precedence over the other nationality minorities in Czechoslovakia; they would also have directly undermined the sovereignty of the state, for instance with a call for the determination and recognition of a Sudeten-German residential territory in which only German public employees and German self-government were to work. What's more, they would have allowed for complete freedom of declaration of German nationality and German (thus Nazi) worldview. The implementation of these proposals would entail the dissolution of Czechoslovakia into several completely autonomous structures and the destruction of its unity and integrity. The outline of these demands was obtained by the Sudeten German leader directly from Berlin.²⁵ On 25 April 1938, W. J. Carr elaborated a report on the basis of information of embassy employees on Henlein's speech in Karlovy Vary. The first response compared these demands to Hitler's demands for a change of the German constitution five years earlier. Carr's informer at the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs told him that it eased the situation to a certain extent: the government would finally be able to treat this minority as a real "enemy" that had revealed its true colours and declared its wishes. On the other hand, it meant the interruption of negotiations between Prime Minister Hodža and the SdP and it was possible that someone like Arthur Seyss-Inquart²⁶ in Austria would appear in the country. Carr was also told that Hitler had asked Henlein not to act so radically, although this was clearly only wishful thinking.²⁷ Here U.S. information was in stark contrast to reality: Henlein's negotiations in Berlin with Hitler were secret and Carr could hardly have learned of the real state of affairs. With the Karlovy Vary demands the SdP had entered open confrontation, a confrontation that culminated not quite six months later with the signature of the Munich Agreement and the secession of the frontier regions of Czechoslovakia.

Another worsening of Czechoslovak-German ties stemmed from the question of elections to municipal councils and extraordinary military measures (so-called partial mobilization). The American envoy commented on these events in a report dated

25 PAAA, Berlin, f. Unterstaatssekretär, R29927, record German Foreign Ministry from 28 March 1938 after talks between A. Hitler and K. Henlein, i.a., it speaks here of the free declaration to National Socialist world opinion etc.: *Aufzeichnung. Die Sudetendeutsche Partei könnte unter anderen an die Tschechoslowakische Regierung folgende Forderungen stellen: 1) Einstellung des Baues von Tschechisierungsschulen und Unterlassung aller anderen Tschechisierungsbemühungen im Sudetendeutschen Gebiet; 2) Schaffung der Möglichkeit für das freie Bekenntnis zur nationalsozialistischen Weltanschauung; 3) Entwicklung der Selbstverwaltung im sudetendeutschen Siedlungsgebiet derart, dass dort nur noch deutsche staatliche und Selbstverwaltungsbeamte tätig sind; 4) Versetzung deutscher Beamten und deutschen Beamtennachwuchses in das sudetendeutsche Siedlungsgebiet; 5) Abhaltung von Staats- und Gemeindevahlen; 6) Abschaffung der Staatspolizei in Grenzgebiet. Die vorstehenden Punkte stellen lediglich Teilforderungen für das grundsätzliche Verlangen nach home rule im sudetendeutschen Gebiet dar. Diese Forderung wäre elastisch zu halten und schrittweise im Verlauf der Aussprache mit der Tschechoslowakischen Regierung zu präzisieren, Von der Erfüllung dieser allgemeinen Forderung wäre die Zustimmung der sudetendeutschen Partei zu einem Eintritt in die Tschechoslowakischen Regierung abhängig zu machen.*

26 Arthur Seyss-Inquart (1892–1946), Austrian Nazi politician, 11–13 March 1938 chancellor of Austria.

27 NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 78, 860f.00/477. See document No. 5.

24 May. The extraordinary military measures did not much surprise the American Embassy, as the deputy of the American military attaché in Berlin, Major Percy Black, had produced an evaluation of the political and military problems connected with the German minority in Czechoslovakia as early as 13 May and this report had also reached Prague.²⁸ In terms of the results of the municipal elections, it was clear that they strengthened the SdP in the borderlands in particular and the American Embassy illustrated this fact on the basis of the results in individual towns.

The American envoy in Prague subsequently also reported on the current course of the negotiations of the Czechoslovak government (and later President Beneš himself) with Henlein and other representatives of the SdP in the form of both shorter dispatches and lengthier analyses (for instance, those of 19 and 20 June and 2, 13 and 28 July 1938), based on which the European Division of the State Department on 13 August again returned to the issue of the fate of the negotiations on the nationality statute, including an analysis. Although the concessions were huge, it was clear even to American officials that what was at issue was whether they satisfied Hitler enough and were accepted by the SdP.²⁹ The dynamic of international negotiations was already chiefly in the hands of the British and German ministries of foreign affairs. The American State Department was particularly understanding toward the subsequent move of the UK Foreign Office, which after the SdP rejected even more “far-reaching” concessions by Hodža’s government contained in the nationality statute and the language act in the first two weeks of July³⁰, decided to send an intermediary to look into the positions of both sides. Nevertheless, the British government did not have to be bound by the proposal of such an intermediary. This mediator was Lord Walter Runciman.³¹ It is most interesting that in this regard the SdP again used the services of its confidant Prince Max Hohenlohe, who in an interview with British diplomat Robert Vansittart³² passed on to UK officials the Sudeten-German rejection of the negotiations so far.³³ Sending a mediator was intended to prolong the negotiations and either resolve the crisis or at least postpone a military solution, which Hitler had begun to threaten.

In view of the international dimension of the Czechoslovak crisis, the U.S. State Department also analysed the Great Powers’ position on Central Europe. With regard

28 Ibid., RG 59, M 1218, roll 19, No. 149, 860f.4016/51, report by U.S. military attaché in Berlin Major Percy Black from 13 May 1938.

29 Ibid., No. 129 and 227, 860f.4016/54-58, reports by U.S. Envoy in Prague Wilbur J. Carr from 19 June and 28 July 1938.

30 See also WOODWARD, E. L. – BUTLER, Rohan (eds.): *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, Third Series, Vol. I. His Majesty’s Stationery Office, London 1968, doc. No. 467, pp. 539–540.

31 *The National Archives of the United Kingdom*, London (TNA), Foreign Office (FO) 371, 21727, C 6868, extract from Cabinet Conclusions 31 (38) of the 6th July 1938. For more on Runciman’s mission see VYSNY, Paul: *The Runciman Mission to Czechoslovakia. Prelude to Munich*. Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke 2003.

32 Robert Gilbert Vansittart, 1st Baron Vansittart (1881–1957), 1930–1938 Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

33 GLASSHEIM, Eagle: *Noble Nationalists. The Transformation of the Bohemian Aristocracy*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA. 2005, pp. 179–180.

to the allied France's ties to Czechoslovakia and both states' ties to the U.S.S.R., it was specifically interested in the question of the Soviet position, including military matters, which is well documented by the report of the American military attaché to the U.S.S.R., LTC Philip R. Faymonville³⁴, of 15 September 1938.³⁵ Nevertheless, British-French talks were especially crucial. They specifically eliminated the U.S.S.R. from the decision-making process and in particular personal negotiations between British Prime Minister Chamberlain and German Chancellor Hitler, which represented the peak of the policy of appeasement and resulted in a decision to resolve the Czechoslovak crisis, including the minority question, with the relinquishment of Czechoslovak territory in favour of Germany. What is important from the perspective of the theme of this essay is also that U.S. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt also sought to influence the situation with an appeal to negotiations and maintaining peace.³⁶ As we are very aware, the negotiations led to the Munich Agreement and the Munich solution did not bring peace.

Nevertheless, if we are to assess the position of the U.S. State Department and in particular its representatives in Czechoslovakia on the nationality question in the framework of the Czechoslovak state at the end of the 1930s, we can declare that – naturally with certain exceptions – it is almost surprising how well it managed not only to get a general picture of the issue (not just from commonly accessible means, especially the press, but also from its own information channels) but also to employ keen judgement on the essence of the issues. This goes not only for the diplomats at the U.S. Embassy in Prague, who were more closely acquainted with the Czech milieu in particular, but also for employees of the European Division of the State Department. It may be stated that for American diplomats, Czechoslovakia was generally – as is clear from many statements – an island of democracy in Central Europe, surrounded by totalitarian and semi-totalitarian regimes. Unfortunately, however, as the events of subsequent months showed, it was an island drowning not only under its own domestic political problems, artificially capitalized on from abroad, but especially under the merciless pressure of the Great Powers' policies...

34 More about Col. Philip R. Faymonville: HERNDON James S. – BAYLEN Joseph O.: Col. Philip R. Faymonville and the Red Army, 1934–43. *Slavic Review*, 1975, Vol. 34, No. 3 (September 1975), pp. 483–505.

35 See document No. 8.

36 FARNHAM, Barbara Rearden: *Roosevelt and the Munich Crisis. A Study of Political Decision-Making*. Princeton University Press, Princeton 1997, pp. 112–113. See also MANÁK, Marián: Sudetská kríza v ČSR v roku 1938 v správach amerických diplomatov /Sudeten crisis in Czechoslovakia in 1938 in the reports of American diplomats/. In: DUCHOŇOVÁ, Diana – RÁBIK, Vladimír et al.: *Prudentissimae dominae nobis honorandiae... K životnému jubileu profesorky Márie Kohútovej*. Filozofická fakulta Trnavskej univerzity, Trnava 2015, pp. 549–552. The study is based on documents from *Foreign Relations of United States*.

Note on edition

The purpose of this edition is not to duplicate the foreign policy documentation amassed in comprehensive form in the relevant volume of the Foreign Relations of United States (an entire section is devoted to the German-Czechoslovak crisis in the first volume on 1938). It can, rather, be understood as an addition to it with regard to several interesting facts or themes (e.g., in particular reports on the domestic political situation in relation to nationality, but also the Soviet assistance of Czechoslovakia in September 1938).³⁷

The documents are published according to valid rules for the publication of modern historical sources.³⁸ Each document is introduced by a document number and a short entry which provides the basic information, date, place of origin of the document, type of diplomatic document, author, or addressee. The content of the papers is not presented.

Beneath the published text are given the abbreviation of the archive, collection, signature of the deposition of the document and information on the form of the preservation and method of copying, or publication, of the text. Despite standardised editorial practice where textual and factual annotations are divided and placed at the end of the related document, we have merged both types of annotations and placed them as footnotes at the end of each page. This decision was based on a request from the editors of *Securitas Imperii*.

37 The German-Czechoslovak Crisis, doc. No. 493–712 in *Foreign Relations of United States, 1938*, Vol. 1 – General. United States Government Printing Office, Washington 1955.

38 ŠTOVÍČEK, Ivan et al.: *Zásady vydávání novověkých historických pramenů z období od počátku 16. století do současnosti. Příprava vědeckých edic dokumentů ze 16.–20. století pro potřeby historiografie* / Fundamentals of the Publication of Modern Historical Sources from the Period from the Beginning of the 16th Century to the Present. Preparation of scientific editions of documents from the 16th–20th centuries for the needs of historiography/. Archivní správa Ministerstva vnitra ČR, Prague 2002.

D 1

1938, March 23,³⁹ Prague. – *Telegraphic report of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull.*

My telegram No. 42, March 21, 4 p.m.⁴⁰

After several days on intense discussions and negotiations the German Agrarian League⁴¹ which polled 142,399 votes in the 1935 general elections and held five seats in the Chamber of Deputies (none in the Senate) decided last night to withdraw from the Government and join the Sudeten Deutsch Party. Minister [without Portfolio] Franz Spina tendered his resignation to the Prime Minister.

It is further expected that the German Christian Socialist Party (162,797⁴² votes in the 1935 elections gaining this party six seats in the Chamber of Deputies and three in the Senate) will probably also submit to the leadership of Konrad Henlein. (END GRAY)⁴³

I am told by a responsible official of the Foreign Office that the primary reason for the action taken by these Germans is interpreted as motivated by fear and a desire to bet upon what appears to be the winning horse. As an offset to this defalcation the Government hopes to obtain the cooperation of the Hlinka (Slovak Peoples Party with a potential number of five seats in the Chamber of Deputies) in the near future.

(GRAY) It is interesting that the German Social Democrats representing eleven seats in the Chamber of Deputies have definitely indicated that they will not withdraw from participation in the Government. The Foreign Office believes that whereas the German affiliated elements of this country may be approaching a “common front” the Government will still maintain a substantial and working majority in the two Houses of Parliament.

Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 43, 860F.00/461. Microfilm, typescript.

39 Report sent from Prague on 23 March at 5 p.m., received at State Department on 23 March at 1.10 p.m.

40 Telegraphic report of W. J. Carr from 21 March, 1938: *Comprehensive reconstruction of Czech[oslovak] Cabinet originally planned has been postponed. This is mainly due to the unsettled situation existing within the German Activist Party. The most pressing political claim to a cabinet position was granted on March 20 to the National Union Party (to the Democratic Wing representing heavy industries and banking interests). Dr. Frantisek Jezek was nominated to represent this party as a minister without portfolio. Please see my despatch 96, March 12. Further despatch will be forwarded.* NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 42, 860F.00/458.

41 Correctly German Agrarian Party (see above).

42 Correctly (Czech Statistical Office): 162 781 votes.

43 The editors don't know what END GRAY/GRAY means.

D 2

1938, March 23, Prague. – Political report of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull about readjustment in Czechoslovak Cabinet.

Sir,

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 96 of March 12, 1938,⁴⁴ and my telegram No. 42 of March 21, 1 p.m.⁴⁵ with respect to contemplated and now effected changes in the Czechoslovak Coalition Government Cabinet, and to repeat that a response was made only to the most pressing political claim in appointing, on March 20th, a member of the National Union Party to the Cabinet. As indicated in my despatch under reference, the National Union Party generally represents banking and heavy industry interests. In confirmation of my telegram, Dr. František Ježek has been designated as Minister without Portfolio to represent this particular influence in Czechoslovak politics.

As previously reported by the Legation, a rather far-reaching change in the Cabinet has been anticipated, but this has been momentarily postponed pending certain local political considerations. These involve:

(1) A dispute which has centered about Deputy Jaksch of the German Social Democrat Party involving his continued leadership of that party and the retention of a representative place in the Cabinet of the party. It now appears probable that Deputy Jaksch is going to continue his fight for the party's leadership and the position in the Cabinet which is now held by the Minister of Public Health, Dr. Ludwig Czech;

(2) The German Agrarian party's uncertainty with regard to its continuance to cooperate with the Coalition Cabinet;

(3) The leadership of the German Christian-Socialist party is doubtful whether it desires to retain an affiliation with the Coalition Government or to launch out upon its own and perhaps merge with the Sudetendeutsche as has been urged by certain elements in the party.

In regard to the German Christian Socialist party, Minister [Erwin] Zajíček – Minister without Portfolio – is said to have endeavoured to dissuade his immediate following in the party from the proposal made by Senator [Karl] Hilgenreiner, Catholic priest, who has, in no small measure, been influenced by the action of Cardinal [Theodor] Innitzer of Austria, who had last week pledged allegiance and cooperation to Chancellor Hitler. Senator Hilgenreiner is attempting to develop a rapprochement with the Sudetendeutsche party in order to establish a common Sudeten German Front.

Any establishment of such a Front would give the Opposition – or, commonly speaking, the German Minority – a working and cohesive Opposition combination in the Parliament distinctly in improvement of its present constitution as an Opposition.

I was informed on March 19th that Prime Minister Hodža instructed the Council of Ministers to prepare, in cooperation with the Ministries of Interior and Unifica-

44 Not published.

45 See document No. 1, note 40.

tion, in particular, a Parliamentary bill for the establishment of an Economics Ministry which, it is assumed, would ultimately be placed in charge of Dr. Ježek, the new Minister and a leading member of the National Union. While the functions of this Ministry have not yet been clearly defined, it has been indicated that it will control matters dealing with industry, foreign trade and the Tobacco Monopoly.

In face of the activity of the Sudetendeutsche party and the attempt to establish a German Minority Front, and thus to increase its position as the preeminent Opposition group, it is interesting to note that the addition of a representative of the National Union to the Coalition Cabinet theoretically increases the majority of the Government Coalition from the present number of 172 to 185 in the Chamber of Deputies (total, 300 seats) and from 85 to 92 in the Senate (total, 150).

While certain further changes may be expected in the constitution of the Cabinet, as indicated in the above mentioned despatch No. 96, I am including a list of its present personnel to include the addition of Dr. Ježek. Under separate cover, I am forwarding the usual form containing "Biographic Data" with respect to the new Minister.

Respectfully yours,
Wilbur J. Carr

Enclosure: List of Cabinet⁴⁶

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 104, 860F.00/472. Microfilm, typescript.

D 3

1938, March 25, Vienna.⁴⁷ – Telegraphic report of the United States Chargé d'affaires ad interim in Austria John Cooper Wiley to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull.

From Military Attaché.⁴⁸

Talked with Hungarian colleague who states his belief Czechoslovakia will be subjected to economic and political suffocation; that six months will see liquidation of Czechoslovakia without necessity of war. As German minority demands are presented the demands of Poland and Hungary will be simultaneously formulated. Hungarian Army G 2⁴⁹ stated Hungary would begin intensive campaign for minorities. Newspaper reports indicate this already begun.

Wiley

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 144, 860F.00/462. Microfilm, typescript.

⁴⁶ Without enclosure.

⁴⁷ Report sent from Vienna at 11.25 a.m., received at the State Department on 25 March at 8.25 a.m.

⁴⁸ Major Lowell M. Riley, U.S. military attaché in Austria, consequently from April 1938 U.S. military attaché in Czechoslovakia.

⁴⁹ The editors don't know what this means. The Hungarian Second Army (Második Magyar Hadsereg) was one of three field armies (Hadsereg) raised by the Kingdom of Hungary (Magyar Királyság) saw action during World War II. All three armies were formed on March 1, 1940.

D 4

1938, March 29, Prague. – Political report⁵⁰ of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State⁵¹ of State Department Cordell Hull.⁵²

Sir,

I have the honor to enclose herewith, in pamphlet form,⁵³ the speeches made, as officially translated into English, by Prime Minister Dr. Milan Hodža on March 4, and March 28, 1938, respectively, dealing with international and local political considerations of the Czechoslovak Government.

The significant passages of these speeches have already been reported to the Department by telegram or despatch – please see my telegram No. 20 of March 5, 1 p.m.;⁵⁴ Nos. 43⁵⁵ and 45⁵⁶ (dealing with Cabinet and Party changes) of March 23 and March 25, respectively; and my despatch No. 105 of March 28.⁵⁷

In this connection it is interesting to note that it is the Prime Minister, rather than President Beneš or the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Kamil Krofta, who is at the moment carrying the brunt and bearing the burden of pronouncing Czechoslovak policy to the international forum. This is generally explained here by the fact that on March 4th Dr. Hodža, as President of the Council of Ministers, was the logical person to answer Herr Hitler and that he was obligated to pronounce, in the same capacity, the Government's policy on March 28th, as his speech dealt particularly with internal political affairs. It so happens, however, that many of these so-called "internal affairs" have now become matters of international consideration, particularly the attitude which this Government is taking to the minority question.

Furthermore, it may be stated that, from a local political point of view, Dr. Hodža is more solidly entrenched with the nation as a whole, as the leader of the Czechoslovak Agrarian party,⁵⁸ and, consequently, more popular than is President Beneš. Therefore, his pronouncements, made for internal consumption, carry more weight than those of the President. It is assumed that this situation is recognized by the lat-

50 Document was classified as strictly confidential.

51 Political report was sent also to U.S. Embassy in London, Paris and Berlin.

52 Compare Summary of despatch No. 108 about Hodža's speeches from 26th April, 1938 in Division of European Affairs Department of State: *In a despatch transmitting an English translation of Hodža's speeches in March, Mr. Carr points out that the Prime Minister is carrying the brunt and burden of pronouncing Czechoslovak policy to the international forum. The Legation states that Dr. Hodža is more solidly entrenched with the nation as a whole and more popular than President Beneš. Therefore his pronouncements carry more weight than those of the President who presumably realizes the situation. In fact, "there have been rumors circulating which involve a possible resignation of the Chief Executive".* PM On document is stamp: Undersecretary of State Mr. Welles.

53 In enclosure is the pamphlet: *The new European Situation and Czechoslovakia. Speeches by Dr. Milan Hodža, Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovak sources and documents No. 24.*

54 Not published.

55 See document No. 1.

56 Not published.

57 Not published.

58 The Republican Party of Farmers and Peasants (Republikánská strana zemědělského a malorolnického lidu).

ter – in fact, there have been rumors circulating which involve a possible resignation of the Chief Executive.

Respectfully yours,
Wilbur J. Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 108, 860F.00/473. Microfilm, typescript.

D 5

1938, April 25,⁵⁹ Prague. – *Telegraphic report of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull.*

In a speech delivered yesterday in Carlsbad Henlein announced an eight point program of the Sudeten Deutsch Party affecting administrative autonomy changes in Czechoslovak foreign policy (France, Russia) open affiliation with national socialism and rectifications for the German elements within the framework of the Czech constitution, et cetera (END GRAY). An early official reaction to these demands compare this declaration and these demands to those made by Hitler some five years ago towards the German constitution and point to developments which have subsequently occurred in Germany.

My informant at the Foreign Office yesterday stated that it would henceforth be easier in one sense to deal with the problem of this particular minority as the government would now recognize its “enemy” operating under true colors and know precisely what it has to meet. On the other hand he stated that it probably meant the breaking down of the Hodza-Sudeten Deutsche negotiations and that adequate steps would be taken to prevent any such character as Seyss-Inquart to develop in this country.

At the same time the Henlein speech he indicated would tend to solidify the forces of the National Union Party in this country. Political quarters consider that Henlein has placed himself outside constitutional bounds.

The speech had some relation to forthcoming communal elections scheduled for the third week in May. One opinion at the Foreign Office believes that it was contrary to admonitions of Hitler who apparently fearful that the Sudeten Deutsche aggressiveness might precipitate a general conflict, had told Henlein to go more slowly. This may be wishful thinking.

Does the Department desire entire text of speech by telegram? I am seeing the President this morning and will report any significant reactions.⁶⁰

Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 78, 860F.00/477. Microfilm, typescript.

59 Report sent from Prague at on 25 March at 1 p.m., received at State Department on 25 March at 12.35 p.m.

60 Compare final part of Carr’s political report about Henlein’s speech and the Annual meeting of the Sudeten German Party at Carlsbad from 25 April, 1938: [...] *President Benes said that he could see only one course that promise peace and that is for the democracies to adopt a clear policy and attain the strength to carry it*

D 6

1938, May 24, Prague. – Political report of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State⁶¹ of State Department Cordell Hull about Czechoslovak communal elections.

Sir:

As I reported in my telegram No. 94 of May 23, 1938, 4 p.m.; I have the honor to state that the Czechoslovak communal elections held on Sunday, May 22, passed without any incident. With the exception of Prague, it is difficult, and more or less impossible, to compare the results with those of 1931, since this year's communal elections are being held only in communities where they are past due, are divided in three groups and are spread over a period of three weeks. On Sunday last, for instance, elections were held in about 240 odd communes, on May 29th they are to be held in 2,600 odd communes, and on June 12th in about 6,500 communities. In approximately 80 Czech communes the elections have become superfluous as the different Czech parties have reached an agreement about the distribution of seats (mandates) in advance.

In Prague, the extreme Rightist elements suffered considerable losses (the extreme nationalist Stříbrný League⁶²), in particular, while the Leftist parties made substantial gains. Notwithstanding the absence of would be voters, who, having been called for extraordinary military training only 48 hours prior to the elections were thus unable to go to the polls, the polling was very heavy. The Czechoslovak National Socialist Party⁶³ (supported by Dr. Beneš prior to assuming the Presidency and a group which unconditionally favors the present Czechoslovak foreign policy) not only maintained its lead in the City but also increased its votes by 35,015 votes, or 35 %, (total 142,430) and thus will have 26 seats in the Municipal Council out of a total of 100 aldermen.

out. It must be a policy that will make it clear to Germany that no more fait accompli will be tolerated. In his opinion, France and Great Britain and possibly Russia must jointly adopt this principle and held steadfastly to it. The only alternatives are war or chaos or both. Czechoslovakia had maintained a policy of continued resistance to the aggressions of her powerful neighbor and would continue to resist, but Czechoslovakia is a small country and is capable of doing only that which is within its limited powers. It feels that it has already done its duty toward the democracies. Its people have shown a great deal of (unreadable word – editor's note) and self-control in the face of increasing difficulties. They have maintained democratic institutions and freedom of individual enterprise despite the difficulties under which they have labored. The President stressed the value of moral support from both England and the United States and took occasion to say that Czechoslovakia greatly appreciated the friendly attitude which the United States had manifested through the conclusion recently of the Trade Agreement [from 7 March 1938] and in other ways and indicated that he regarded the Trade Agreement as a great step in the progress of the relations between the two countries. Toward the conclusion of our conversation President Benes said that he and his Government have a clear realization of the seriousness of the situation in respect to this country and the nature of the difficulties with which the Government is faced; but he said that he is still optimistic that a solution will be found. Meanwhile the people of the country remain calm and disciplined. Respectfully yours, Wilbur J. Carr. NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 139, 860f.00/495. Compare also the telegraphic report of Joseph Patrick Kennedy to the Secretary of State from 14 May 1938. Foreign Relations of United States, 1938, Vol. 1 – General, pp. 498–500.

61 The political report was sent also to the U.S. Embassy in London, Paris and Berlin.

62 Jiří Stříbrný (1880–1955), founder of fascist party National League (Národní liga).

63 Československá strana národně socialistická.

The communists now are the second strongest party after polling 90,373 votes – an increase of 30,808 votes. This increase is apparently due to the proletariat's confidence in the Soviet alliance and a result of the party's pre-election slogan: "For a united Czechoslovakia against Nazism and Fascism". As stated to me by an important local journalist the vote of the Communists was in fact a voice of protest against "Hitlerism".

The Czechoslovak Social Democrats⁶⁴ are in third place, in Prague, polling 77,530 votes, or a gain of 10,469. They are followed by the National (Kramář) Union⁶⁵ with 64,631 votes showing a loss of about 6,000; the Czechoslovak Catholic Peoples Party⁶⁶ (in friendly collaboration with the Socialist) polled 37,542 – a gain of 10,322; the extreme nationalist (Stříbrný) League with 29,236 – a loss of 19,287, or a decrease of approximately 45,000 odd votes if compared with the results in the 1935 general elections when the National Democratic and National League elements had formed a bloc.

The Czechoslovak Trades Party⁶⁷ polled 35,740 votes gaining about 10,000 votes, while the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party which had submitted three different ballots (house-owners, Agrarians, and Agrarians organized in labor union) polled about 29,000 and thus gained 12,000 odd votes.

In so far as the two German parties in the Prague elections are concerned, that is, the Sudetendeutsche Party, and the German democratic bloc, the former polled 15,420 votes, gaining 4,831, the latter only 4,850 votes.

According to preliminary reports, in the Sudeten German areas the Sudetendeutsche (Henlein) Party polled between 64 % and 94 % of all German votes cast. In certain communes the Party succeeded in increasing the total number of votes over the total received by itself together with those cast for the former German Agrarian and Christian Socialist parties, while in other communes, such as in the Boehmerwald⁶⁸ and in a few industrial centers, it lost slightly. In general, the German Social Democrats show substantial losses, while the Communist votes in the German areas are gradually disappearing entirely.

The Sudetendeutsche Party [newspaper *Die Zeit*] emphasizes that 69 odd German communes went more than 90 % for Konrad Henlein and that the German Social Democrats have lost up to 50 % of their former followers, and emphasizes an increase in votes cast by the Czech elements in the frontier areas. As stated in my telegram under reference, in the event that the Czech parties are able to come to an agreement with the German democratic elements and the Communists, the City of Dux,⁶⁹ Sudeten German frontier, will have a Czech mayor for the first time since the

64 Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická.

65 Karel Kramář (1860–1937), founder of National Unification (Národní sjednocení).

66 Československá strana lidová.

67 Československá živnostensko-obchodnická strana středostavovská.

68 The editors don't know what this means. Böhmerwald in German means Šumava and also Český les (both Bohemian Forest in English).

69 Duchcov.

establishment of Czechoslovakia. The City of Aussig,⁷⁰ an important city in the Sudeten area will continue to be governed by a mixed (Czech and German) municipality administration; in fact, the results of this first of the series of elections does not give the Henlein party complete control in any one of the larger towns or cities in the German districts.

Final election results for May 22, 1938 (with results from only nine small communities still missing) may be summarized as follows:

Name of Party	Total No. of votes	Gains or losses of votes compared to 1931 and 1935
CS National Socialist	184,654	+ 40,399
CS Agrarians	54,782	+ 14,061
CS Social Democrats	123,740	+ 1,330
Communists	118,334	+ 13,222
National Union	84,860	
Nation League (Stříbrný)	29,507	- 47,342
CS Trades Party	63,100	- 5,297
CS Peoples Catholic Party	58,751	+ 8,748
Fascists (Gajda)	8,693	+ 673
Slovak Party (Hlinka)	15,816	- 619
German Democratic elements	21,859	- 4,342
Sudetendeutsche Party	133,991	+ 18,717 (1935)

The day of the elections (Sunday, May 22) passed without incident. It is true that there had been many incidents varying in degree of importance prior to that date but on the day itself calm was maintained everywhere. Reference to these incidents prior to the elections will be found in a separate despatch.

The reasons for the calmness and orderliness which prevailed may be attributed in their probable order of importance as follows: (1) attitude of France and Great Britain; (2) rapid and efficient movement of the Czech[oslovak] Army into the Sudeten area on the Friday and Saturday before the election; and (3) decidedly inclement weather. I shall comment further upon these phases of the situation in yet another despatch.

As indicated in my telegram, too much significance should not be placed upon these first elections due to the comparatively few communes voting, but it is regarded as a trend by local officials in support of the national Government's foreign policy. Parenthetically, I was informed by the Foreign Office that the reason for the series of elections – rather than a holding of all communal voting on the same day – was prompted by a desire to avoid any possibility that the results might be claimed, even remotely, as a plebiscite. In 1931, the year of the last general communal elections, voting was registered all on one day. At the time of writing, there is no doubt that the populace in general is satisfied and, in fact, distinctly pleased at the firm stand taken by its Government – a tone of better spirits prevails.

The Czechoslovak Government issued a statement which was transmitted by radio broadcast to the Czechoslovak population last night (May 23) in which it expressed its gratitude to the people, to all political parties and to their leaders for their exemplary discipline manifested during the elections last Sunday.

Inspired by the conviction that all citizens of the Republic without distinction of profession or nationality are capable of discipline and sociability, the Government renewed its appeal to the whole population not to spoil, or in any manner or way, tarnish the good moral results of election-day and to abstain also in the future from any action which could give cause to demonstrations or a disturbance of public order.

Respectfully yours,
Wilbur J. Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 163, 860F.00/526. Microfilm, typescript.

D 7

1938, July 5, Prague. – Political report⁷¹ of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State⁷² of State Department Cordell Hull.

Sir,

I have the honor to report herewith the substance of a conversation which Major John S. Winslow, formerly Military Attaché at this post, had with President Beneš on July 2, 1938. Major Winslow's call was arranged by the War Office to permit him to take official leave of the President. He was accompanied by his successor, the present Military Attaché, Major Riley, upon whose notes this despatch is based.

The president, as usual, talked freely and earnestly, touching mainly upon the present political and defense situation of Czechoslovakia. After voicing a few customary amenities appropriate to the occasion, he made, in effect, the following statements and references:

71 The document was classified as strictly confidential.

72 The political report was sent also to the U.S. Embassies in London, Paris and Berlin.

73 Extraordinary military measures (so-called partial mobilization).

(1) That, had it not been for the action⁷³ of the Czechoslovak Government on May 21st in moving to defend itself, this country would now be at war.

(2) That the calling of troops and their movement was not a boast, not a threat and not a sword-rattling provocation; it was simply a determined action on the part of a country which wishes “to be free”. That he abhors the idea of an ideologic war.

(3) That he is at heart a pacifist but at the same time a realist and believes under the present situation that the only way to be free is to be strong. That this is the only way to “keep the peace”. That this country must fight alone if need be in spite of the fact that Czechoslovakia is a small country; however, peace cannot be maintained by this country alone.

(4) That the “dynamic nations” believe in force to increase their territory and the only way that peace-loving countries can prevent them from so doing is by a realization of those “dynamic nations” of the superior strength of the others. Under the influence of this necessary strength – that he is hopeful that a change will take place and that the “dynamic nations” will see the light and pursue a policy of greater conformity – he mentioned Russia as an example of this possibility since, as recently as three years ago, it advocated and worked for world revolution. Now the revolution is not mentioned as Russia saw the world turned against it.

(5) That the “fait accompli” technique is ended and the move of May 21st helped to end it; the next effort at a “fait accompli” means war.

In conclusion, Major Riley reports that President Beneš took occasion to state that the understanding and the moral and financial help of America has always been and will continue to be a thing which his country cherishes.

Respectfully yours,

Wilbur J. Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 203, 860F.00/541. Microfilm, typescript.

D 8

*1938, September 15, Moscow. – Report of the United States Military Attaché to U.S.S.R. Lt. Col. Philip R. Faymonville to War Department.*⁷⁴

The most important point regarding the Soviet military attitude toward the Central European crisis appear (3 p.m. September 15, 1938) to be the following:

1. The Soviet Government and in particular the military leaders of the Red Army have constantly in mind their obligations under the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Alliance⁷⁵ and profess a willingness and an intention to act if Czechoslovakia is attacked by Germany.

74 The war department sent the document to the State Department, European Affairs and communications and records divisions.

75 The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty of Alliance was signed on 16 May 1935.

2. Although the terms of the alliance do not provide for independent Soviet support to Czechoslovakia if France should fail to act, Soviet military leaders are, nevertheless, in a frame of mind to proceed independently in rendering aid to Czechoslovakia. It is not believed that the military leaders would show themselves disposed to support Czechoslovakia outside the terms of the treaty unless the Soviet Government were fully agreed in its intention to act if Czechoslovakia is attacked, regardless of the moves of other nations.

3. Soviet military leaders are openly critical of British policy and appear to believe that the Runciman mission is endeavouring to bring about a state of affairs under which the Sudeten provinces will be detached from the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic.

4. It appears probable that in case of an attack, the Red Army will at once render aid to Czechoslovakia by supplying air units to act from Czechoslovak bases. The number of airplanes to be furnished is, of course, impossible to ascertain, but it is conjectured that two hundred medium bombers might be made available.

5. Land forces to be sent from the Soviet Union to Czechoslovakia could be prepared for expeditionary movements only after several weeks after hostilities open. During this period of weeks it is believed that the political alignments of Poland and Roumania would necessarily be made clearer than they are at present, and these political alignments would determine what route would be the most feasible for a connecting land route between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia.

6. Other possible methods of supporting Czechoslovakia are discussed by foreign circles in Moscow. These methods include Soviet submarine attacks against German commerce in the Baltic; Soviet naval demonstrations against the German Baltic coast; Soviet land support to be furnished by Red Army detachments transported to France; air attacks by Soviet planes made from bases on Soviet territory; Soviet submarine operations against Italy in the Mediterranean; the reinforcement of Spanish republican troops fighting against German and Italian units in Spain. While it is possible that some of these methods might be used, such use is thought to be wholly improbable. A general European War such as would be precipitated by a German attack on Czechoslovakia would find the Soviet Government in a mood to conserve its own military forces to the greatest possible extent. If Soviet military forces participated, it is believed they would participate only as indicated in paragraphs four and five.

Philip R. Faymonville,
Lt. Col., Ord. Dept.,
Military Attaché

NARA, RG 59, T 1243, roll 30, No. 1320, 760F.62/1720. Microfilm, typescript.

D 9

1938, September 22,⁷⁶ Prague. – *Telegraphic report of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull.*

General protest strike called by laborers, half successful, involving suspension of work on our shelter, huge demonstrations in Praha last night crowds orderly considering size and occasion. Definite Communist note singing Internationale and using salute, many demands for military dictatorship. Castle grounds under heavy protection. Praha police in full control. Authorities consider demonstrations natural reaction and not dangerous. Believe no military measures have yet been taken, anti-foreign growing particular animosity towards British and French. Attitude friendly to Americans on identification. Present Government has resigned and revision of the Government is now being discussed and new Government will be announced by Beneš any moment.⁷⁷ Foreign Office claims it will remain a civil Government.

Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 218. Microfilm, typescript.

D 10

1938, October 3,⁷⁸ Prague. – *Telegraphic report⁷⁹ of the United States Envoy in Czechoslovakia Wilbur John Carr to the Secretary of State of State Department Cordell Hull.*

There are many rumors circulation as to a change in Government here. It is likely that any new Government will again have Prime Minister Syrový at its head. However my Foreign Office informant tells me that any change would be very far reaching which means the resignation of Beneš.⁸⁰ This change while not expected at the moment and might not happen at all is nevertheless contingent on internal developments arising out of the occupation. The people do not yet realize how close to Praha the Munich agreement may permit Germany to penetrate through plebiscite or through the decisions of the Internal Commission now sitting in Berlin. The new frontier may in some places be within 60 kilometres of Praha. When full realization of this dawns on the public someone's head may be demanded and the obvious one is Beneš. As you know the latter has not inspired wide popularity among the people. He suffers by comparison to Masaryk and while he has shared with the latter much of the early glory of liberation of this country of twenty years ago there is now a growing sentiment that

76 Report sent from Prague on 22 September at 1 p.m., received at State Department on 22 September at 12.40 p.m.

77 On 22 September 1938 General Jan Syrový (1888–1970) was appointed prime minister of a national unity government.

78 Report sent from Prague on 3 October at 3 p.m., received at State Department on 3 October at 2 p.m.

79 Document was classified as confidential.

80 President Edvard Beneš resigned on 5th October 1938.

the foreign policy as guided by Beneš in the last number of years has been injurious to this country in the light of recent events particularly emphasized by the desertion of its allies. Furthermore there are many who believe that this country's future policy must be correlated to that of Berlin. If this belief should become widespread as is not unlikely, Beneš position especially in view of the strong feeling against him in Berlin would become intolerable.

Carr

NARA, RG 59, M 1218, roll 14, No. 271, 860F.00/560. Microfilm, typescript.