CABINET

CONCLUSIONS OF MEETINGS OF THE CABINET

SEPT. 12 – OCT. 3

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Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on MONDAY, 12TH SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

AGENDUM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: CENTRAL EUROPE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

(Reference Note of Meeting of Ministers held on Tuesday, 30th August, 1938, and recent Foreign Office telegrams.)

Statement by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

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

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1,
9th September, 1938.
CABINET 37 (38).

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Monday, 12th September, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

PRESENT:

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


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

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


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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.E. Bridges, K.C., Secretary.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he would like to say a word as to the purpose of the present Meeting and the reason why it had been announced beforehand.

At the Meeting of Ministers held on Tuesday, the 30th August, and attended by almost all the Members of the Cabinet, it had been agreed that the Cabinet should meet together from time to time, in order to hear from those directly concerned how matters were proceeding and to assure themselves of their unanimity.

The reason why this particular date had been chosen for the present Meeting was that it was the day on which Herr Hitler was to deliver his great speech at Nuremberg. No-one could say that a Cabinet Meeting held a few hours before this speech was delivered, and announced some days beforehand, had been called together hastily at a few hours' notice to deal with a crisis. He hoped, indeed, that the advance announcement of the Meeting would assist in keeping public opinion steady. If circumstances should render it necessary it would, of course, always be possible for the Cabinet to meet again at short notice.

THE PRIME MINISTER then invited the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to tell his colleagues what had happened since the Meeting of Ministers held on the 30th August.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS summarised the main events which had taken place as follows:
INTERNATIONAL SITUATION.

Central Europe

Czechoslovakia.

(Pevious Reference: Cabinet 36 (38) Conclusion 1.)

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THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS summarised the main events which had taken place as follows:-
On the 31st August the French had begun to call up Reservists and to man the Maginot Line. On the same date Sir Nevile Henderson returned to Berlin and gave Baron von Weizsäcker a strong personal warning as to the probable attitude of His Majesty's Government.

On the 1st September Sir Nevile Henderson repeated his personal warning to Herr von Ribbentrop. On the 1st and 2nd September Herr Henlein saw Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden and delivered to him a message from Lord Runciman. Herr Henlein had then returned to Prague expressing confidence in Herr Hitler's peaceful attitude. On the 2nd September the Sudeten-German representatives had practically rejected Dr. Benes's proposals of the 24th August and had put forward counter-proposals.

On the 3rd September Mr. Newton had made strong representations to Dr. Benes on behalf of His Majesty's Government, urging him to go to the utmost limit of concessions.

On the same day the French defensive preparations had been intensified in view of reports of German preparations on the French frontier.

On the 7th September the new Czech proposals had been communicated to Dr. Kundt. These proposals were considered by Lord Runciman to be a satisfactory basis for negotiation. That evening, however, the Mährisch-Ostrau incident had occurred, which caused the Sudeten representatives to suspend negotiations.

On the same day "The Times" had published an unhappy leading article advocating consideration of the secession of certain fringe areas as a possible alternative solution.
On that day he (the Secretary of State) received a visit from the French Ambassador urging that His Majesty's Government should send a message to Herr Hitler making their attitude quite clear. Reports of this meeting and of a subsequent meeting on 9th September are contained in Foreign Office telegrams to Paris Numbers 262 and 264.

On the 8th September M. Daladier had had an interview with Sir Eric Phipps and had stated in effect that if Germany entered Czechoslovakia France would mobilise and declare war. Both the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Sir Eric Phipps had repeated the desire of His Majesty's Government that the French would consult us before taking any action which would involve them in war.

On the 9th September Sir Nevile Henderson had seen Herr von Ribbentrop at Nuremberg. He had taken the opportunity to repeat in clear and strong language the warning which he had previously given to him.

On the same day (9th September), a meeting of the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary and the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been held to consider whether, in the light of the information which continued to be received from responsible official sources in Germany as to Germany's intentions, it was necessary to deliver a further and formal warning to Germany.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he, of course, kept in mind the view, which had been
so strongly expressed at the Meeting of Ministers on the 30th August, against delivering a further warning to Germany. On the other hand, that view had related to the delivery of a public warning and, at their Meeting on the 30th August, Ministers had not had before them the later information, since received, bearing on Germany's intentions. The gist of this information was that Herr Hitler had decided to march into Czechoslovakia on some date between the 18th and the 29th September, relying on being able to clear up the situation with great rapidity.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs referred to telegram No. 354 of the 9th September to Berlin, which contained a statement which it was proposed should be delivered to Herr Hitler with the object of giving another clear warning as to the consequences of recourse to force. It was arranged that Sir Nevile Henderson should not deliver this message until he received specific instructions to this effect.

It so happened that just at this time a message had been received (which in the event turned out to be untrue) to the effect that Sir Nevile Henderson was having a long conversation with Herr Hitler. It was felt that it would be very risky to instruct our Ambassador to deliver a formal warning until we knew exactly how the position was left by this interview. The instructions to deliver this message were, therefore, suspended until a report was received from Sir Nevile Henderson.
This report was received on the afternoon of Saturday, the 10th September. Three letters setting out Sir Nevile's views of the position had been circulated as C.P. 196 (38). The second of these two letters gave Sir Nevile's reactions on receiving the message contained in telegram No. 354. Sir Nevile was awkwardly placed at Nuremberg, living in a railway carriage without the use of cyphers. It would be seen from his letter that he had urged, with all the force at his command, that he should not be instructed to make the official démarche proposed in telegram No. 354. Sir Nevile reported that the moderate elements in the Nazi Party, in particular, were most strongly against what they termed the "repetition of 21st May".

It had, therefore, been decided to telegraph to Sir Nevile Henderson that, provided he was satisfied that he had conveyed the substance of the instructions contained in telegram No. 354, and that our meaning and intentions were fully understood by Germany, the official démarche need not be delivered.

To complete the historical summary, on the 9th September, consideration had been given to what the First Lord had termed a symbolic act which might speak more effectively than words. In the absence of the First Lord, the First Sea Lord had been brought into consultation and action had been taken (1) to issue orders to commission four Destroyer Minelayers now in reserve; (2) to issue orders for the First Mine Sweeping Flotilla to be brought up to full complement and to be placed under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleet. This action had been announced in the Press on the 10th September.
with the result that the German Naval Attache had called at the Admiralty that day and had been told by Rear-Admiral Troup Director of Naval Intelligence that the naval measures taken were limited in scope, and were the result of the disturbed state of Europe. He had added that everybody in England knew that if France were involved in war, we should be likewise. The German Naval Attache had been greatly shaken and had expressed himself as being overwhelmed. He had replied that he had never thought until now that such a position could come about. The impression that he had received had been conveyed to the German Foreign Office and Admiralty, and to Nuremberg.

On the 11th September consideration had been given to carrying out a further naval step, which had been proposed by the First Lord, namely, issuing orders for the crews of the Seventh Destroyer Flotilla to be brought up to full complement. It had been decided not to take this action. The bringing of this Destroyer Flotilla up to full complement would be a measure of a somewhat more "offensive" character, and it had been felt that it was unwise to have this action prominently noted in the Press on the very morning of the day when Hitler was putting the finishing touches to his speech.

The Foreign Secretary reported that, with the Prime Minister, he had seen Mr. Winston Churchill on the previous day. Mr. Churchill's proposition was that we should tell Germany that if she set foot in Czechoslovakia we should at once be at war with her. Mr. Churchill agreed that this line of action was an advance on the line of action which he had proposed some two or three weeks earlier, but he thought that by taking it we should incur no added risk.
The Foreign Secretary said that he had also seen Mr. Anthony Eden, who had expressed complete agreement with the line taken. Mr. Eden's letter in to-day's Times had been published with the full concurrence of the Prime Minister and himself.

Lord Lloyd had also been among the Foreign Secretary's visitors on the previous day. His only concern was whether Sir Nevile Henderson had succeeded in making our attitude quite plain. He had agreed that we could not go against Sir Nevile Henderson's strongly expressed advice.

The United States Ambassador had also called on the Foreign Secretary, and had been received by the Prime Minister the previous night. Lord Halifax thought that there was a certain spectacular or moral value to be drawn from these visits.

The United States Ambassador had asked whether two United States cruisers should come into Portland and he had said that was a matter for the United States Government.

Lord Halifax then proceeded to give his own diagnosis of the position. He thought that Herr Hitler was possibly or even probably mad. He might have taken a definite decision to attack Czechoslovakia "à tout ou rien". This view of the position - the first hypothesis - was supported by a good deal of information from responsible quarters, conveyed to us at some risk.

If Herr Hitler had made up his mind to attack, it was probable that nothing which we could do would stop him. There was a body of opinion which thought that he could be stopped by a direct ultimatum. This was, however, at the best a very doubtful view. He had been impressed by what he had been told by Professor Correlli who had just returned from Germany. The story was that a report from the German Ambassador in Paris was brought to Hitler to the effect that, if he attacked Czechoslovakia, France, the United Kingdom and the United States of America would all fight him. Herr Hitler was said to have read the report and then to have thrown it aside, saying that
it was an interesting document which could be dealt with after action had been taken.

In the Foreign Secretary's view, any serious prospect of getting Herr Hitler back to a sane outlook would probably be irretrievably destroyed by any action on our part which would involve him in what he would regard as a public humiliation. This view of the situation was supported by all those who were in a position to judge the facts.

The Foreign Secretary added that he was also influenced by the consideration that he was not prepared to make a statement until he was perfectly certain that he was in a position to carry it out. He was not prepared to say that we would go to war on the issue of Czechoslovakia alone, since it was impossible to say in what form that issue might arise. To say without qualification that we were prepared to go to war to defend Czechoslovakia would, in fact, put the decision of peace or war in the hands of others than ourselves.

Turning to the second hypothesis, if Herr Hitler had not definitely made up his mind to attack Czechoslovakia, there was a great probability that a warning in the nature of an ultimatum would do great harm; would not add to the force of what we had already said, and might well have the effect of driving Herr Hitler over the edge.

The Foreign Secretary put the question "Have we up to the present moment done everything within our power?" He thought that we could answer that question in the affirmative. Up to the present moment we had acted largely with our eyes on Herr Hitler's speech to-night. Those in a position to judge did not think that the speech would be catastrophic or would contain surprises. It might, indeed, be an attempt to chloroform this country and the world generally. The Foreign Secretary thought the wise course was to await Herr Hitler's speech and then review the situation. A number of suggestions had already
been made and might be considered. Thus, there was the suggestion tentatively put forward by M. Leger to Sir E. Phipps of a Four-Power Conference. Again, the French had stated that they were prepared to accept any suggestion put forward by His Majesty's Government or by Lord Runciman to settle the Sudeten German problem. Lord Runciman might well be in a position to offer some suggestions in the course of the next two or three days.

Lord Halifax added that he did not wish to go into these possibilities in detail now, provided that they could be considered later at a further meeting of the Cabinet, which might have to be called at short notice.

In reply to a question by the Secretary of State for Air, the Foreign Secretary stated that Lord Runciman might be prepared to contemplate making proposals on his own responsibility, but had not committed himself to this course.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had nothing to add to the Foreign Secretary's very complete account of the international position. He mentioned that Mr. Attlee had written to him informing him of the demand of the Labour Party for the summoning of Parliament. Mr. Attlee's letter had crossed a letter from the Prime Minister inviting Mr. Attlee to come and see him. At the Meeting of Ministers held on the 30th August, it had been agreed that no approach should at present be made to the Leader of the Opposition, but the Prime Minister said he had thought that the time had come when the Leader of the Opposition should be acquainted with developments.

At the interview, at which the Foreign Secretary had been present, Mr. Attlee had not himself raised the question of summoning Parliament. The Prime Minister had mentioned the matter and had said that it would be brought before today's Cabinet Meeting, after which a considered reply
would be sent to Mr. Attlee. The Prime Minister told Mr. Attlee, however, that he thought that the Cabinet would probably take the view that in the present delicate state of affairs it would be undesirable to have a public debate. He had added that a situation might of course arise later in which it would be necessary to summon Parliament.

The Prime Minister said that his interview with Mr. Attlee had taken place on the same day that Sir Nevile Henderson had seen Herr von Ribbentrop, Field-Marshal Goering, and other German leaders, at Nuremberg. He had repeated to Mr. Attlee a sentence from a telephone message from Sir Nevile Henderson reporting these conversations, to the effect that Sir Nevile was satisfied that there was no illusion in Germany among the people who counted as to the attitude of Great Britain.

Mr. Attlee had said that the Labour Party were somewhat uneasy about two points. The first was whether the leaders in Germany had been made sufficiently aware of the position of this country. The second was whether we had exercised as much pressure on Berlin as on Prague.

The Prime Minister thought that the first point had been answered by the sentence which he had quoted from Sir Nevile Henderson's report of his conversations. As regards the second, the Foreign Secretary had said that we had exerted all the pressure which we could. Mr. Attlee had appeared satisfied and had said that he would be careful to avoid giving any impression that this country was disunited. The Prime Minister added that he had undertaken to keep Mr. Attlee informed, and was to see him again on Tuesday. He had also arranged to see Sir Archibald Sinclair on the same date.
THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that he wanted to be quite clear as to what was the impression which Sir Nevile Henderson was satisfied that he had conveyed to German leaders.

In reply the FOREIGN SECRETARY pointed to the paragraph in telegram No. 354 starting "France having thus become involved it seems to His Majesty's Government inevitable that the sequence of events must result in a general conflict from which Great Britain could not stand aside."

THE PRIME MINISTER said that the view which we had conveyed to France represented the probable sequence of events rather than a definite commitment. If Germany attempted to use force after the negotiations had got so far, it was our opinion that the French would probably be involved, and, if so, our opinion was that we could not stand aside.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS also referred to a sentence in Sir Nevile Henderson's letter of the 10th September ("II" in C.P.-196 (33)) which reads -

"If the worst comes, His Majesty's Government can truly say that the instructions they are now sending will have already been communicated by me to Ribbentrop and Goering, to Neurath and others."

It was true that we had no precise record of what Sir Nevile Henderson had said, but this was a pretty strong statement.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that in his view the message set out in telegram No. 354 could not be described as a "warning ultimatum." He thought it was an admirable statement of the position, which ought not to upset Herr Hitler.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY here interposed that when he spoke of a "warning ultimatum" he had in mind rather the line which Mr. Churchill had suggested that we should take.

Continuing, the FIRST LORD said that he was rather disconcerted by the fact that public opinion, both in this country and abroad, was insistent that we should make an official démarche to Germany setting out the action which we should take if she used force. We had not taken this course on the advice of Sir Nevile Henderson only. The language of his messages, however, did not reassure him. It seemed that the solution which Sir Nevile contemplated would result in a complete surrender on the part of the Czechs. He thought it was quite likely that Herr Hitler's speech tonight would be a moderate speech, and that he would take this line in order to improve his position vis-à-vis world opinion before delivering the blow which he intended to deliver at a later date. He suggested that the handing to the German Government of a formal warning on the lines of that set out in telegram No. 354 should be now considered by the Cabinet.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that the question with which they were at present concerned was whether a message on the lines of telegram No. 354 should be delivered before Herr Hitler's speech tonight. The question of the delivery of such a message after that speech was a matter which could be further considered at a later date. The immediate question was whether, if a message was sent on these lines now, it would stop Herr Hitler from committing himself in his speech tonight to some violent action. Sir Nevile Henderson, who was on the spot and familiar with the local atmosphere, was emphatic that the message proposed would not have this effect. It was impossible for us to disregard the Ambassador's strongly expressed opinion on this subject, an opinion, moreover, which was supported by many other people in Germany. All these people gave the same advice, namely, that if Herr Hitler had made up his mind to use force, the proposed message would not stop him, and that if he had not made up his mind, the proposed message would be likely to drive him to adopt the course we were anxious to avoid.

The Prime Minister added that Mr. Anthony Eden had concurred in this view.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER pointed out that the French Government had virtually agreed to consult H.M. Government before they took action which involved them in war. He presumed that in such an event a decision would be taken by the Cabinet.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said it was not merely a question of whether we were to support France, but of whether we should adopt so non-committal an attitude that France would always be looking over her shoulder and wondering what our attitude was going to be.
Much had happened in the last few months. He referred to the Prime Minister's speech and the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech at Lanark; the pressure we had put on the Czechs to make concessions, and the sending of Lord Runciman to Prague. We should be in a most humiliating position if, notwithstanding all these steps, we were to decide that, in view of our armament position, we could not support the French.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he agreed that a decision of vital importance, such as that referred to by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, must come before the Cabinet. He undertook to make every possible effort to secure that every Minister was given an opportunity to take part in discussions on these vital issues.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER said that France must not be given the impression that we had arrived at any firm decision either to support her, or not to support her in the event of her becoming involved in war. No decision had, in fact, been reached on this point.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND referred to the German Naval Attache's interview and asked what weight or force it would carry in Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that when the Naval Attache had read the news of these measures, he had realised exactly what they involved. He had put together this news with his information as to the other steps which we had taken, e.g. the movement of ships in the Mediterranean and the ships which had been kept at the southern ports, notwithstanding the naval manoeuvres. He had thus detected that our ships were at their war stations and his report would be calculated to draw attention to all these points.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND enquired whether there had been any further reactions from the Dominions.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES (in the absence of the Secretary of State for the Dominions) said that the Dominions had been kept fully informed of the position. The only Dominion which had sent any comment was the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia, which had suggested that we should advise the Czechoslovak Government to do something generous, and advise them that unless they did so, we should wash our hands of them. It so happened that this telegram had been followed shortly afterwards by the new offer made by the Czechoslovak Government. Generally, the attitude of the Dominions had been very much what he had forecast at the Meeting of Ministers on the 30th August.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS added that he had seen Mr. Vincent Massey, who had said that while a minority in Canada might be in favour of our taking some forward action, the majority would be against such action, in the hopes that we should not be involved in war.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the point raised by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster was of considerable importance. It was very difficult to go far enough without at the same time going too far.

Lord Halifax then read paragraphs 2 and 3 of his telegram to Sir E. Phipps giving an account of his interview with the French Ambassador on the 7th September (these paragraphs are reproduced as Appendix 1 to these Conclusions).

What the French wanted us to say was, of course, that the moment they were involved in war we should come in on their side. In this connection the Foreign Secretary read a private and confidential letter addressed to him by Sir E. Phipps reporting a conversation between the latter and
M. Bonnet. (This letter is reproduced as Appendix II to these Conclusions.)

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that it was clear we might have a very short time in which to make up our minds on the question of what line we should take if France mobilised and declared war. It was clear that the decision taken by H.M. Government committed the Empire. Difficulties would arise if we reached a decision without allowing time for what the Dominions would regard as reasonable consultation in the circumstances.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that he was seeing the High Commissioners that afternoon. It might be necessary to request them to stay in London and not go to Geneva. He thought that a certain amount, but not a great deal of additional delay, might be necessary in order that we should put ourselves in the right position with the Dominions.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that he was unwilling to speak as most of his colleagues had far more knowledge of the questions at issue than himself. Everyone spoke as though, if France was involved in war, there were only two alternatives, namely, that we should or should not join with her. A possible third course occurred to him, namely, that we might tell France that our present military position was weak, but that given a little time, we could put ourselves into a far more satisfactory position. At the same time, we would not stand by and see France overcome, and if there was any risk of that happening, we would intervene at once. In the meantime France should hold the Maginot Line. According to the Chiefs of staff, the time factor was of the greatest importance.

The Lord Chancellor also referred to the general impression that Italy was unwilling to support Germany, that Italy would stay out as long as we stayed out, but that if we came in, Italy would join Germany. It seemed to him, therefore, that France might be willing to agree that we should stand aside.
at the outset of the war. The neutrality of Italy would be of great importance to France, having regard to the difficulty of maintaining their communications with Tunis if Italy were hostile.

The Lord Chancellor said that he wished to be sure that this third course, which he might describe as a 'dilatory' course, had been carefully considered. For his part, he would be satisfied with whatever conclusion was reached by the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary.

The Prime Minister said that he did not think that a discussion of the various alternatives with which we might be faced could be very fruitful at the present moment. If and when the situation now under discussion arose, he thought that it would probably arise in an entirely different way from anything that was at present envisaged. He was, therefore, opposed to a discussion of these alternatives at the present time. He hoped the Cabinet would rest content with the assurance he had given that he would make every possible endeavour to ensure that vital decisions were considered by the full Cabinet.

The First Lord of the Admiralty referred to a suggestion which had been made in two quarters that hostilities might be started by an attempt to murder Lord Runciman or Herr Henlein.

The Home Secretary said that he had consulted the authorities who dealt with these matters. They were satisfied that the Czech Police protection for Lord Runciman was adequate and they were informed that the despatch of British policemen to protect Lord Runciman would have awkward political consequences. For the time being, therefore, it had been decided not to despatch a police guard for Lord Runciman, but the subject was being further investigated.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR referred to the need for an up to date appreciation of the situation by the Chiefs of Staff.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was some time since the Chiefs of Staff had prepared their Report of last March on the implications of German aggression against Czechoslovakia. He thought they should be asked to review the position in the light of the most recent developments. Thus supposing France to be at war with Germany: what action was Germany likely to take and what action could we take against her?

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that the Chiefs of Staff had recently prepared an appreciation relating to the situation, as it would be in April, 1939. He understood that the position to-day was not substantially different. He agreed, however, that it would be as well that the Chiefs of Staff should review the position. He thought that could be done in a few days' time.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he had re-read the Chiefs of Staff Report of the 28th March (P.P. (36) 57). This Report made it quite clear that, if the circumstances envisaged came to pass, no action which the Army or the Navy could take would prevent Germany from inflicting a decisive defeat on Czechoslovakia. There was nothing effective which we could do except by means of a process of attrition. He thought that any question of a warning to be delivered by this country must march hand in hand with what we were in a position to do. Suppose that in a fortnight's time, Herr Hitler tried to seize a part of Czechoslovakia rapidly, what effective
action were we in a position to take?

In the course of further discussion, it was agreed that the Chiefs of Staff should be invited to review the position on the lines proposed. It was clear that such a review could only be carried out on the basis of certain definite assumptions, but, so far as the Military assumptions were concerned, these must be framed by the Chiefs of Staff themselves.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that he thought the review should, if possible, give the position both as it is to-day and also as it would be next year if Germany was allowed to carry out a coup in Czechoslovakia this year and subsequently extended her influence in South-Eastern Europe; it was essential to compare the position under both hypotheses.

It was agreed:

That the Chiefs of Staff should be asked to prepare an up to date appreciation of the situation which would arise in the event of immediate hostilities on the lines indicated above.
Discussion then turned on various military precautions which might be taken to ensure a higher degree of preparedness.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR referred to the two Meetings which had been held under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence at which various proposals had been submitted by the three Service Departments. These proposals had been approved, but some of them required financial authority. They had been submitted to the Treasury Inter-Service Committee, but authority for certain items had been withheld.

After further discussion it was agreed that the Ministers concerned would look into the points at issue.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that in regard to any further meetings of representatives of the Defence Departments which he might arrange, he would ensure that a representative of the Treasury was invited to attend.

Discussion then turned to various measures in regard to passive defence and the home position.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH thought that the position should be reviewed, and suggested certain steps in regard, e.g., to the purchase of blankets and stretchers, which might be taken.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR also referred to certain problems which awaited solution concerning the closing down of factories during air raids. He was not sure who was responsible for dealing with these problems.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that there was a long series of these problems, and he thought that they should be kept separate from the Chiefs of Staff Report.
After discussion it was agreed that Civil Departments should be instructed to prepare a Note concerning any matters in regard to which they thought that some immediate action should be taken, and should submit it to the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence. THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE undertook to see that immediate steps were taken to have these matters dealt with and to submit them for Ministerial decision where necessary at the earliest possible opportunity.

In this connection it was suggested that it would be undesirable to set up new Committees for this purpose and that it was desirable to use the normal machinery so far as possible.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that there were certain further naval steps which he thought could be taken without undue publicity, and he would propose to submit these proposals to the Prime Minister with a view to action being taken at once if the Prime Minister agreed.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he hoped the Cabinet agreed with the action taken so far. He suggested that another Meeting should be called as soon as any decision was necessary on a very vital issue.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that as soon as there had been time to study Herr Hitler's speech it would be desirable to have a Meeting to consider the position generally. For the present he thought that, while steps might be taken to get Departmental machinery going, it would be wiser to take no further overt action.
Reply to Sir Eric Phipps's letter of 10th September.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY referred to Sir Eric Phipps's letter of the 10th September.

He had not yet had time to consult the Foreign Office, but he thought that it might be desirable to obtain the approval of the Cabinet to the general line which the reply should take. He suggested that this should be to the following effect:

"While H.M. Government would never allow the security of France to be threatened, they are unable to make precise statements of the character of their future action, or the time at which it would be taken, in circumstances that they cannot at present foresee."

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that he hoped that in drafting a reply on this matter the Foreign Secretary would bear in mind that he thought the tone of his discussion with the French Ambassador on the 7th September was perhaps somewhat discouraging to the French.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY pointed out that he had had two interviews with the French Ambassador on the 7th September. At the first interview he had given a considered view. At the second, a chance conversation had taken place. It was this second conversation which had somewhat excited the French, and he proposed to explain the circumstances to them. At the same time it was difficult to steer a line between being too discouraging and not encouraging enough to the French.
After further discussion, it was agreed that the general line of the Foreign Secretary's reply to M. Bonnet's enquiry, in regard to which he would consult further with the Prime Minister, must be neither to put the brake on the French nor yet to apply the accelerator. The Foreign Secretary undertook to consider a suggestion of the Secretary of State for the Colonies that he might inform the French that, in any event, a certain amount of delay to enable consultation to take place with the Dominions, would probably be necessary. Several Ministers made reference to speaking engagements which they were due to fulfil in the next few days.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY suggested that, in any speeches which they might make, Ministers might say something on the lines of what the Prime Minister had said to the Press yesterday, namely, that the negotiations had reached a stage at which no reason was seen why a settlement should not be arrived at without recourse to force, and, in our view, no justification was seen for recourse to force.

In regard to meetings which would involve Ministers having to travel a long distance from London during the next two or three days, the PRIME MINISTER thought that such meetings could be cancelled on the ground that in present circumstances the Minister concerned could not be absent from London for the length of time involved. As regards future meetings of the Cabinet, it was not possible to reach an immediate decision. It might be necessary to have a meeting on Tuesday, the 13th September, but he thought it more likely that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, the 14th September.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that it would be desirable that the Lord Privy Seal should proceed to Geneva, but that he should hold himself free to return at very short notice. This was agreed to.

In conclusion, THE PRIME MINISTER read extracts from a note of a conversation which Sir Horace Wilson had with Lord Brocket, who had just returned from Nuremberg.

CONCLUSIONS.

It was agreed -

(1) To take note of the statements made by the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in regard to the policy which had been adopted for dealing with the situation since the Meeting of Ministers held on the 30th August, and to approve the action taken to give effect thereto.

(2) That further decisions on policy should be postponed until after Herr Hitler's speech at Nuremberg this evening.

(3) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should reply to M. Bonnet's enquiry as to H.M. Government's attitude, on the basis that we should neither put a brake on the French nor yet apply the accelerator.

(4) That a further Meeting of the Cabinet should be held to discuss the situation generally, probably in the course of the next few days. No decision on vital issues of policy would be taken until this further meeting of the Cabinet had been held.

(5) To approve the reply which the Prime Minister proposed to send to Mr. Attlee in regard to the summoning of Parliament, namely, that in present circumstances it was undesirable to summon Parliament, but that a situation might arise in which this course would be necessary.
(6) That the Chiefs of Staff should be asked to prepare forthwith an up-to-date appreciation of the situation which would arise in the event of immediate hostilities; that if possible this Report should give the position both as it is to-day and as it would be next year if Germany was allowed to carry out a coup in Czechoslovakia.

(7) That the Army precautions which had been approved at the Meeting held by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence on the 8th September, but in regard to which full financial authority had not been forthcoming, should be further discussed by the Ministers concerned.

(8) That the Civil Departments should submit to the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence any matters in regard to which they thought that some immediate action should be taken to improve our preparedness.

(9) That as a general rule Ministers should cancel speaking engagements in the course of the next few days, which would result in their being away from London for any considerable length of time.

Richmond Terrace,
Whitehall, S.W.1,
12th September, 1938.
APPENDIX I.

Extract from cypher telegram No. 262 to Sir E. Phinns
(Partial) dated 6th September, 1938.

2. I asked the Ambassador whether, by his suggestion that it was important to remove any ambiguity, M. Bonnet intended to suggest that this country should go further than the position defined by the Prime Minister on 24th March. M. Corbin disclaimed any such intention on the part of M. Bonnet, but suggested that the same thing might be said again in such a way as to be of great service.

3. I said that His Majesty's Government would give full weight to M. Bonnet's suggestion, which was one that we had always before our minds. As I had more than once said to M. Bonnet, we were constantly obliged to have regard to public opinion in this country and in the Empire. Making full allowance for the wider issues that public opinion might recognise to be involved in any attack on Czechoslovakia, I thought that there was a distinction to be drawn. I did not think that British public opinion, although it might change as the situation developed, would be willing to contemplate being involved in war on direct account of Czechoslovakia. While this was certainly true, I thought it was also probable that if France was obliged to act in discharge of her obligations, British public opinion would realise that we could not allow France to be in trouble, without wishing to do our best to help her. This distinction meant that, although Great Britain might feel obliged to support France in a conflict, if only because it would
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recognise that British interests were involved in any threat to French security, it did not mean that we should be willing automatically to find ourselves at war with Germany, because France might be involved in discharge of obligations which Great Britain did not share, and which a large section of British opinion had always disliked.
APPENDIX II.

Copy of letter from the British Ambassador at Paris to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL.

BRITISH EMBASSY,

PARIS.

10th September, 1938.

My dear Secretary of State,

Bonnet said to me in the course of our conversation this morning that he wished to put a question to me not to the Ambassador but to the friend.

Supposing the Germans attacked Czechoslovakia and France mobilised, as she at once would. Supposing France then turned to Great Britain and said "We are going to march; will you march with us?"

What would our answer be? Bonnet said it was tremendously important to know, and if the question were put it would be tremendously important that the answer should be immediate and quite plain, one way or the other.

I replied, speaking personally, that not only could I not give an answer to this hypothetical question, but that I really did not believe that His Majesty's Government could either.

So much I said, depended upon the nature of the German "aggression", for instance. Supposing, for the sake of argument, that the Czech police or crowd lost their heads and killed several Sudeten Germans, and that Hitler, in response to an appeal for help, marched in. Would that constitute an act of aggression that would warrant an affirmative reply by His Majesty's Government to the above-mentioned question by France? One of many other shadings
of "aggression" might take place and I could not conceive of a cut and dried reply that would apply to all of them.

Bonnet begged me to treat all this as very private; in fact he indicated that he did not wish his question to me to be officially recorded. Hence this private letter, which I told him I would write.

In the course of our conversation I indicated that the positions of our two countries were not quite similar. France was bound by a definite pact, whereas we were not. To this Bonnet objected that the moment had passed for legal subtleties. It was vital for our two countries to act together in the matter, which might be one of life or death.

Bonnet repeated what he had said to me so often, viz: that the French Government will adopt any plan of settlement suggested by Lord Runciman or by His Majesty's Government.

My impression is that Bonnet, perhaps more than Daladier, and certainly much more than Mandel, Reynaud and Co., is desperately anxious for a possible way out of this "impasse" without being obliged to fight.

I of course always indicate that, although Lord Runciman may produce a plan as a last card, it would be greatly preferable that that last card should not have to be played. The ideal solution remains one agreed upon by the Sudeten and the Czechoslovaks.

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) ERIC PHIPPS.

The Rt. Hon. The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,
G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., etc.
CABINET 38 (38).

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on WEDNESDAY, the 14th SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

AGENDUM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: CENTRAL EUROPE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

(Reference Cabinet 37 (38) and recent Foreign Office telegrams.)

(i) Continuation of discussion.

(ii) Note by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, covering a copy of a letter from the British Ambassador in Paris, dated 10th September, 1938, and of his reply thereto despatched 12th September, 1938. (To take note of.)

C.P. 197 (38) - circulated herewith

(Signed) E.E. BRIDGES

Secretary to the Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,

13th September, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Wednesday, 14th September, 1938 at 11.0 a.m.

PRESENT:

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


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


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


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

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

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

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

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


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

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


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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.B. Bridges, M.C., Secretary.
In pursuance of Conclusion (3) of the Meeting mentioned in the margin, the Cabinet resumed their discussion of the international situation in relation to Central Europe and Czechoslovakia.

The Prime Minister said that, at the previous Meeting of the Cabinet on September 12th, their thoughts had been directed principally to the speech to be made that evening by Herr Hitler. As the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs had explained, their endeavours had been directed to taking such action as would make Herr Hitler realise that if France was involved in war, it was likely that we should also be involved while not driving him to precipitate action by any repetition of May 21st.

The Prime Minister said that he had not himself thought that Herr Hitler's speech would take us much further.

On Monday night, the reports of the speech were received and examined. The preliminary impressions of the speech, later confirmed by closer examination, showed that the action we had taken had been justified, inasmuch as Herr Hitler had not done anything irrevocable. At the same time, the speech gave no encouragement, and contained some ominous phrases. In particular, although he did not commit himself to a plebiscite, he used words which pointed in that direction. The practical difficulties of a plebiscite were enormous, but if the demand took that form, it would be difficult for the democratic countries to go to war in order to prevent the
Sudeten Germans from saying what form of Government they wanted to have.

The Prime Minister said that much time had been spent in the last few days in discussing the plebiscite question. An incident in the Sudeten German areas might, at any time, arise and provoke a crisis. He had already told his colleagues that there might come a time when we found ourselves on the very edge of some vital and irrevocable action on the part of Germany, as, for example, that Germany was on the point of marching into Czechoslovakia, having decided, notwithstanding the warnings we had given, to take her chance. He had given some thought before the Meeting of Ministers held on the 30th August to a plan which had occurred to him as one which might be put into force at a moment's notice, and which would have some chance at the eleventh hour of preserving peace.

The Prime Minister said that he had discussed this plan with one or two colleagues in closest touch with him at the time, and he had also mentioned it to Sir Nevile Henderson. The latter had taken the view that, if Herr Hitler had decided to invade Czechoslovakia, this new idea might cause him to cancel that intention. The vital element in this plan was surprise, and as it was imperative that no hint of what was in contemplation should leak out, he had thought it better to postpone mentioning it until the last moment.
The plan was that, as soon as it became clear that a solution could be reached in no other way, the Prime Minister himself should go to Germany and see Herr Hitler. As originally sketched, the procedure proposed was that the Prime Minister should not let Herr Hitler know that he was coming to Germany until he had actually started. This procedure, however, which was intended to prevent Herr Hitler from saying that he could not see the Prime Minister, would expose the latter to a rebuff. Herr Hitler might say that he had a cold and could not see the Prime Minister. This would be humiliating, and, moreover, would result in a serious situation.

Sir Nevile Henderson had thought that this procedure was too risky, and had preferred that Herr Hitler should be informed of the Prime Minister's proposed visit, and his assent obtained, in advance. It was considered that if this procedure was adopted it would be less likely to result in a refusal, and that the first suggestion might lead Herr Hitler to think that his hand was being forced.

The success of the plan depended upon its being accurately timed. If adopted too soon it would be asked why this action had been taken before Lord Runciman had finished his task. On the other hand, if we waited too long, Herr Hitler might have taken some irrevocable action.

Up to yesterday afternoon (13th September), the Prime Minister continued, he had had it in mind that this plan, which had been known as plan "Z", should
be put into effect probably towards the end of the present week. On the preceding afternoon, however, events had started to move rapidly and there had been a succession of "incidents" in the Sudeten areas.

A remarkable communication had also been received yesterday afternoon (13th September) from Sir Eric Phipps, who had seen M. Bonnet. The latter had been described as in a state of collapse. He seemed thoroughly cowed, and convinced that if war came the great cities of France and England would be laid in ruins. It appeared that the French had been very frightened by a report from Colonel Lindbergh saying that Germany had 8,000 aeroplanes and could produce 1,500 a month.

Later in the day M. Daladier had wanted to speak to the Prime Minister on the telephone. This might have been embarrassing, and Sir Eric Phipps was asked to see him. Sir Eric replied that he had already seen M. Daladier, but would, if necessary, do so again. In the report of his first conversation with the French Prime Minister, Sir Eric Phipps said that he had found M. Daladier a very different person from what he had been on the 8th September. At the present time he was not committing himself to anything but that some way must be found out. At the second interview M. Daladier had said that at all costs Germany must be prevented from invading Czechoslovakia because in that case France would be faced with her obligations. The Prime Minister thought that this language was significant.
Later in the evening news had arrived of the ultimatum delivered by the Sudeten Germans to the Czechoslovak Government. The latter had refused it, but had left the door open for negotiation. Herr Henlein had now notified the Czechoslovak Government that negotiations had been broken off.

In these circumstances the Prime Minister said that he and the Foreign Secretary, with the advice of the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Home Secretary - themselves two former Foreign Secretaries - had decided that plan "Z" should be put into operation at once. A telegram had accordingly been despatched to Sir Nevile Henderson. (Copies of this telegram, No. 368 to Paris, were handed round at the Meeting).

The Prime Minister said that his hand had been forced, since a position had been reached in which, unless plan "Z" was put into effect quickly, it could not be adopted at all. He hoped that the Cabinet would feel that he had not gone beyond his proper duty in taking this action on the advice of those of his colleagues whom he had mentioned, but without consulting the full Cabinet.

The Prime Minister thought that the Cabinet should be aware of two suggestions which had been made by M. Daladier. The first was that Lord Runciman should now produce a plan. We were by no means sure that Lord Runciman was ready to produce a plan, and we did not want to press him to
do so. Even if the production of a plan now was feasible, this course was open to various objections. Thus, it might not be acceptable to the two parties, and it would be liable to be described as "the British plan". We did not want the responsibility of sponsoring any particular scheme.

M. Daladier's second suggestion was that a Three-Power Conference should be summoned to discuss such a plan. Our view was that there was no hope of getting Germany to accept a Three-Power Conference, although she might conceivably accept a Four-Power Conference. Even the latter, however, was open to several objections. It was a clumsy instrument. Russia, Poland, and possibly other countries would want to be admitted to it. Germany preferred bilateral to multilateral arrangements. Finally, there was nothing in a Four-Power Conference which was likely to prove attractive to Germany. It was felt that plan "Z" had a much better chance of acceptance.

The Prime Minister said that he would like to give the Cabinet some idea of the lines on which he would propose to talk to Herr Hitler if the latter agreed to receive him. He hoped that the idea would appeal to the Hitlerian mentality. Herr Hitler liked to see Heads of States, and it might be agreeable to his vanity that the British Prime Minister should take so unprecedented a step.
But he also had in mind that you could say more to a man face to face than you could put in a letter, and he thought that doubts as to the British attitude would be better removed by discussion than by any other means.

The Prime Minister said that he thought that the right course was to open by an appeal to Herr Hitler on the grounds that he had a great chance of obtaining fame for himself by making peace in Europe and thereafter by establishing good relations with this country, which was always his aim.

After some such opening it might be pointed out that if Germany was to have the goodwill of the British people, it was essential that the present dispute should not be settled by force. We were neither pro-Czech nor pro-Sudeten German. Our business was to keep the peace and find a just and equitable settlement. Negotiations had continued for a long time. Thanks, however, to pressure from ourselves and France, M. Benes had gone much further than had been expected. At this point there would probably be a tirade against M. Benes and a statement that it was impossible to have any confidence that M. Benes would carry out his promises.

The Prime Minister said that he thought that at this point reference might be made to the suggestion that some international body should be set up to supervise the fulfilment of any agreement reached. To this Herr Hitler might retort that no agreement had yet been reached and that matters could not go on
indefinitely. The Prime Minister had had in mind to propose as a solution that the two parties should agree to put their views before Lord Runciman and to accept Lord Runciman as the final arbitrator.

The Prime Minister said he would, of course, have to make it clear that he could not answer for M. Benes. At the same time he would undertake to put all the pressure he could on M. Benes, and that the French would do likewise.

This, said the Prime Minister, was the idea with which he had started. But he now felt that Herr Hitler might say that, while this might have been acceptable a week ago, nothing could now settle the matter except a Plebiscite. The Prime Minister thought that the Cabinet would have to consider very carefully what should be said to any such demand.

Some people might take the view that the demand for a Plebiscite should be rejected out of hand. That was not his view, nor the view of the Foreign Secretary. He thought it was impossible for a democracy like ourselves to say that we would go to war to prevent the holding of a Plebiscite. Further, the presence within their boundaries of a homogeneous, disciplined and easily-moved people such as the Sudeten Germans, was not a source of strength to Czechoslovakia. The Prime Minister added that he was aware of the enormous difficulties attending a Plebiscite. There was the initial difficulty of delimiting the areas to which the Plebiscite should relate: there were mixed populations to be dealt with: there were also strategic and economic considerations: but he doubted whether Czechoslovakia would ever have peace so long as the Sudeten Germans
were part of the country. He did not think it right that we should say that we would have nothing to do with the idea of a Plebiscite. He would propose, of course, to start the conversation on the lines already indicated, but he thought we must be prepared to be brought up against the Plebiscite issue.

A great deal of consideration had been given to the question, and he thought the difficulties were not entirely incapable of solution. He mentioned in particular one suggestion which had originally been put forward by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and which had much to commend it. This was that the Sudeten Germans should at the outset be given a wide measure of autonomy in specified areas, with the option of a Plebiscite after a given period. This would ensure that the Plebiscite took place in a better atmosphere, and would relate the Plebiscite to specified areas. As regards mixed areas, the only satisfactory solution seemed to be transfer.

But supposing that part of Czechoslovakia were given to Germany, what would happen to the rest of the country? It might be said that there would be a helpless little strip of territory liable at any moment to be gobbled up by Germany. The Czechs might take that view and might prefer to die fighting rather than accept a solution which would rob them of their natural frontiers.

The Prime Minister said the only answer which he could find was one which he was most unwilling to contemplate, namely, that this country should join in guaranteeing the integrity of the rest of Czechoslovakia.
This would be a new liability, and he realised that we could not save Czechoslovakia if Germany decided to over-run it. The value of the guarantee would lie in its deterrent effect. The sort of arrangement contemplated was that Czechoslovakia should be guaranteed by France, Russia, Germany and ourselves, and should be relieved from liability to go to the assistance of the guarantor countries, and would thus become a neutral State. This would help to clear up the situation in Central Europe. He did not suggest that the Cabinet should be called upon to give any final opinion on such a wide question, but he would like to know that the idea was not altogether excluded.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the inducement to be held out to Herr Hitler in the proposed negotiations was the chance of securing better relations between Germany and England. This chance would be lost if Herr Hitler had recourse to force now. He could say that if a solution was found to the present difficulty, we might presently be able to deal with problems which affected both countries.

In this connection the Prime Minister referred to the statement which Field-Marshal Goering had made to Sir Nevile Henderson to the effect that if once the present difficulty was settled, we in this country would be surprised at the moderation of the German demands.
The Prime Minister then referred to the encirclement argument and thought that some reference might be made to the economic assistance which we had recently afforded to Turkey. If it was suggested to him that we were trying to hem Germany in, he would reply that we had no desire to do that. We wished to foster international trade and we realised that we could not have it all. The position was that other countries came to us and said that Germany had established a stranglehold over their trade. All these difficulties had arisen from the political situation and if only an understanding could be reached between the two countries, these matters of trade could easily be settled.

If the question of Colonies was raised, the Prime Minister would say that this would have to be left till later.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL asked what would happen if other minorities asked for a plebiscite.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he did not contemplate that any such demand would be made.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that it was true that the other minorities in Czechoslovakia were content at the moment. One of the dangers, however, was that the idea of a plebiscite was infectious and the point must be borne in mind.

THE PRIME MINISTER then read a Reuter's message which had just been received, in which
increased emphasis was laid on the right of the Sudeten Germans to self-determination.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY asked what line we should take if Herr Hitler asked whether, if the Czech Government refused to agree to our plan, we should withdraw our support from them.

THE PRIME MINISTER replied that he thought the idea of the guarantee would very likely make all the difference.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS suggested that if this question was put, the Prime Minister might reply that it was impossible to answer such a question in advance. It would be necessary to see first what attitude the Czech Government took. The main point was to get agreement on a broad line, and Great Britain and Germany should remain in close contact in order to ensure that any difficulties which arose were ironed out.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had communicated the plan to Lord Runciman, who had replied that he was in agreement, although he realised that it might be the end of his mission. He had in mind that he might ask Lord Runciman to come to Berchtesgaden.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that one aspect of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's suggestion which might be acceptable to the Czech Government was that, whereas a plebiscite today would certainly result in incorporation of the
Sudeten areas in the Reich, it was by no means certain that the same would be the result after some years of autonomy.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH thought that the position was a little difficult for those Ministers who had not been concerned in all the discussions. While in general agreement with what the Prime Minister had said, he thought that we were being led by pressure to do something which we should not have done of our own free will. There were also certain dangers in projecting these conversations some time ahead. He asked what would happen if the invitation was not accepted, or if an answer was delayed for a long time.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that if a favourable answer was received he proposed to start at once. If no answer, or an unfavourable answer, was received, he would summon the Cabinet. He would not wait long for an answer.

Continuing, THE MINISTER OF HEALTH said that if we came to some arrangement whereby Lord Runciman was accepted as arbitrator, we should be in a strong position. He thought that specific action to enable the plebiscite to be carried out should be considered. He cited the Silesian Plebiscite, where responsible people had decided what should be done over the heads of the contending parties, and where the towns had been garrisoned by troops of neutral parties. This last point was of considerable importance.
The Minister of Health also asked what value would be attached to a guarantee to Czechoslovakia which we might give in present circumstances. People would say that we had been bluff on the present occasion.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that, in his view, the "Z" plan was absolutely right and would be regarded as a real effort to avert a great tragedy. Even if it met with a rebuff, it would be recognised that we had done everything possible to avoid a catastrophe.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR agreed with the Secretary of State for Air that the plan was an adventurous one which would appeal to the imagination of the whole world. It was not without risk, but there was some risk about all really big undertakings. He would like to make two suppositions. The first, that Herr Hitler would be flattered and ready to listen. In this case, he was entitled to ask: What, if conciliation failed, we proposed to do. The second supposition was that Herr Hitler might say candidly that he was not interested about autonomy for the Sudeten Germans and that he wished to incorporate them in the Reich. If that was his desire, what action did we propose to take? He thought that it might be made plain to Herr Hitler that the world thought that the present episode was all part of a relentless plan on the lines of "Mein Kampf". We had to make up our minds what we should do in the face of such a situation. He thought that if we did not obtain satisfaction, we should make
it clear to Herr Hitler that we should follow a bold course and should intensify our rearmament programme.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER hoped that this latter point would be borne in mind. The only moral justification for the course proposed was to make it clear to Herr Hitler that, sooner or later, if we did not come to terms with him, we should have to add greatly to the strength of our armed forces in order that later on we might be in a position to resist, by force if necessary, any further acts of aggression. The root factor in the present situation was that Britain and France together, were not in a position to fight Germany, as the result of our failure to take adequate steps to rearm.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that he proposed to confine his remarks to the problems of immediate importance. He said that, for some time, he had been of the opinion that Herr Hitler was determined to incorporate the Sudeten Germans in the Reich. The present series of incidents was engineered. The real question was whether it was better for the Sudeten Germans to be incorporated in the Reich by military violence, or as the result of their own choice, as shown in a plebiscite. He had no doubt which was the lesser evil. He thought that we should tell Herr Hitler that, subject to suitable conditions, we should not oppose self-determination.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that he admired the decision taken as to plan "Z". He thought that it was important that when the plan was made public, it should be made clear that it was a
sign of strength and not of weakness. Thus it should be shown to be consistent with the statements which had already been made as to the difficulty of being sure that our real views were communicated to Herr Hitler.

Continuing, the President of the Board of Trade said that he was in complete agreement with the proposal that Lord Runciman should act as arbitrator. The plebiscite question seemed, however, to him to be a very different matter. Immediate acceptance of a plebiscite would give Herr Hitler everything which he was now demanding by force and would be a complete surrender. In his view, no Government which proposed such a suggestion would stand for long. Nor would it deserve to. He thought, however, that to decide on acceptance of a plebiscite and to announce, at the same time, the intention to increase the pace of our rearmament would be a sign of weakness.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer's suggestion contained considerable elements of justice. The plebiscite would then be carried out in a better atmosphere, and if the Sudeten Germans, after five years of autonomy, still wanted to leave Czechoslovakia, it would be very difficult to say that they should not do so.
There was a big gulf between a plebiscite on the lines proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and an immediate plebiscite. A large section of public opinion in Germany was frightened of war, and would act as a brake on Herr Hitler, if they knew that he had refused the offer of autonomy followed by a plebiscite after an interval.

In his view the Prime Minister's plan presented the only possibility, but he thought that we must be careful that it did not lead us further along the road to complete surrender. It was important to make it plain that the decision taken was not only conciliatory but was also a firm step.

THE PRIME MINISTER made it clear that he would, of course, enter into no definite engagement in regard to a plebiscite, but he thought that he should say that in certain circumstances the idea could be discussed. One alternative was, of course, a plebiscite in about six months' time, after the Reservists had been demobilised, and under the auspices of an international commission.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that everyone would feel that the step which had been taken was inspired by courage and vision. He agreed as to the first steps which the Prime Minister had proposed, but felt more difficulty about a plebiscite. A demand for self-determination was difficult to refuse, but it was difficult to see how a fair plebiscite could be carried out in present conditions.
The Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposal had much to commend it. It would allow time for the position to cool down, and Herr Hitler could say that his demand for a plebiscite had been conceded. This was important psychologically. To this might be added the idea of a neutral guaranteed State for the remainder of Czechoslovakia. He thought that, whereas the attack on Austria arose from very deep emotions on the part of Herr Hitler, in the case of the Sudeten Germans he was mainly concerned with foreign policy. If his fear could be removed, matters should be easier.

If, however, Herr Hitler was not prepared to meet us on these lines, he hoped we would not give in. If we did, this country would cease to be worthy of respect.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES warmly approved of the proposal. The only point which he criticised was the absence of any suggestion for a guarantee of safe-conduct for the Prime Minister. As the exordium to the proposed conversations, he suggested that the Prime Minister might say that he was impressed with the growing feeling in this country that war with Germany was inevitable, either now or in the near future. This suspicion arose from the idea that a conflict with the German peoples was inevitable, but that he himself did not believe in these inevitable trends if matters were dealt with on the right lines at the right moment. The Minister said that public opinion had greatly changed in the last few years, and the people who had then been loudest in opposing re-armament were now loudest in demanding that this country should take a firm line.
He thought it would be important not to let Herr Hitler know that the French had agreed to adopt any plan which was acceptable to us.

With regard to a plebiscite, he thought there was all the difference in the world between a plebiscite now and one a little later. The latter was, in his view, the proper course. The danger was that Herr Hitler would see that, whereas a plebiscite now would be likely to go in his favour, one later on might have a very different result.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL wholeheartedly approved the plan. He agreed with the proposal that Lord Runciman should act as arbitrator, but he would like to reserve his views about the plebiscite proposal, and he hoped that the Prime Minister would not have to commit himself, or the country, on this point. In this connection he was somewhat apprehensive of the position in regard to other minorities, and of the proposed guarantee. In connection with the latter point he recalled the advice given by the Chiefs of Staff.

He was also doubtful if the Czech Government would accept a plebiscite. He suggested that, if the plebiscite proposal was put forward, the Prime Minister should try to play for time, so as to give opportunities for further discussion with his colleagues and with the French and Czechoslovak Governments. He asked whether there would be an Interpreter present.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was contemplated that both Sir Nevile Henderson and Herr Schmidt would attend the meeting.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION thought that there might be a demand for protection for the Sudeten Germans in order to stop the present unfortunate incidents.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had this point in mind, and referred to what had been done in the Saar.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND said that the plebiscite issue would certainly be raised. He thought that, while the temper of the country was rising, the majority of people would take the view that a plebiscite carried out under reasonable conditions was preferable to war. He suggested that one of these conditions should be that the plebiscite should be carried out after an interval of some months and be under international control.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR said that he thought very well of this magnificent proposal, which would have a great influence over the whole world. The plan was unexampled and had a great chance of success.

The first question which would arise was what course France would take. If France did not go to war in order to protect Czechoslovakia it was clear that we could not be expected to do so; and at the moment France had "cold feet". He thought that the Government should pay great attention to what they had been told by the Secretaries of State for War and Air as to the position of our defence preparations. If war came it would be a life and death matter alike to Herr Hitler and to ourselves. The time factor was of the utmost importance. He hoped that the interview with Herr Hitler would result in giving us a breathing-space of some weeks, or perhaps months.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS then read out two recent telegrams from Prague, Nos. 569 and 572. The second of these telegrams gave particulars of four demands made by the Sudeten Germans which had not been accepted by the Czechoslovak Government.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he fully approved the plan proposed, which he thought would be universally welcomed. He mentioned that Mr. te Water, the High Commissioner for the Union of South Africa, had said to him earlier that morning that all now rested in our hands: this country alone could influence and restrain Germany, and we had the one man who could do it, namely, the Prime Minister. He himself agreed with the line which it was proposed to adopt in the conversations, namely, starting with the most favourable, and proceeding to the less favourable course. He felt that the proposal that Lord Runciman should act as arbitrator, while it might have been accepted at one time, was now too late. It was most important that we should not be too late again. He thought that a proposal on the lines of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's suggestion would be a very wise compromise.

If need be, however, he (the Secretary of State) would accept a plebiscite in six months' time. And, if it was impossible to obtain that amount of respite, humiliating though the position might be, he would prefer an immediate plebiscite to war.

He was not altogether in agreement with the President of the Board of Trade about public opinion in this country. He did not think that public opinion wanted war in order to avoid a plebiscite. There was still an immense pacifist element in the Labour Party. He believed that there would be tremendous support for a plebiscite now, if the only alternative was war. That opinion was almost certainly shared by the
In his view the choice was not between war and a plebiscite, but between war now and war later. He had never been optimistic about our catching up Germany in our re-armament programme.

Nor did he agree with the suggestion of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster that our actions to-day were influenced by fear of German arms. He was quite confident that if we went to war we should win. What was really influencing us was hatred of war.

The First Lord added that he had intended to propose the mobilisation of the Fleet. This, however, was now out of the question, and he much preferred plan "Z". The plan had, however, two possible dangers. The first was that if we put up a proposal which Germany accepted but Czechoslovakia refused, we should then make it much more difficult for ourselves to support the latter country. In this way we might improve the German case.

The second was that we might be accused of acting behind the backs of France.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that he had never viewed this war as an adventure to save Czechoslovakia, but as something which might be forced on us in order to save France. It was clear that we could not prevent Czechoslovakia from being over-run; nor, if it was once over-run, would it
ever be likely to be re-created in its existing form.

In regard to the line which the discussion would take, he thought it was possible that Herr Hitler might begin by suggesting that Germany was being hemmed in and that we were out to prevent her from dominating certain parts of the world in the same way that we dominated other parts of the world. For his part, he thought the reply to such an opening might be that we were prepared to see Germany a great people, with a rising population, and a tremendous force in the world. Nor did we propose to deny Germany a dominating position in South Eastern Europe if this could be obtained by proper methods. What we objected to was the use of threats and force.

The Minister also said that he thought it was important to make it clear that the present approach was not being made out of weakness. He thought that the real importance of the proposed meeting would be the renewal of general contacts with Germany.

As regards a plebiscite, he thought it would be folly to deny the rights of self-determination and to fight a war to prevent it.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he felt sure the Prime Minister must feel deeply moved by the way in which his colleagues had received this brilliant proposal. It had, of course, always been intended to unfold the proposal to the Cabinet before it had been adopted, but things had moved too quickly.
He thought that the proposal would be recognised all
the world over, not merely as a positive contribution,
but as almost the only way of impressing the German
people. Their Press was controlled and facts were
concealed from them, but this was something which
could not be kept dark.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer said that to
concede a well ordered plebiscite would not give Hitler
all he asked for. The policy of "Mein Kampf"
represented a great deal more. He also doubted
whether the proposal that Lord Runciman should act
as arbitrator and the proposal for a plebiscite could
be regarded as necessarily separate proposals. Before
an arbitrator could be appointed, his powers would have
to be determined, and he thought that M. Benes would
certainly object if Lord Runciman was appointed
arbitrator with powers to award a part of
Czechoslovakian territory to another country. If
this happened, it would raise the plebiscite issue.
The Chancellor of the Exchequer asked the Cabinet to record their unanimous approval of the action taken, to express their confidence and trust in the Prime Minister and to authorise him, if the invitation is accepted, to carry on conversations in the light of the discussion at the present Meeting. His absence from this country, if only for a short time, was a grievous matter, but if he came back with the seeds of peace with honour he would be universally acclaimed as having carried out the greatest achievement of the last twenty years.

This course was agreed to.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was much touched by the confidence placed in him by his colleagues. The fate of much might depend upon his efforts, but he would not have done his duty to his conscience if he did not make this effort to avert the threatened catastrophe.

He was grateful to his colleagues for the expression of their views, and he was clear as to how far they would wish him to go. At the same time it was impossible to lay down precise limitations. On some points it might be necessary to go rather further than at first intended, while in others it might not be necessary to concede so much. He would, however, undertake to do his very best, in the light of the discussion.
The Prime Minister then dealt with various contingencies. If Herr Hitler refused the invitation, he thought that the Cabinet should meet at once to consider the position. If the invitation was accepted, he thought that it would almost certainly be necessary to summon Parliament on his return, but only for a limited period. If the invitation was refused, a situation might still arise in which Parliament would have to be summoned. But no decision was called for on this point at the present time.

Whether the invitation was accepted or refused, it would have to be made public before long. For the time being, however, it was of the utmost importance that the proposal should be kept absolutely secret. He asked his colleagues to bear this in mind.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that it was of the utmost importance that steps should be taken to ensure that the Press received the news of plan "Z" correctly, and suggested that it might be necessary that the newspaper proprietors and editors should be seen instead of the Lobby and Diplomatic Correspondents.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence also mentioned a suggestion that instead of an interview it might be better to issue a statement. Possibly both courses could be combined.

The Prime Minister said that on this occasion it would be necessary to issue a statement.

It was also suggested that it was important to make it clear to the Press that we were making this proposal not from weakness but from strength.
CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed —

(1) To record their whole-hearted approval of the action taken by the Prime Minister in sending a personal message to Herr Hitler containing an offer by the Prime Minister to come over to Germany at once to confer with Herr Hitler.

(2) That if the offer is accepted, the Prime Minister should be authorised to confer with Herr Hitler on the general lines indicated in the discussion at the present Meeting.

(3) That if the offer is refused, the Cabinet should meet at once to consider the position.

(4) That if the offer is accepted, it would be necessary to summon Parliament to meet on the Prime Minister's return, for a limited period.

(5) That it was of the utmost importance that the action taken should be kept absolutely secret for the time being.

(6) That when the time came to make an announcement a special communique should be issued to the Press.

(7) That consideration of the mobilisation of the Fleet, which the First Lord had intended to propose at the present Meeting, should be deferred for the time being.

(8) To take note of a Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P. 197 (38)) covering a copy of a Private and Confidential letter from the British Ambassador in Paris, dated 10th September, 1938, and of his reply thereto despatched on the 12th September, 1938, relating to the attitude of His Majesty's Government in the event of a German attack upon Czechoslovakia.
MEMORIAL SERVICE TO THE LATE PRINCE ARTHUR OF CONNAUGHT.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER informed his colleagues that the funeral of the late Prince Arthur of Connaught would take place at 11.30 a.m. on Friday next at Windsor, and that a Memorial Service would be held in St. Martin's in the Fields on the same day. Attendance at Windsor was, of course, a matter which depended upon receiving an invitation from the Palace. In regard to the Memorial Service, the position was that it was not proper to be represented at a Royal Funeral or Memorial Service, and that any Minister who wished to pay his tributes must, therefore, attend himself. Attendance at this latter service is a matter to be arranged by Ministers individually with the Vicar of St. Martin's in the Fields, i.e. no Minister is under obligation to attend, or need seek permission to absent himself. But it would probably be desirable that a certain number, including, no doubt, the Defence Ministers, should attend.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

14th September, 1938.
Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10 Downing Street, S.W.1., on SATURDAY, 17th SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

AGENDUM

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: CENTRAL EUROPE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA: THE PRIME MINISTER'S VISIT TO HERR HITLER.

(Reference Cabinet 38 (38))

(a) Statement by the Prime Minister.

(b) Notes by Sir Horace Wilson circulated by direction of the Prime Minister. C.P. 202 (38) - circulated herewith.

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

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
16th September, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Saturday, 17th September, 1958, at 11.0 a.m. and resumed at 3.0 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.,
Prime Minister.


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


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


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

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

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

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

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

The Right Hon. The Viscount Runciman.

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

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:

The Right Hon. The Viscount Runciman.

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C. Secretary.
The Cabinet met for the purpose of hearing from the Prime Minister a statement on his recent visit to Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden in connection with the position in Central Europe and Czechoslovakia, and the serious international situation which had arisen. The Cabinet also had before them a copy of Notes by Sir Horace Wilson, who had accompanied the Prime Minister (C.P. 202(38)).

The Prime Minister thought the most convenient plan would be that the Cabinet should first hear from Lord Runciman, whom they were glad to have with them, an account of the present position in Czechoslovakia. That would be the proper background for his account of his visit to Herr Hitler. The Cabinet knew how great an influence Lord Runciman had established in Czechoslovakia, and what respect was felt in that country for his impartiality and industry. It must be a disappointment to him that after so much work the situation should have deteriorated so rapidly. It would be a great mistake, however, to think that Lord Runciman's work had been thrown away. It had succeeded in preserving the situation, and had convinced the world that every possible effort had been made to find a solution by mediation. This country was under a deep debt of gratitude to Lord Runciman and his Staff.

Lord Runciman said that he was, of course, disappointed that he had not been able to bring about a solution by agreement between the parties concerned. He had borne it in mind, however, that Lord Halifax had told him, when he left for Prague, that time gained was of
importance. He could not have carried out the work which he had done without the assistance of his admirable staff. In particular, he owed a great deal to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin.

On his arrival at Prague, Lord Runciman had found the Czech Government blind to what was going on around them. Dr. Benes was a man of great ability, so agile that he made those about him distrust him. Dr. Hodza was an excellent Prime Minister, but with rather limited experience. The other members of the Czech Cabinet were of poor quality and did not count.

At the outset, Lord Runciman continued, he had made enquiries into the political and economic position. Much of the support which the Sudeten Germans received came from people who were suffering from a very acute economic depression, and the efforts which his Mission had made to find solutions for those economic troubles had strengthened their hands.

On the political issues, the Sudeten Germans had from the outset been very suspicious. Herr Henlein lived at Asch, four hours' motor journey away from Prague, and could only be seen occasionally. He was a genial, good-tempered person, but nothing much could be got out of him. Lord Runciman had since learned that, even before his own arrival in Prague, Herr Henlein had been in frequent communication with Berlin.

Herr Frank had a bad influence and was unreliable. Recently he had broken away from the Party and had become more extreme.
Herr Kundt, on the other hand, had been very useful to the Mission. He was a good type of man, who knew his case well and could be relied upon. Lord Runciman said that before leaving Prague on the previous day he had asked Herr Kundt whether he was still a member of the Party. He had replied that he had severed his connection with the Party as, although he was not a Czech, he did not want to become a German subject. Herr Kundt was ready to resume conversations at any time if we wanted him to do so.

Lord Runciman said that one of his difficulties had been to get at the real facts, behind all the exaggeration which was current. By degrees he had got the two parties into the way of saying what points they would agree to, and had induced them to put their names to various plans.

Lord Runciman gave some details of the four plans which had been produced. The last of these which still held the field, included the eight Carlsbad points, and would have given Herr Henlein and his colleagues a basis on which they could have agreed to participate in the government of the country. There was no point in putting forward any further plan at the present time.

The Sudeten Party now proposed the inclusion of the Sudeten areas in the Reich. The Czech Government would take strong action to stop this. They had ordered the arrest of Herr Henlein, who was now in Bavaria.

Various possible solutions had been put forward to deal with the present position. The Sudeten-German leaders spoke of a plebiscite as though it offered the only possible solution. The difficulties in the way of such a solution were, of course, very
great, though he (Lord Runciman) would not say that they could not be overcome. He mentioned, for example, the definition of areas; the formulation of the questions to be put; the control which would be needed to prevent intimidation, and so forth. Even in normal times a plebiscite would not have been the best way of dealing with the situation. At the present time, he doubted whether free expression of opinion was possible. He thought that Dr. Benes shared this doubt. The Army would not stand the strain of a plebiscite well.

The great centres of opposition to the Government were Eger and Asch, in the north-western corner of Bohemia, which contained about 800,000 Germans and very few of any other race. The transfer of these areas to Germany would almost certainly be a good thing. On the other hand, the Czechoslovak army would certainly oppose any transfer of territory very strongly. Dr. Benes had said that they would fight rather than accept it.

The Military Attache had said that the Czechoslovak army was a formidable force, but lacked experience.

A second possible solution was the creation of a new and independent Sudeten-German State, but it was clear that nothing could be made of this alternative in present conditions.

Another third solution was a Four-Power Conference. This suggestion would probably have to be linked up somehow to the plebiscite, if a plebiscite was adopted as the best way out.

Mr. Newton, our Minister in Prague, was in favour of a Federal solution. Mr. Newton was a man of much commonsense, who had kept his head very well. Mr. Newton agreed, however,
that at the present time a Federal solution was unlikely to be acceptable.

Lord Runciman said that it had been suggested in various telegrams that he should produce a plan of his own. He had always been reluctant to adopt this course, since it would draw upon him the fire of criticism. For this reason his Mission had never fathered the fourth plan, which had met with a considerable measure of support.

Even at the present time a number of bankers, including men like Dr. Preiss, thought that a solution based on the fourth plan might prove acceptable. Dr. Preiss's suggested solution included the following:-

(1) The Carlsbad Eight Points, which the Czech Government had now accepted.

(2) Suppression of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia.

(3) Denunciation of the Russian-Czech Political Treaty.

(Lord Runciman here said that Dr. Benes had told him there was no such Treaty, and maintained that there was only an "indirect understanding" between the two countries).

(4) Permanent representation of the Sudeten-German people in the Cabinet.

(5) A Commission of equal numbers of Czechs and Germans to deal with disputes in carrying out the agreement.

(6) A Commercial Treaty with Germany.

Lord Runciman thought, however, that there was no hope that this plan would now prove acceptable.

Lord Runciman then replied to a number of questions which were put to him by members of the Cabinet. He said that he had reached the
conclusion that Czechoslovakia could not continue to exist as she was today. Something would have to be done, even if it amounted to no more than cutting off certain fringes.

There were numerous instances of Sudeten Germans having been pushed out of Government posts and Czechs put in their places. This applied to nearly all the State Services.

Again, in affording financial assistance to distressed areas, the Government had taken care to see that practically all the money had gone to Czech areas. The Czechs were, in fact, themselves responsible for most of the trouble.

Lord Runciman explained how he had succeeded in persuading the Czech Government to dispossess some Czech officials in Úger and Asch, and to replace them by Germans. There had been considerable rejoicing over these and other changes which had been made.

As regards Dr. Benes, he thought that he was rather more honest than he allowed himself to appear to be. He was much cleverer than anyone else in the country, and this gave him a reputation for slipperiness. It would be a calamity if both Dr. Benes and Dr. Hodza left the Government. He doubted whether Dr. Benes could persuade the Czech Army to accept a plebiscite. He thought that there was a considerable percentage of people in the German areas who did not wish to be incorporated in the Reich.

Asked whether Dr. Benes still relied on French assistance, Lord Runciman said that the French Minister, at a party given by the latter, had spoken very freely about the attitude of France and had told half a dozen people that there
were things for which France would not go to war, and that it was just as well that they should be clearly known.

In reply to a question from the Home Secretary, as to whether the two sides had ever been near to agreement, Lord Runciman said that about a fortnight ago they had been very close, but at that time he had not fully realised the close connection between the Sudeten-German leaders and Berlin. Dr. Benes had then slowed up the negotiations, which had again become difficult.

In reply to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Runciman said that he thought Herr Kundt would obtain considerable support. The other officials of the party had left Prague, but Herr Kundt had stayed on there.

THE PRIME MINISTER thanked Lord Runciman for his statement, which he thought would be of great assistance to the Cabinet in sizing up the position.

THE PRIME MINISTER then gave an account of his visit to Herr Hitler. He attached great importance to the dramatic side of the visit, since we were dealing with an individual and a new technique of diplomacy relying on personal contacts was required.

The Prime Minister described how, from the time of his arrival at the airfield at Munich, there were crowds in the towns and villages along his route, who saluted and welcomed him. He had travelled by train from Munich to Berchtesgaden, a journey of three hours. There was nothing in the conversations which he had on the journey which was of special importance.
On arrival at Berchtesgaden, he was met by a guard of honour and, after half an hour's wait at the hotel, he had driven up the mountain. After passing two guarded entrances, they found themselves at the Brown House. Hitler was standing halfway down the steps and came down to shake hands with him.

On a first view, Herr Hitler was unimpressive. There was nothing out of the common in his features. The party had proceeded through a barely furnished corridor to the big room, which had so often been described where they had had tea.

At one point during the visit Herr Hitler had expressed his distress at the long journey the Prime Minister had had to undertake. He had thought of offering to come to England but had realised that the difficulties were too great. At another point, Herr Hitler had asked whether there would be strong demonstrations of disapproval if he came to London, to which the Prime Minister had replied that it would be as well to choose the right moment.

After talking platitudes for about half an hour, Herr Hitler asked him what was to be the next stage. Would he like two or three of each side to be present? The Prime Minister had said that he would prefer a private talk with Herr Hitler alone.

About 5.20, therefore, the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler went off with Dr. Schmidt to Herr Hitler's room. The conversation lasted until 8.15 p.m.
The Prime Minister said that he had no idea that this conversation would last anything approaching so long a time. What he had in mind was to open by suggesting to Herr Hitler that this was an opportunity for bringing about a new understanding between England and Germany. He had started on this line. He had said that this idea had been in his mind ever since he had been Prime Minister. Up till now various events had occurred which had rendered it impossible to make any progress, but he hoped that the opportunity had now come. The events of the last few weeks, however, had been so serious that, unless some remedy could be found, it seemed likely that his hopes of an understanding would continue to be disappointed. It was this, and not merely the troubles in Czechoslovakia, that had made him want to visit Herr Hitler. Herr Hitler had replied that the other matters to which the Prime Minister referred were of great importance, but unfortunately there was something else of the utmost urgency and could not wait, namely the Sudeten-German question. The Prime Minister had then agreed to discuss this matter.

The Prime Minister said he would like to give the impression which he had formed of Herr Hitler as the conversation proceeded. He saw no signs of insanity but many of excitement. Occasionally Herr Hitler would lose the thread of what he was saying and would go off into a tirade. It was impossible not to be impressed with the power of the man. He was extremely determined; he had thought out what he wanted and he meant to get it and he would not brook opposition beyond a certain point. Further, and this was a point of considerable importance, the Prime Minister had formed the opinion that Herr Hitler's objectives were strictly limited.
Having agreed to discuss the Czechoslovakian situation, he had been surprised that Herr Hitler did not at once start by saying that his people were being tortured. Instead he had given an historical account of his attitude towards Germany's neighbours. He dealt first with his Agreement with Poland: he regarded his boundary with Poland as being definitely fixed. Next France. If the Saar had been allocated to France, it would have been a source of friction, but in the end it had come to Germany and that matter was now closed. He repeated that he had renounced any claim to Alsace Lorraine. Next, he spoke of the British Naval Treaty. He had made the Treaty because he had thought he would never be at war with England, but (and here Herr Hitler began to talk truculently) if there ceased to be an understanding that there would be no war between England and Germany, and if English people continued to talk, as they had recently, in a threatening way, then it might be better to denounce the Naval Treaty.

At this point the Prime Minister said that he had interrupted, and had asked for Herr Hitler's statement to be interpreted, - a course he had to adopt many times during the discussion. Did the Fuehrer mean that he would denounce the Treaty before we went to war with him? The Fuehrer answered in the affirmative; he had made the Treaty on the assumption that we had
renounced all idea of going to war with Germany. The Prime Minister said that he would like to deal with this point at once. It was for Herr Hitler to decide what he wanted to do, but in his (the Prime Minister's) view there was the greatest difference between a warning and a threat. After 1914 it had been said that if Germany had been warned of our attitude in time, she would never have come into the war. We did not want people to make that complaint again. There would be just grounds for complaint if we let it be thought that in no circumstances would we go to war with Germany, if, in fact, there were circumstances in which we should do so. He thought it was better that that should be made clear.

Herr Hitler replied that a warning or a threat had much the same result. The Prime Minister said he thought it better not to pursue the point further at the time.

Herr Hitler then continued his review of his relations with his neighbours. From his youth up he had pursued the idea of racial unity. He referred to the 10 million Germans outside the Reich; 7 million in Austria and 3 million in the Sudeten lands. The Austrians were now in the Reich. There remained the Sudeten Germans. In this connection, Herr Hitler distinguished between what was possible and what was impossible, and said he appreciated that there were Germans living outside Germany who could not be brought into the Reich.
As regards the Sudeten Germans, they wanted to come in. They must come in. If they were not allowed to come in, he would have to see that they did, and if necessary he would run the risk of a world war in order to bring them in. This, said the Prime Minister, was the gist of what Herr Hitler said, although he could not say that this was the exact equivalent of the words used.

At this point the Prime Minister said that he again stopped Herr Hitler and said that there was something which he wished to know which was most important. Suppose that the Sudeten Germans were included in the Reich, was that all that Herr Hitler wanted, or had he some other aims? The point was of importance, because there were a number of people in England who did not believe what Herr Hitler said. They thought that he was trying to deceive us, and they took the view that his real aim was not merely the inclusion of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich, but the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

Herr Hitler then said that what he was concerned with was the German race. He did not wish to include Czechs in the Reich. When he had included the Sudeten Germans in the Reich he would be satisfied. He referred to his Treaties with Belgium and Holland. The only other place which he mentioned was Memel, which he said
he was prepared to leave, provided the Lithuanians stood by the Statute of Memel.

The Prime Minister said that the impression left on him was that Herr Hitler meant what he said. He thought also that this conversation was consistent with what Herr Hitler had said at other times. It was clearly of the utmost importance to make up one's mind whether the inclusion of the Sudeten Germans in the Reich was the end at which Herr Hitler was aiming or only a beginning. This was a matter on which one could only exercise one's judgment. The Prime Minister's view was that Herr Hitler was telling the truth.

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The Prime Minister had said that he thought there were other difficulties, whereupon Herr Hitler had said that this was academic. They had to face terrible facts. He referred to a statement that 300 Sudeten Germans had been killed the day before, that villages were being put into a state of siege and that refugees were pouring across the frontier. All this must be solved at once. At this point Herr Hitler began to grow excited.

The Prime Minister said that at this stage he had thought it necessary to show a stiffer attitude. He had said that if the Fuehrer really intended to settle the matter in this way he wondered why he had allowed the Prime Minister to come to see him, and whether he (the Prime Minister) had not wasted his time in coming and had not better go home. This was perhaps the turning point of the conversation. Herr Hitler became quieter in his manner. The Prime Minister had suggested that he and Herr Hitler might issue some joint appeal to the parties to restrain their followers. Herr Hitler had raised objections to this, and the Prime Minister had not pursued the suggestion. Then Herr Hitler had said that it all depended on the attitude of the British Government. If the British Government could not accept the principle of self-determination there was no use in pursuing the negotiations; if they could, then he thought that he and the Prime Minister could get to work and discuss the method of procedure.
The Prime Minister had said in reply that he was not in a position to give any such assurance. It was necessary for him to consult the British Cabinet, the French Government and Lord Runciman. (He had not mentioned the Czech Government at this point). But he would give Herr Hitler his personal opinion, which was that, looking at the question as one of principle, it was immaterial to him whether the Sudeten Germans stayed in Czechoslovakia or were included in the Reich. What the British people wanted was a peaceful and a just settlement. It was the practical difficulties of the position that troubled him.

Herr Hitler then asked what course the Prime Minister suggested. The Prime Minister had proposed that the conversations should be adjourned, that he should go back to England and consult his colleagues, and that, having done so, he should return to continue the conversations. Herr Hitler had agreed to this, but had expressed regret that the Prime Minister should have a second long journey and had offered to come as far as the frontier for the second meeting.

The question had then been discussed whether the position in Czechoslovakia could be held in the meantime. The Fuehrer's first approach to this had been to say that it was a matter for the Czechs; if only they would withdraw the State police and confine the troops to barracks and stop mobilisation, order would be restored at once. The Prime Minister had then asked whether Herr Hitler could not do something to assist this object.
Herr Hitler had replied that the German military machine was a terrific instrument. In effect, he had left it to be understood that the machine was ready to act at any moment. Any serious incident which occurred would release the spring and the pincers would close. Once the machine was put in motion, nothing could stop it.

Herr Hitler gave an assurance that he would not give the order to set the machine in motion, pending the resumption of conversations, if he could help it. He felt bound to make this qualification because some incident might occur which would force his hand.

In the Prime Minister's judgment the situation when he went out to Germany had been one of desperate urgency. If he had not gone he thought that hostilities would have started by now. The atmosphere had been electric. Fantastic stories of outrages were accepted without question. A man as excitable as Herr Hitler might easily be carried away by some unfounded report.

The Prime Minister said that his impression was that Herr Hitler would prove to be better than his word, and that he would take care not to set the military machine in motion for a period long enough to allow us time for a reasonable discussion. At the same time, the longer the delay the greater the danger, since it was impossible to rely on a continuation of the relaxation of tension which had been secured.

The Prime Minister said that Sir Horace Wilson had taken great pains to impress on Dr. von Dircksen, and the other German officials with whom he had come in contact, that any aggressive action taken by Germany before the Prime Minister's second visit took place would be treated by the British people as an intolerable affront.
The Prime Minister thought that Herr Hitler would hold the position until the conversations had been resumed, but it was important to lose no time.

The Prime Minister emphasised that there had been no opportunity for him to put smaller points, or to try and impose conditions, or to get Herr Hitler to accept alternative solutions which seemed reasonable over here but which would not have been accepted in the atmosphere prevailing at Berchtesgarten. The only practical course had been for him to return home and consult his colleagues.

The Prime Minister concluded by saying that when he left Herr Hitler he had been uncertain what impression he had made upon him. He mentioned, however, that Herr Hitler's manner was definitely different when they left his study; he had stopped halfway down the stairs and lamented the fact that the bad weather made it impossible for him to take the Prime Minister to see the view from the top of the mountain. Herr Hitler had said that he hoped this might be possible on some other occasion. Information from other sources had been to the effect that the Fuehrer had been most favourably impressed. This was of the utmost importance, since the future conduct of these negotiations depended mainly upon personal contacts.

The Prime Minister thought that it was not possible to deal with a man such as Herr Hitler by attaching conditions. He thought, however, that if the principle of self-determination was accepted and negotiations were entered into as to the method of applying that principle, Herr Hitler would not prove too difficult about such questions as the area of the plebiscite, and the conditions under which it was to be carried out.

At the end of the conversation Herr Hitler had said that when the Czechoslovakian question was settled he would like to take up the question of Anglo-German relations and especially the question of colonies; Germany would not abandon her demand for colonies, but it was not a war matter.
The Prime Minister thought that, if it was possible to get a settlement of the present difficulty, there was a chance of obtaining a settlement of other matters also.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR asked whether by "self-determination" Herr Hitler meant a plebiscite.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that Herr Hitler had not used the word "plebiscite", but he felt sure that that was what he meant. He added that the German Foreign Office had for some time been working on plebiscite questions.

The Prime Minister added that Herr Hitler had made some allusion to the Soviet Treaty. He (the Prime Minister) had asked whether, if the Sudeten Germans were brought into the Reich, Herr Hitler would feel any anxiety about the remainder of Czechoslovakia. Herr Hitler's answer had been "Yes, if the Treaty continues". The Prime Minister had asked what would happen if the Treaty was modified. Herr Hitler had answered this indirectly by saying that if the Sudeten Germans were given self-determination the same would have to be done for the Hungarians, the Poles, and the Slovaks. If that happened he would not worry in the least about what would be left of Czechoslovakia.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS said that the question of the other minorities was very important, he did not feel that the plebiscite need apply to them.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the Polish Minister, whom he had seen the previous day, had said that if a plebiscite was given to the Sudeten Germans the Polish Government would expect it for the Poles in Czechoslovakia, e.g., at Teschen. If this was not granted the relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia would be seriously strained.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR asked whether it would be possible to accept the principle of self-determination, on an undertaking being given by Herr Hitler that it should be carried out on really fair conditions, and if he agreed to demobilise the Army before effect was given to self-determination.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he did not think it was possible to attach conditions to our acceptance of the principle. We should make no progress in that way. What he would like to say was that now the principle had been agreed, it remained to examine how it should be carried out. He thought we could make good progress on these lines. This, of course, could not be done until we had consulted the French.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that unless the Czech Government were prepared to co-operate in arranging a fair plebiscite, he did not see how a proper plebiscite could be carried through. He feared that it might be difficult to get the Czech Government to accept the solution of a plebiscite, and it seemed to him that force might have to be used to prevent fighting from breaking out. He asked whether it was proposed that the Cabinet's decision should be communicated to the Opposition and to Parliament before the Prime Minister saw Herr Hitler again.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he proposed to see representatives of the Opposition and to explain the present position to them. As regards Parliament, his view was that a discussion in Parliament at the present time would result in wrecking very delicate negotiations. Parliament would be summoned as soon as that course would be helpful. In effect, Parliament would be informed of the decision of His Majesty's Government after it had been taken. It would be for Parliament to say whether they
approved the course taken, and were prepared to ratify it.

Discussion then ensued as to the attitude to be adopted vis-a-vis the French Government.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that all the French Government had been told was that the Prime Minister had found the situation critical, but thought that Herr Hitler would hold his hand until the conversations could be resumed. They had also been told that Herr Hitler had pressed for acceptance of the principle of self-determination, but that the method of giving effect to that principle had not been discussed.

The Foreign Secretary also read a telegram received from Sir Eric Phipps to the effect that the French Government were much disturbed, as they had not been informed of what had happened at Berchtesgaden, and asked that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet might come to London as soon as possible. This telegram had been despatched before the French had received the information which he had just referred to. He thought that there was great danger that the responsibility for the decision taken at the present time might be placed on our shoulders, although it was France and not we ourselves who had Treaty obligations with the Czechoslovak Government.

After further discussion on this point it was agreed

(i) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should invite the representatives of the French Government to come over to this country as soon as possible for discussion;

(ii) and that the discussions with the French should be conducted on the basis that we should endeavour to reach a joint decision with the French Government.
In the course of further discussion the Secretary of State for War suggested that it might be desirable that a Committee of Experts should be called together to examine the possibilities of improvising a workable scheme for a plebiscite. The General Staff had already prepared a paper on the military forces which would be necessary to exercise control. It appeared that not less than 3 divisions would be required, and that it would be difficult to protect them from outside attack, for example, by the Czech forces. The problems were not, he thought, insoluble but it was desirable that they should be examined as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister said that he hoped his colleagues were prepared to express their general agreement with the proposition that we should accept the principle of self-determination, on the understanding that no announcement to this effect should be made for the present time, and that we should next proceed to negotiate with the French.

The Lord President of the Council suggested that the Cabinet should endorse the attitude which the Prime Minister had taken in his negotiations with Herr Hitler, but should postpone recording a formal decision until after the negotiations with the French.

The President of the Board of Trade thought it was a little difficult to reach a decision on such a vital issue, when the Cabinet had only just been informed of the position resulting from the Prime Minister's discussion with Herr Hitler. Further, unless the Prime Minister was certain that he could obtain
satisfactory conditions, we might be faced with a demand for a plebiscite in its baldest form. He would like further time to consider the matter.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH also thought that it was undesirable to conclude the discussion that morning, without further consideration. If the Polish and Hungarian minorities also demanded self-determination, the result might be the dismemberment of Czechoslovakia.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that the difficulty he felt in arriving at a decision was the fear that, by doing so, we might be led into a complete surrender. He noted with some regret that the Prime Minister had not been able to put forward to Herr Hitler a number of reasonable propositions (such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer's plan for autonomy for a period of years, to be followed by a plebiscite). Further, what Herr Hitler had said about Czechoslovakia's Treaty with Russia showed that he was not prepared to leave any independence to Czechoslovakia. He thought that Czechoslovakia would probably prefer to fight.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER was also in favour of postponing a decision until there had been time for further discussion.

THE PRIME MINISTER said he thought that it was entirely reasonable that the Cabinet should have further opportunity for discussion.

It was agreed that it was desirable to have a further discussion in Cabinet before the French representatives started. The Cabinet accordingly adjourned until 3.0 p.m.
THE CABINET resumed discussion of the international position which had been adjourned at 1.30 p.m.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that a telegram had been received from Geneva to the effect that M. Bonnet was somewhat incensed that the French had not been immediately brought into consultation. He thought that this had been put right by the action which had now been taken.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he had little to say. He hoped the Cabinet would give the Prime Minister an assurance that what the Prime Minister had already given as his personal opinion, expressed the general view of the Government.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR referred to the principles of foreign policy laid down by Canning and approved by Disraeli. Under that policy two conditions had to be satisfied before we intervened. First, that British interests were seriously affected; secondly, that we should only intervene with overwhelming force. When he became Lord Chancellor, this policy was being observed. He had been informed that British interests were not vitally affected by what happened to the Sudeten Germans. It was the French whose treaty obligations were involved, and those obligations were not altogether straightforward and were curiously worded. It had, however, been agreed that if the French became involved and their security was threatened, this country could not stand aside. That had been the position up till to-day, except that this country had made endeavours through the Foreign Secretary and Lord Runciman to reach a solution which would satisfy Germany. Now Lord Runciman's efforts had failed, and we had been informed what Herr Hitler's attitude was. Lord Maugham reached the conclusion that, except for some possible loss of prestige, British interests were not involved.
Further, no action on our part could prevent Herr Hitler from over-running Czechoslovakia.

In considering what action should be taken, it must be remembered that we were not immediately involved, but France was. France should therefore be asked first what action she proposed to take. It must be remembered that France had no overwhelming force at her disposal. If the opinion of the French Government were asked, it was likely that they would reply that they were a democratic people, and that they could not go to war to keep 3½ million Germans under the Prague Government. That would be the effect of their answer, save for certain face-saving phrases. He thought that if the French asked us our opinion, we should reply that it was France which was primarily involved, but that we thought they would take a wise course if they said that they would not fight to prevent the self-determination of the Sudeten Germans.

Continuing, the Lord Chancellor said that it would be a very serious thing to involve this country in war in the present dispute. Some people might regard this attitude as cowardly, but such people were not in a position to understand the factors involved. If war broke out to-day, it would be a long and desperate affair and would cause immense sacrifice. Further, the position of the Empire must be considered. The Congress party in India might take advantage of the position; there might be an Arab revolt in Asia and armed neutrality, if not war, on the part of Japan.

Subject to the form in which the Government's determination was made known, he thought that the course proposed by the Prime Minister was the right one.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY, referring to the Lord Chancellor's remarks, said that it was a primary interest of this country to prevent any single power dominating Europe. We were now faced with the most formidable power for a century. As regards the condition that we should not intervene unless we had overwhelming force, we had not got it now and were unlikely to attain it. It was of the utmost importance to pacify Germany and there was almost no length to which he would not go to attain this end. But what chance was there of achieving this? He found it difficult to believe that the self-determination of the Sudeten Germans was Hitler's last aim. He did not altogether understand Herr Hitler's remark about the colonies, to which the Prime Minister had referred.

The First Lord also referred to the series of statements which Herr Hitler had made to the effect that he had no intention of attacking Austria or Czechoslovakia. He felt that his promises were quite unreliable.

At the present time, the country was singularly united, and the Dominions would probably be more attracted by the idea of supporting the democratic countries in a fight against dictators than they were by the issues with which we were faced in 1914.

The First Lord was afraid that even if a solution of the present problem was found, it would not be the end of our troubles, and that there was no chance of peace in Europe so long as there was a Nazi regime in Germany.
He was afraid that Germany might make some attempt on our Colonial Empire, and that on such an issue neither France nor the United States would rally to our help. He saw no prospect that we should be able to increase the tempo of our re-armament, owing to the financial situation.

He hoped that when the Prime Minister saw Herr Hitler again next week he would make it clear that we were only prepared to agree to a plebiscite provided certain conditions were accepted.

Hitherto, the First Lord said, the arguments on which he had relied had run counter to the line of action proposed by the Prime Minister. But a war in modern conditions was a terrible affair, and no government was in a position to forecast the future with certainty. While, therefore, he was afraid that although we might avoid war now we might only be putting off the evil day, there was the chance that some unforeseen event might upset the rule of the Nazi party. That chance, he thought, was worth taking.

If, however, we were to act on this course, he thought we should decide that the Government was prepared to accept the principle of self-determination as the basis of negotiation, but that the question of how it should be applied in the present abnormal circumstances should be the subject of careful enquiry. That was as far as he thought we ought to go.
THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that he thought most of his colleagues would feel the force of what the First Lord had said. He doubted, however, whether there was any essential difference between his opinion and the Prime Minister's. (The First Lord said that he hoped that this was so).

Continuing, Sir Thomas Inskip said that we must face the facts of the situation. It was not a question of fighting a war to preserve Czechoslovakia— that we could not hope to achieve—but of fighting a war to check Herr Hitler. Such a war would cause immense suffering and damage, and while it might destroy Hitler it would almost certainly destroy a great deal more. The result might be changes in the state of Europe which would be satisfactory to no one except Moscow and the Bolsheviks. Though the decision was a difficult one, he felt no doubt in his own mind what the decision would be and he agreed with the Prime Minister.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he would prefer some solution other than a plebiscite. It must be remembered that the Czechoslovaks had missed many opportunities through lack of statesmanship, especially in the last few months. Their treatment of minorities left much to be desired. In recent months M. Benes had had opportunities to stave off
the demands of the Sudeten Germans; but he had always procrastinated and been too late. The people of this country would be overwhelmingly in favour of a plebiscite rather than a war. He therefore favoured acceptance of the principle of self-determination. Nevertheless, it was clear that this decision would put us into a possible dilemma. The Prime Minister had said that Herr Hitler would take some violent action if we started to lay down the conditions. If, therefore, we were to deal satisfactorily with Herr Hitler we must accept the principle of self-determination unconditionally and talk about conditions later. From the point of view of our own people this was a difficult position to sustain. He asked whether it was possible to say to Herr Hitler that we accepted self-determination but that we of course would want to sit down with him and work out details so as to ensure the proper implementation of the principle. That, he thought, would leave us with an adequate defence. He thought that it was quite likely that we should obtain a reasonable settlement with Herr Hitler, and in this event the Government would have the overwhelming support of this country. Nevertheless, he anticipated difficulties with France and with the Czechoslovak Government. The latter difficulty might be overcome if we were prepared to give Czechoslovakia a guarantee.
THE HOME SECRETARY said that he had for some time felt that a guarantee was the key to the position. It was important, however, to see that Herr Hitler did not gain everything he wanted without making some concession, and it was very desirable to obtain some quid pro quo from him in the negotiations. He felt quite sure that, apart from the decision to be reached by the Cabinet, self-determination had already started in Czecho-Slovakia. The Czech Government had really lost the Sudeten Germans and till that fact was recognised there would be no peace in Europe.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that Herr Hitler was determined to incorporate the Sudeten Germans in the Reich and that it was impossible to prevent him from doing so. The real question was whether he should do so peacefully or by force. He did not doubt that the former was the better alternative. At the same time he was anxious not to say that we were actuated solely by the principle of self-determination. Were we to do so the Indian Congress Party would not be slow to take advantage of such a declaration on our part.

The Secretary of State for India referred to the appalling results which would follow from a world war. This would bring about the destruction
of the present world order and the emergence of something which might approximate to the ideals of those who controlled the destiny of Russia. He also referred to a number of circumstances which would make war extremely difficult for us at the present time. Italy would be likely to come in against us and we should have to supply forces in the Mediterranean. Owing to recent changes in the British Army in India there were now 12,000 fewer troops in India than in 1914 and it would be difficult to call upon India for reinforcements. Further, Moslem opinion was becoming more and more exercised about the position in Palestine and we should probably require to retain in India all the troops which were now there. If there was no alternative between force and self-determination he would prefer acceptance of the latter.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND said that the vast majority of people would prefer a plebiscite to war, but the method of holding a plebiscite so as to ensure fair treatment was of great importance. We could not urge the French to fight a war so as to prevent the application of the principle of self-determination. He was much impressed by the fact that in the Prime Minister's view Herr Hitler had limited objectives. He trusted that some limitation of armaments might follow the present negotiations.
THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that it was impossible to object to the principle of self-determination. Nevertheless, in present circumstances he thought that it was almost impossible to make the concessions asked for. These concessions would be unfair to the Czechs and dishonourable to ourselves, after all that we had done in the last few months. He thought it was wrong to assume that there were no other courses open to us than war or complete surrender. He asked whether we had ever placed ourselves in such a humiliating position as to negotiate with a country which had a million and a half men under arms. The third alternative which he suggested was that we should obtain peace with honour, and if that was unobtainable, we must face the possibility of war. Unless we did this, whenever Herr Hitler threatened the world, we should have to concede what he asked for. He suggested that we should say that we accepted the principle of self-determination, but that we would not enter into negotiations (or, perhaps, that we would not agree to the Plebiscite being held) until the German Army had been demobilised. No one was particularly anxious to embark on war on behalf of Czechoslovakia; but he for his part was prepared to face war in order to free the world from the continual threat of ultimatums.

If we took any steps which meant that the Czechoslovakian Government lost their present frontiers, we must be prepared to give that country a guarantee.
Up to the present time neither the Sudeten Germans nor Germany had made any concessions. They must be prepared to make some concession if we were to reach an honourable settlement. If, on the other hand, we reached a settlement which looked like a surrender to force, it was doubtful whether the Government could carry this policy in the House of Commons or in the country, and we should do irreparable damage to our prestige. His main point was that if we took a decision to accept Herr Hitler's terms without obtaining a quid pro quo, that would represent an abject surrender.

The Lord President of the Council said that the Government had decided some time back that they would not fight for Czechoslovakia, but that they would go to France's assistance, if France were threatened. That attitude should influence the Cabinet's decision today. If France was not prepared to fight Hitler to prevent the Sudeten Germans entering the Reich, there was nothing which we could do, or should be called upon to do.

It was in our interests to prevent any single power dominating Europe; but that had come to pass, and he thought we had no alternative but to submit to what the Lord Privy Seal regarded as humiliation. In his view we should accept the position laid down by the Prime Minister, that we should try to negotiate the best terms obtainable. We must obtain a decision from France whereby that country would put the maximum pressure on M. Benes.
THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER said that he was profoundly disturbed by the Lord President of the Council's remarks. He thought the Lord President's arguments could equally be used to justify acquiescence in the invasion of Kent or the surrender of the Isle of Wight. It must be remembered that not only had Herr Hitler asked for the return of the German colonies two years ago, but that even before the war Germany had been dissatisfied at the extent of her colonial empire.

It was true that there was no profit in war, but sometimes war had to be faced, since otherwise the alternative was to become a vassal state. In his opinion the issue now before the Cabinet raised the same issue as had been raised in 1914, when Belgium had been invaded. There was hard fibre in the British people which did not like to be told that, unless they acquiesced in certain things, it was all up with them.

Looking at the matter from the Parliamentary point of view, he strongly hoped that the action agreed upon would not be represented as a pure surrender to force. At the time of Mr. Eden's resignation, it had been stated that Mr. Eden had left the Government because it had yielded to a threat of force, and nothing had been more effective than the Prime Minister's statement that this was not the case. If Germany continued to keep her troops mobilised, then our action would be represented as a surrender. It was essential that Germany should make some concession. For example, he would like to see the date of the Plebiscite postponed. He agreed with what the Home Secretary had said about the need for a guarantee.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said he hoped the Cabinet would realise the immense strain on the Prime Minister in negotiating for hours with Herr Hitler. The two colleagues who had spoken last differed as to the weight which should be given to the several realistic arguments which might be marshalled in this matter. He felt the extreme difficulty of weighing properly the arguments produced by the Lord Privy Seal with those advanced by the Lord President of the Council.

He rather shared the views of the Secretary of State for India that it was undesirable to burn too much incense on the altar of self-determination. The most which he was prepared to say on the matter was that it was impossible to lead this country into a war against this principle.

He asked himself, was it possible to give the ordinary man any reason to hope that in future, when the present affair had been dealt with, the temptation to aggression would be lessened, and there would be foundations for some better understanding between the countries? He agreed that the present affair contained an element of German blackmail but this should not blind us to other considerations. The Czechoslovak problem must be looked at in its setting as a problem which was a thousand years old, and which happened to have become active at the present time under the guise of a Dictator's blackmail. He compared this problem again to the stresses and strains at work below the crust of the earth, which would result in an explosion
unless some relief were given. This led him to the view that unless these peoples could be separated and divided up, the problem would never be solved except by war.

Many people talked of the provision in Articles XIX of the Covenant for the revision of boundaries, but such revision could only be carried out in one of three ways - by consent; by the threat of war; or by war. It was obvious that all Europe was at fault for not having faced these problems in the last few years and obtained settlements by consent. His conclusions were fortified by Lord Runciman's view that no local solution was possible. If the alternative to acceptance of the Prime Minister's proposal was war, then, he asked himself, what was the ultimate justification for war? In his view, he would fight for the great moralities which knew no geographical boundaries. But there was no greater urge to fight for Czechoslovakia than to fight Japan because of the bombing of civilians in Canton. If the matter was looked at from the point of view of self interest, he would distinguish between the attack on Czechoslovakia and an attack, say, on the Isle of Wight.

As regards the view that if we did not have war now we should have it later on, that was really the argument for a preventive war. It was, however, impossible to forecast the future. Moreover, the theory of a preventive war meant that we should have a bad war every 20 years, in order to prevent a war from occurring five years later. He had no doubt that if we were involved in war now we should win it after a long time, but he could not feel we
were justified in embarking on action which would result in such untold suffering.

To sum up his views, the Foreign Secretary thought that we should accept the principle of the transfer of these peoples, but he thought that we should first do all we could to restrain aggression and to get Herr Hitler to say publicly that he would be satisfied when he had obtained self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. Secondly, that we should obtain the best possible conditions of transfer. He rather doubted whether it would be desirable to postpone the transfer for long, since the intervening period would be too dangerous. The transfer could not of course be effected at lightning speed. He hoped that the Prime Minister would succeed in obtaining these conditions.

As regards procedure it was very important that we should avoid allowing the French to say that they came to London and found that we had decided to give the show away. His principal anxiety concerned the position in Czechoslovakia. He thought we should increase the number of our observers there and do all we could to assist in keeping order.

As regards a guarantee, he disliked the idea, but thought we should very likely have to concede it when the time came.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER suggested that in considering any guarantee to Czechoslovakia, that we must be careful about the area whose integrity we guaranteed. We must bear in mind the possibility that the Hungarians and Poles in Czechoslovakia would also demand a Plebiscite.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS concurred.
THE MINISTER OF LABOUR said that he hoped this matter would not be discussed on the basis that our honour was involved in maintaining the existing boundaries of the Czechoslovak state. The present dispute was a very old one. It was true that we had several times yielded to force in recent years, but the root fault was that the League of Nations had not been used as a basis for peaceful change. He thought that the Prime Minister's personal visit to Herr Hitler had had enormous advantages. He had studied Herr Hitler's character as portrayed in numerous books about him, and had reached the conclusion that Herr Hitler combined an inflammatory temper with a cool, clear brain in regard to certain simple objectives. He referred to the various coups which Herr Hitler had carried out, and pointed out that in future, with the exception of the Polish Corridor, his problems did not relate to territories contiguous to his own boundaries.

No doubt we were in a very difficult position in that we were faced with constant demands backed by marching men. But his own view was quite plain, namely, that we must accept the Prime Minister's proposal, provided that we endeavoured to secure satisfactory conditions for the plebiscite.
There were, of course, certain things for which we would fight, and if necessary go down, rather than yield on, but in his view this was not such a case. It would be necessary to have a far more clearly-cut issue before we embarked on war. He was sure the Prime Minister would have the backing of all his colleagues. The Prime Minister's endeavours to obtain a peaceful settlement had the almost desperate goodwill of the whole world.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that he did not agree with much that had been said by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Labour. Like the First Lord of the Admiralty, he regarded this question as almost as direct an attack upon us as, say, an attack on the Isle of Wight. This was not the last of Herr Hitler's coups. The present Nazi regime could not exist without coups. If the choice for the Government in the next few days was between surrender and fighting, we ought to fight. His view was that the present was a better rather than a worse time to fight; if the Government found themselves discussing issues of peace or war six months or a year hence on some such issue as the Polish Corridor, or Memel, or the Colonies, the same points would arise. By then, Germany's difficulties would have largely disappeared. If it was a choice between surrender and fighting he would choose the latter, provided we were supported by France. We must be prepared to tell France that, unless terms could be devised which did not represent a mere surrender, we should support her.

Continuing, the President of the Board of Trade said that he did not think that this issue had yet arisen. He was rather less hopeful now than he had been before the Berchtesgaden interview, and felt that we were virtually faced with an ultimatum.
Some people would say that even acceptance of the principle of the plebiscite would be regarded as a surrender but he did not take that view. He thought that there were grounds which justified the acceptance of the principle of the plebiscite.

Acceptance of the principle of the plebiscite was all that the Prime Minister now asked for; but he asked whether it was fair to the Prime Minister to leave matters in this position. For example, while he (the President of the Board of Trade) would be satisfied with a plebiscite carried out under reasonable conditions, he would regard a plebiscite taking place under the guns of an armed force of 1½ million men as a surrender. There was every possible gradation between these two extremes. He thought that several other Ministers shared his view and were ready to say that they were prepared to accept certain proposals for a plebiscite but that they could not accept others.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE pointed out that the Prime Minister had felt it impossible to mention conditions at his interview with Herr Hitler, but that at the second meeting he would have to start negotiating conditions. He thought that the Cabinet should make certain, before the Prime Minister resumed the negotiations, that he knew what conditions his colleagues would regard as acceptable. He suggested that, whilst the French negotiations were being conducted, the Cabinet, or a Committee of the Cabinet, should discuss this vital matter of conditions.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION said that he could not regard the question of the Sudeten Germans as an issue which affected the vital interests of this country in the same way regardless whether the date of Light had not. He thought that many of should be taken on the fact that the demand had come from the Sudeten Germans would not be satisfied with anything less than self-determination.
M. Benes had missed his opportunities so often that separation was now inevitable. There was no reason why the Prime Minister should not discuss with Herr Hitler the conditions on which the plebiscite should be held. The problem of maintaining law and order during the plebiscite was the most difficult one we had to face and must directly affect the conditions which could be obtained.

The Minister of Transport said that Great Britain and Germany were the two greatest Powers to-day and Germany was greater than Herr Hitler. It was impossible to keep down a country of 70 million people. He thought that the present negotiations marked the beginning of a new era which would result in Anglo-German understanding. He favoured the resumption of negotiations on the basis of the acceptance of a plebiscite, with a view to the negotiation of satisfactory conditions. He had no hesitation in supporting the course proposed by the Prime Minister.

The Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries thought the future was dark. If a settlement on the basis of self-determination was proposed he thought that we could not oppose such a settlement by war. To the question posed in this way there could in his view be only one answer. The country would be wholeheartedly behind the course of action proposed by the Prime Minister.

Neither in his Nuremberg Speech nor in his conversations with the Prime Minister had Herr Hitler used the word "plebiscite". There must be some reason for this. Was it that he hoped to secure that there was no bar to the cession of these territories without a plebiscite? Or was it that he was not satisfied with a plebiscite that was
the only way out, and that he might possibly be satisfied with some cantonal solution. Owing to their distressed economic position the Sudeten areas were not a prize to covet. He did not feel to the same extent as some of his colleagues, that our honour was implicated in the dispute. We had been careful never to commit ourselves to take action in the event of a dispute over Czechoslovakia. The wisdom of this course was now evident and we should act upon it. It would be very rash to intrude the Empire into a quarrel which was not our own affair. He was quite clear in his own mind as to what our attitude should be. If France were drawn in then our interests were involved, but otherwise we should not allow ourselves to become involved.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH said that he had listened with great attention to the Foreign Secretary’s remarks, and was not disappointed by the persuasive way in which he had stated his case. Nevertheless, the arguments used led him to fear that we might be cloaking our real motives.

If in the course of the negotiations we were faced with the alternatives of surrender or war, we must choose the latter. He thought that we should accept self-determination as the basis on which to open negotiations, and that if we could induce Herr Hitler to produce some military détente we might reach a satisfactory position. If not, we should revert to some of the plans which had been brought forward to improve our military position, such as the mobilisation of the Fleet. Herr Hitler could not object to this, as we could say that as he would not step down from his preparations, which were greater than ours, we should have to increase our own. If we did not
take such action, he thought that Parliament would become highly critical, on the grounds that we had taken no steps to convince Herr Hitler that there was a point at which we should withstand him. If we were faced with an intolerable demand, it was our duty to oppose such a demand by war.

He was all in favour of increasing the number of Observers in Czechoslovakia. Such a measure would be very valuable.

By force of circumstances we had been forced into this question and had been obliged to take a leading part. Our prestige was now deeply involved. Nor could we withdraw without breaking the national front, which was perhaps our greatest asset at the present time. Even the extreme Left were fully in accord with the action which we had taken.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that we were never committed to go to war on account of Czechoslovakia, but we would have to go to war if France became involved. That, however, was quite a separate question from the merits of the present proposal. He thought that we should accept the present proposal, provided that we could ensure that the transfer of population was carried out under reasonable conditions. He thought that we should agree to the transfer of the peoples who wished to be incorporated in the Reich, provided that we were not irretrievably committed to some particular method.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that he supported the action proposed by the Prime Minister. He did not think that the nation would support any action which would involve us in war in order to prevent the principle of determination. It would, of course, be
necessary that reasonable conditions for a Plebiscite should be laid down. He thought that it was very necessary that we should look ahead and consider the position vis-a-vis public opinion at home and abroad in regard to the decision now to be taken. It was very desirable that we should enter into discussions with the French Government in this matter, but as soon as the French Government was informed, the position would become known and there might be an insistent demand to recall Parliament. The view might be taken that, if Parliament was not recalled now, we should be hopelessly committed before Parliament had any chance of expressing its views in the matter.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that there was almost no length to which he would not go to avoid war. The Lord President of the Council had said that we should submit to a humiliation; and he thought that this represented the position. He reminded the Cabinet that at Wednesday's meeting he had said that it was of the utmost importance that we should not offend France. He hoped we had not done so. We were in danger of being accused of truckling to Dictators, and offending our best friends. He thought we should make it plain to France that we would fight rather than agree to an abject surrender, and that we should support the French rather than attempt to put a brake upon their actions.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that his colleagues had accepted the principle of self-determination, and had given him the support he had asked for; he was most grateful to them. One course would be for him to say no more, and leave it at that; but he thought that perhaps he had better say something in regard to the views that had been expressed.

He had been somewhat surprised at the First Lord's conclusion, as from his opening remarks he thought he was going to say that we must now stand and fight. It was not until the Lord Privy Seal's speech that any of his colleagues had contemplated actual hostilities. He (the Prime Minister) recognised that in certain circumstances we should have to fight, even if our armaments were weaker than they were. But in modern circumstances war was very different from what it was in 1914. To-day war affected the whole population. He wished he could show his colleagues some of the many letters which he had received in the last few days, which showed the intense feeling of relief throughout the country, and of thankfulness and gratitude for the load which had been lifted, at least temporarily.

If at any time we were convinced that some vital British interest was at stake, then, of course, we should have to go through with it; but we should have to be very fully satisfied that this was the case. The alternatives to-day were not between abject surrender and war. Acceptance of the principle of self-determination was not an abject surrender.
In the account of his conversations with Herr Hitler he could not repeat every word which had passed. No doubt it might be thought that at a particular moment he should have used some rather different language, but in a single-handed conversation it was necessary to act quickly. Also, he had been actuated by the desire not to say something which would force Herr Hitler to commit himself to something to which he had not committed himself already. For this reason he had not asked Herr Hitler whether he thought that any other solution would be preferable.

We had agreed to accept the principle of self-determination and had thus secured the only condition on which negotiations could be carried on. But that of course did not mean that we should give Herr Hitler a free hand.

The comment made by the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, on the fact that the word "plebiscite" had not been mentioned, was quite just. It might be that we should find that Herr Hitler said that he did not want to have any vote. On the other hand, he might demand an immediate plebiscite.

The Prime Minister said that it had never entered his head that he should go to Germany and say to Herr Hitler that he could have self-determination on any terms he wanted. He would not assent to any such agreement.

If, as had been suggested, he were to say now to Herr Hitler that he would not return unless Germany demobilised, the only result would be that Herr Hitler would order
his troops to march straight into Czechoslovakia. We might not like that position, but there it was. If our rearmament programme had not progressed so far as it had, it would have been impossible for him (the Prime Minister) to have faced Herr Hitler at all. It was only the fact that we had increased our strength and were now a formidable Power that enabled us to speak with any influence. The Prime Minister emphasised that the acceptance by the Cabinet of self-determination in principle did not mean any more than it said.

The Prime Minister referred to recent telegrams from Czechoslovakia which showed that opinion was hardening against self-determination. This might result in precipitate action by Herr Hitler which we should not be able to stop. The Prime Minister recognised that an attempt by Herr Hitler to force the issue of self-determination without proper arrangements was not a transaction with which we should care to be associated. Nevertheless, he rather deprecated any attempt to tie his hands too closely by fixing precise limits beyond which he should not go, when he resumed the negotiations.

Another possibility, which he hoped would prove correct, was that, if we now accepted the principle of self-determination, Herr Hitler would feel himself to some extent committed to an orderly carrying-out of the principle.
When the negotiations came to the question of procedure, it would be necessary to provide conditions which would enable law and order to be preserved. That would prove a very difficult matter.

Further, there still remained the question whether it was possible to make the change any less unpalatable to the Czechoslovakians. More than one minister had said that we should have to give them a guarantee. On this he agreed with the Foreign Secretary. He disliked the proposal, as it involved a commitment in a distant country; a commitment, moreover, which we could not carry out effectively. Its value would lie in its deterrent effect. He thought, therefore, we could not exclude the possibility of giving a guarantee, for which a good deal of support had been forthcoming at this meeting. The matter would, of course, have to be considered when the time came. He had not proposed to make any suggestion about a guarantee to Herr Hitler, at any rate at the present time. Our next step would be to have discussions with the French.

After some further discussion it was agreed that, while the Cabinet was in general agreement with the views expressed by the Prime Minister, it was undesirable to record any conclusion until discussions with the French Government had taken place.

It was also agreed that the Cabinet should hold themselves available for a meeting at, say, two hours' notice. Owing to the discussions with the French, which the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs informed the Cabinet were due to start at 11.0 a.m. on Sunday morning, no meeting would be held on Sunday morning, and it was unlikely that any further meeting of the Cabinet would be necessary until Monday morning.
The Prime Minister mentioned that he was seeing Mr. Herbert Morrison, M.P., Dr. Hugh Dalton, M.P. and Sir Walter Citrine that evening. He proposed to inform them of the upshot of his discussion with Herr Hitler; he thought that he might ask them whether they thought the country would be prepared to go to war to prevent the application of the principle of self-determination. He would not, of course, inform them of the general sense of the discussion which they had had in the Cabinet.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES mentioned the question of communication with the Dominions, and it was agreed that a telegram should be despatched after consultation between the Foreign Office, the Dominions Office and the Prime Minister's Secretariat.

It was also agreed that consideration of any further defence precautions, e.g. naval mobilisation, should stand over for the present.

CONCLUSIONS

THE CABINET agreed —

(1) To postpone recording any Conclusion on the report made by the Prime Minister on his visit to Herr Hitler until discussions with the French Government had taken place,

(2) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should invite representatives of the French Government to come over to this country as soon as possible for discussion.

(3) That the discussions with the French should be conducted on the basis that we should endeavour to reach a joint decision with the French Government.

Richmond Terrace,
Whitehall, S.W.1.
17th September, 1938.
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.
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.

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P.,
Prime Minister.

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

The Right Hon. Lord Maugham,
Lord Chancellor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Right Hon. E.H. Burghin, M.P.,
Minister of Transport.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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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.
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 Czecho-slovak 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 Czecho-slovakia 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 Czecho-slovakia. 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 Czecho-slovakia.
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 Beneš 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.
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 5 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 propose 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.

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.
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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.

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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.
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:—

(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.

(Previous reference: Cabinet 39 (39), Conclusion (i)).
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.
CABINET 41 (38)

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on WEDNESDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 3.0 p.m.

AGENDUM:

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: CENTRAL EUROPE: CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

(Reference Cabinet 40 (38))

Statement by the Prime Minister.

(Signed)  E.E. BRIDGES

Secretary to the Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

31st September, 1938.
SECRET.

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Wednesday, 21st September, 1938, at 2.0 p.m.

PRESENT:-

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.
Lord Maugham,
Lord Chancellor.

The Right Hon.
The Viscount Halifax, K.G.,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C. ........................................Secretary.
THE PRIME MINISTER asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to give a résumé of events during the last two days.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS reminded his colleagues that, when the Cabinet had met on Monday, they had been waiting for the reply from the Czechoslovak Government.

On Tuesday morning an unofficial statement had been issued to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government proposed to accept the joint British and French proposals. Messages received from Paris at about the same time indicated that considerable pressure was being brought to bear on the French Government, whose position had appeared somewhat insecure.

No definite answer was received from Czechoslovakia until late on Tuesday evening. About half-past ten he had received from our Minister at Prague a short résumé of the Czechoslovak Government's reply (see telegram No. 664 from Prague).

A little earlier a communication had been received from the French Ambassador to the effect that there was a further concentration of German troops on the Czechoslovak frontier. The French were greatly concerned at this news, and thought that it would be difficult for them to maintain their advice to the Czechoslovak Government not to mobilise, unless at the same time we continued to put great pressure on Dr. Benes to accept the joint French and British proposals.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that late on Tuesday night, after consultation
with the Prime Minister, he had sent a further telegram to Prague (No. 315) urging the Czechoslovak Government to reconsider their attitude. The concluding paragraph of this telegram had been to the effect that if, on reconsideration, the Czech Government felt bound to reject our advice, they must of course be free to take any action they thought appropriate to meet the situation that might thereafter develop.

Telegram No. 670 had now been received from Prague. This telegram contained a personal and preliminary message from Dr. Hodza's Private Secretary to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government accepted the French and British proposals and that an official reply would be sent as soon as possible.

In the meantime, we were running a considerable risk that the situation would get out of hand, if steps were not taken to confirm the date for the resumption of the Prime Minister's conversations with Herr Hitler. On Tuesday, the German Government had become somewhat restive as to the failure to fix the date and time for the Prime Minister's return. Sir Nevile Henderson had reported that the position might get out of hand unless the date of the Prime Minister's visit was definitely fixed. He had temporised for half a day, but Sir Nevile Henderson had returned to the charge and had stated that Herr Hitler had made arrangements to go from Berchtesgaden to Bad Godesberg and wanted early confirmation of the arrangements. Herr Hitler had proposed that the meeting should be definitely fixed for Thursday morning.
It had been felt that the situation made it necessary to fix a definite date, and a message had therefore been sent late on Tuesday agreeing to the resumption of the conversations on Thursday. This had involved some risk, in view of the uncertainty as to the attitude of the Czechoslovak Government. But the position in this respect was somewhat eased by recent telegrams from Prague.

In reply to the Secretary of State for Air, the Foreign Secretary said that he had received a visit from the Hungarian Minister last night on the subject of minorities. The Hungarian Minister had said that Hungary’s claim was overwhelming, and that they had behaved with great moderation, for which they should not be penalised.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had replied on the lines that His Majesty’s Government were at present engrossed in other problems. That, however, did not mean that any claim which the Hungarians might make would not be given due consideration, if it were raised at the appropriate time. For the time being he took note of the Hungarian Minister’s statement (See telegram No.67 to Budapest).

The Polish Minister was coming to see him that evening in regard to the Polish claim, and he proposed to reply on the same lines. It was noticeable that the Poles were somewhat more truculent, and that statements had been made to the effect that, unless their claim for the return of Teschen was immediately recognised, their relations with the Czechoslovak Government would become strained.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had nothing to add to the Secretary of State’s resume of events, except
perhaps to call attention to telegram No. 668 from Prague, which indicated that the Czechoslovak Government hardly anticipated that their first answer to the French and British proposals would be accepted, and expected that further pressure would be brought to bear upon them.

There were certain matters which were likely to arise at an early stage of his conversation with Herr Hitler, and he welcomed the opportunity of discussing them with his colleagues.

The question of minorities in Czechoslovakia, other than the Sudeten Germans, had been mentioned in his first talk with Herr Hitler, and the latter had said that he was not interested in them. If Herr Hitler maintained that attitude, these minorities should not present any immediate difficulty. But representatives of Hungary and Poland had both visited Berchtesgaden in the last few days, and we had no very precise account of what had passed. It was possible that Herr Hitler would now say that, since his first meeting with the Prime Minister, he had been approached by these other two countries; that their position in regard to minorities was the same as Germany's; and that he could not reach a settlement on the Sudeten German question unless the position of the Hungarian and Polish minorities in Czechoslovakia was also settled. He did not think that Herr Hitler was likely to take up this attitude. Nevertheless, he had to consider what answer should be made to such a demand.
The Prime Minister said that, if Herr Hitler made any such demand, he proposed to say that it was inconsistent with what the Führer had said to him at his first interview, when he had asked him (the Prime Minister) to deal with the particular problem of the Sudeten Germans. His attitude would be that the settlement of the Sudeten German question could not be made dependent upon the settlement of other quite different questions which did not concern Herr Hitler. If Herr Hitler still adhered to the attitude that he must have an immediate settlement of the Hungarian and Polish Minority questions the Prime Minister proposed to say that he was unable to proceed further on the matter, and must return home to consult his colleagues.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS thought that this issue would be a test of Herr Hitler's sincerity. He thought that the Prime Minister should stand firm by the line of action which he proposed.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he would like to make quite clear what he meant by giving consideration, at a later date, to the claims on behalf of the Hungarian and Polish Minorities. The claims on behalf of these Minorities involved the revision of the Treaties concerned, and Article 19 of the Covenant made provision for such revision. There was a good deal to be said for the revision of the Treaties by proper methods, provided it was not linked up with threats. He agreed that the Prime Minister should refuse to yield to pressure from Herr Hitler to agree to an immediate settlement of these other Minority questions.
The question of Minorities was also linked up with our proposed guarantee. In guaranteeing the boundaries of Czechoslovakia the Foreign Secretary said that he did not preclude consideration of the revision of those boundaries in a proper manner. The guarantee was directed against unprovoked aggression.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he was in agreement with the Home Secretary. He thought that, if Herr Hitler pressed for an immediate settlement of these claims, it would show that his interests lay, not in the German race, but in an attempt to dominate Europe.

In the course of discussion, general agreement was expressed with these views.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that he had very little sympathy with the claims now being put forward by Hungary and Poland. Before the war no nation had treated their Minorities worse than the Magyars and since the war none had treated their Minorities worse than the Poles.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he agreed with the views expressed by his colleagues. When he said that if Herr Hitler persisted in the line suggested, he would find it necessary to consult his colleagues, he had in mind that circumstances might arise, such as the necessity for giving a warning in Prague, which might make it necessary for him to play for time.

The Cabinet agreed with the course proposed by the Prime Minister.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that there were two main questions to be considered in regard to the proposed guarantee. First, should the guarantee be joint or several? Secondly, which Powers should be guarantors?

In regard to the first question, examination only strengthened the case against a several guarantee. Every nation, except ourselves, might run out and leave us to bear the whole burden. The guarantee was against "unprovoked aggression". Who was to determine whether a particular case constituted "unprovoked aggression"?

If each of the guarantor Powers was to decide this question for itself, then each of the guarantor Powers would in effect have the right to determine whether the guarantee operated in a particular case.

It was therefore felt that the right plan was to have a joint guarantee, and to provide for a meeting of the guarantors to decide in any particular case whether "unprovoked aggression" had taken place.

The inclusion in the guarantee of a provision on those lines had a considerable bearing on the question of which Powers should become guarantors. The idea first put forward had been that Germany should be one of the joint guarantors; but if that course were adopted, and if Germany took the view that in a particular case the aggression had been provoked, this would enable her to exercise a free veto on the operation of the joint guarantee, and to make it ineffective. We did not, however, wish to leave Germany out of the picture, and it was therefore proposed to invite Germany to sign a separate pact of non-aggression with Czechoslovakia.
Germany being thus excluded from the joint guarantee, what other Powers remained? It was proposed that the joint guarantors should consist of France, ourselves and Russia. The Prime Minister referred, in this connection, to the provision in paragraph 6 of the joint message from the French and British Governments (Telegram No. 500) to the effect that it was proposed to substitute a general guarantee against unprovoked aggression in place of existing Treaties which involved reciprocal obligations of a military character. The Treaties between France and Czechoslovakia and between Russia and Czechoslovakia both involved reciprocal obligations, and it was proposed that the French should invite Russia to follow France's example and to modify her Treaty with Czechoslovakia to conform with the arrangement now proposed. It was possible that Russia might refuse to agree to this arrangement, but she should be invited to do so.

What attitude would Herr Hitler take to the proposal that these three Powers should be joint guarantors? He had said that he regarded Czechoslovakia as a spearhead in German territory. It was a fair answer to this to say that in future Czechoslovakia would not be entitled to sign any Treaties with reciprocal military obligations. The Prime Minister asked, however, what line he should take if Herr Hitler objected to Russia guaranteeing Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression. So far as he could see, such a guarantee was unobjectionable from Herr Hitler's point of view, unless he intended to commit an act of unprovoked aggression against Czechoslovakia and wished to destroy it.
The Prime Minister therefore proposed that if Herr Hitler raised objection to Russia being one of the joint guarantors he should refer the matter to the Cabinet before reaching a decision.

The Prime Minister next dealt with the possibility of other Powers being guarantors. For many reasons he would have liked to have included Italy. The Berlin-Rome axis might not always be as strong as it was to-day. Again, it must be remembered that we were dealing with individuals whose actions were affected by various motives; and for many reasons it might have been helpful to have brought Signor Mussolini into the picture. But the same reasons which told against the inclusion of Germany in the joint guarantee were in his view decisive against the inclusion of Italy.

The inclusion of other neighbouring Powers had also been considered, for example, Poland, Hungary and Roumania. There was something to be said for the inclusion of these Powers but, having regard to their minority questions, their inclusion in the present guarantee must, he thought, be ruled out.

The Prime Minister therefore proposed that the joint guarantors should be France, this country and Russia, if she was willing, and that Germany should be invited to sign a separate pact of non-aggression with Czechoslovakia.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought it might be desirable to consider two further questions. First, whether it was desirable to include Yugoslavia and Roumania. These countries had no minority
questions which directly affected Czechoslovakia. Their inclusion was, however, open to the disadvantage that, the larger the number of Powers included, the less effective an instrument the joint guarantee might become.

The second point was whether it was possible, while not including Italy in the position of one of the joint guarantors, to include her in some secondary capacity, so as not to leave her out of the picture altogether.

In the course of the discussion which ensued there was general agreement in favour of including Russia as a guarantor.

THE HOME SECRETARY pointed out that, if the guarantee had to be implemented, Russia might provide useful help, that it was a mistake to take action which tended to put Russia out of Europe and that the inclusion of Russia would be helpful from the point of view of certain sections of public opinion in this country.

On the free veto point the LORD CHANCELLOR pointed out that a joint guarantee could be drafted in such terms that, if one of the joint guarantors committed an act of aggression, the remaining Powers should act as though the Power which had committed the aggression was not a guarantor, i.e. the vote of the aggressor Power would be disregarded.
It was pointed out, however, that the act of aggression might be committed, not by Germany, but by some other Power, say Hungary, and that Germany might take the view that Hungary's action did not constitute unprovoked aggression. To meet a contingency of this kind it was suggested that provision might be made for majority decisions. Circumstances might, however, arise in which such a provision would operate against this country; that is to say, that this country might find itself in the minority, out-voted by the votes of other countries. It was impossible for this country to put itself in a position in which we should not have the last word on the issues of peace and war.

It was also pointed out that, in the event of aggression by Germany against Czechoslovakia, France, Russia and this country were the three countries which could most effectively put a curb on Germany's ambitions, and that there was therefore much to be said for having these three Powers only as joint guarantors.

As regards the argument that Germany might think that some slur was put upon her by failure to include her as a guarantor, it was pointed out that there was almost certainly no prospect of persuading Germany to sign a document which was also signed by Russia. Germany's dislike of multilateral pacts was also referred to.
Some discussion took place on the Foreign Secretary's suggestion that some of the minor Powers should be included as guarantors, say, Yugoslavia and Roumania.

Reference was made to the existing obligations between the Little Entente Powers. It was felt that this was a matter which those Powers should settle among themselves and that it need not be brought up in the discussions with Herr Hitler.

The view was also expressed that any attempt to include Italy with some of the minor Powers, such as Yugoslavia and Roumania, would be resented by Italy.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, while agreeing with the desirability of including some of the limitrophe Powers in the joint guarantee, thought that it would be impossible to bring this about until the question of their minorities in Czechoslovakia had been settled.

After further discussion it was agreed that the Prime Minister should proceed on the general basis proposed, that is to say, that France, Russia and Great Britain should be joint guarantors, and that Germany should be invited to sign a separate pact of non-aggression.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought that he might be faced with an immediate difficulty in regard to the arrangements for maintaining law and order in the period which would elapse until the new boundary had been defined. He thought that Herr Hitler would very likely say that it would take some time to carry out the steps proposed in the French and British proposals and that, meanwhile, law and order must be maintained. He would almost certainly demand the immediate withdrawal from the predominantly German districts of the Czech military forces and the Czech State Police. It was true that there was also local Gendarmerie, but would they be able to keep order? If not, what other arrangements could be made?

The Prime Minister said that much thought had been devoted to this question. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin, who probably had more knowledge of the local conditions than any other person in this country, thought that Herr Hitler's intention was to march his troops into the German areas immediately, in order to keep order. There were obvious political difficulties to this course, but there was a good deal to be said on practical grounds for allowing the occupation at an early date by regular German troops of those areas in which the German inhabitants constituted a very large majority, separate treatment being accorded to the other Sudeten German districts. A telegram had been despatched to Dr. Benes asking for his views as to the best method of maintaining order, assuming that the Czech soldiers and State Police were withdrawn, but making no positive suggestions. There was a good deal of evidence for the view that the State Police had acted...
harshly and were personally very unpopular. It would, of course, be an essential condition of any arrangement whereby certain of the Sudeten areas were occupied by German troops that Dr. Benes should concur in the step proposed. But it was not impossible that he would prefer occupation by German troops to occupation by Herr Henlein's Freikorps, who were undisciplined and much more likely to act harshly. The scheme outlined also presupposed that both Herr Hitler and Dr. Benes should issue a declaration emphasising the need for taking steps to keep order and to improve the atmosphere.

There were other areas where the Prime Minister thought that occupation by German troops could not be contemplated. Thus there were certain areas which included industrial centres, and were racially mixed. In these industrial centres there were considerable numbers of Czech workers who held Left views and were inclined to create disorder, and there were also Communist bands.

In these mixed districts, it would be necessary to have some force to support the local Gendarmerie once the State Police and the Czech soldiers had been withdrawn. With this end in view, a number of alternative schemes had been proposed.

One suggestion was the enrolment of a voluntary Special Constabulary of Sudeten Germans with a corps of international Officers. But Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's view was that the Sudeten Germans were not to be trusted, and that they might commit outrages on the people they were supposed to protect. The international Officers would be scattered over large areas and could not exercise detailed control.
Another suggestion had been the employment of Czech troops. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin had thought that these also could not be relied upon.

A third suggestion was the employment of an international military force. He was afraid that, in practice, this would probably mean the employment of British soldiers, since contingents from other countries would probably not be forthcoming, at any rate in substantial numbers. The Prime Minister mentioned that this force would mainly be required to control five or six industrial towns, including Teplice, Brux, Bohm Leipe, Reichenberg and Gablonz. If it could be agreed that these were the areas in which disturbances were likely the problem might be reduced to manageable proportions.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR reminded the Cabinet that it was at Reichenberg that the Sudeten Germans had first raised their banner in 1918, and that difficulties might be anticipated if this centre was occupied by an international force.

Continuing, THE PRIME MINISTER said that we might be faced with the possibility that some such scheme as this would be called for. He had, therefore, consulted the Secretary of State for War and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff as to whether they could spare troops. Much would depend on the number of troops required. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff had said that, if a Division was required, it would mean that one of the two Divisions of the Intermediate Contingent would not be available for despatch to any other scene of operations.
the employment of British troops in this area would involve certain obvious risks, and this was not a task which we should undertake lightly or willingly.

It was to be hoped that the number of troops required might be found to be less than was expected, say, not more than 5,000. In the War Office view it would be three weeks before British troops could reach Czechoslovakia. It would not be possible to despatch a force of this size without calling up Section "A" Reservists.

The Prime Minister said that he did not ask the Cabinet to reach any final decision on the scheme which he had outlined. He wished, however, to put before them the scheme, which, on present information, seemed to have the best chance of acceptance. Every endeavour would, of course, be made to persuade other countries to join in sending contingents, if the despatch of an international force proved to be necessary.

There were two other measures which he thought should be taken in order to help in the preservation of order. The first was that Herr Hitler should agree to the immediate disbandment of Herr Henlein's Freikorps. He had some doubts whether this was a genuine body, or whether it had not been created for the purpose of stirring up trouble. However that might be, if the joint French and British proposals were accepted there seemed no case for the continuance of the Freikorps.

He also thought that the number of British observers should be considerably increased as soon as possible.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that telegrams had been despatched to certain minor Powers (Sweden, Holland and Yugo-Slavia) sounding them as to their willingness to send contingents to the proposed International Force.

In reply to a question by THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND, he said that he was not altogether happy at the suggestion of employing French forces in proximity to German troops. He had held over the suggestion of sending an invitation to Italy. Opinion at the Foreign Office had been opposed to this, mainly on account of the tone of Signor Mussolini's speech on Sunday last.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE was in favour of asking for quite a small contingent from Italy.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH agreed that the employment of an international force was desirable, but he thought it would be very difficult to allow German forces over the frontier before any part of the proposed international force had reached Czechoslovakia. He appreciated that the Prime Minister's proposal was conditional on Dr. Benes inviting German troops over the frontier, but he rather doubted whether Dr. Benes would issue such an invitation. He was also afraid of the reaction on public opinion. It was true that the regular German troops had behaved better than the Nazis in Austria. Nevertheless he was afraid that there might be considerable excesses. He asked whether an international force could not control all the areas concerned. He was also afraid that the arrival of German troops in the German areas might have a disastrous effect on the mixed populations in the limitrophe areas.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that the arrangement proposed depended for its success on the spirit in which it was carried out. If Herr Hitler was satisfied with the general lines of the agreement proposed, he hoped that he would now exercise a restraining influence.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that the proposal to allow German troops to cross the frontier filled him with great anxiety. He thought it was essential to convince people that German rule did not start before the frontier had been delimited, and those people who so desired had had an opportunity to leave the transferred areas. Again, he was not too happy about the proposal that British troops should be sent to Czechoslovakia. He thought that we should be represented as having given away Czechoslovakia’s case and then sent troops to ensure that the proposals were carried out. He thought that, if Herr Hitler showed good will, it should be possible for the Czechoslovak authorities to maintain order with a largely increased force of observers, reporting to international headquarters. He thought that if the German troops were allowed to march in, the last chance of the plan being accepted by public opinion in this country would be destroyed.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY feared that if the German army was allowed to enter part of Czechoslovakia, it would end by their overrunning the whole country.
The German army would put forward various pretexts, such as that it was necessary to throw out an outpost line, or for the troops to make a further advance to restore order; and they would not stop until they were in Prague. He thought that the action taken by Herr Hitler in the last few days (as exemplified by the attitude of the Press, the raising of Herr Henlein's Freikorps, and the minorities question) showed that Herr Hitler had not acted up to his word to the Prime Minister. Pending the fixing of the boundary by an International Commission, the areas concerned should be administered by some form of international control. He thought that the Prime Minister should indicate to Herr Hitler that if he made any further demands we should go to war with him, not in order to prevent the Sudeten Germans from exercising self-determination, but to stop Herr Hitler from dominating Europe. In such an event the United States of America would come in on our side, and Germany, notwithstanding some initial successes, would be faced with ultimate defeat.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that, as Chairman of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Refugees, he had information of the appalling treatment accorded to minorities in Austria. We were under an obligation to
secure fair treatment for the people in the Sudeten-German areas who did not wish to be transferred to the Reich. He was afraid that there was a great deal of innate cruelty in the German race.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he would probably be faced with a statement by Herr Hitler that thousands of people had been turned out of their homes by Czechoslovak oppression and that they must be allowed to return as soon as possible. He would be asked what solution he could put forward.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR said that he thought that Germany might be asked to look after these refugees for the time being. It would be a shock to public opinion if German troops were allowed to enter Czechoslovakia immediately.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had no intention of making any suggestion in this sense to Herr Hitler. The position was that Herr Hitler was certain to demand the immediate withdrawal of the Czech Army and of the Czech State Police. It might be that Herr Hitler would be satisfied that if these steps were carried out, there would be no disorder and that there was no need for troops. But this seemed to him to be a very large assumption.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE referred to the action which the Nazis had taken in Austria. He thought that if the Germans were allowed to send troops into the predominantly German areas, the minority of non-Germans, and the minority of Germans who did not wish to be incorporated in the Reich would be exposed to ill-treatment.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR suggested that the arrival of German troops might prejudice the fixing of the boundary.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES thought that every possible effort should be made to ensure that British Troops, if required, could be despatched as soon as possible.
He would be very unwilling to see German troops allowed to enter Czechoslovakia before the arrival of the proposed international force.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that if the Cabinet decided to send troops they would be sent as expeditiously as possible. He thought that the difficulties involved in the despatch of troops had been very fairly stated by the Prime Minister. It was clear that if the troops were sent they would be exposed to certain risks.

THE PRIME MINISTER read a further telegram received from the British Ambassador at Berlin (No. 498), bearing on the problem of law and order. Sir Nevile Henderson suggested that a measure of control could be entrusted to the Sudeten Germans when the State Police and Czechoslovak troops had been withdrawn. This, however, was directly contrary to Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin's view.

The Prime Minister said that he appreciated the force of the views expressed by the Cabinet. He would not, of course, start by suggesting the despatch of any troops but only the despatch of additional observers and the withdrawal of the State Police and of the Czech troops from the Sudeten German areas. The next line would be to suggest the creation of some international force. If it was not possible to reach an agreement which he regarded as satisfactory, he would consult the Cabinet again.

The Cabinet agreed to this course.

THE PRIME MINISTER then read a further telegram which had been received from Prague (No. 677). This telegram reported full acceptance by the Czech Government of the joint French and British proposals on the supposition that the two Governments would not tolerate a German invasion of Czechoslovak territory, which would remain Czechoslovakia until the transfer had been effected.
CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed to the following Conclusions as indicating the general line on which the Prime Minister would act in his resumed negotiations with Herr Hitler:

(1) That if Herr Hitler adopted the attitude that he could not reach a settlement of the Sudeten-German question unless an immediate settlement was also arrived at in regard to the Hungarian and Polish minorities in Czechoslovakia, the Prime Minister should say that he was unable to proceed further on the matter and must return home to consult his colleagues.

(2) That, in regard to the proposed guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State, the Prime Minister should proceed on the following basis, viz.:-

(a) That the guarantee is joint and not several.

(b) That France, Great Britain and Russia are the joint guarantors.

(c) That Germany should be invited to sign a separate Pact of Non-Aggression with Czechoslovakia.

(d) That if Herr Hitler objected to the inclusion of Russia in the joint guarantee, the Prime Minister should again refer the matter to the Cabinet.

(3) That as regards the arrangements for maintaining law and order during the transitional period —

(a) The Prime Minister should first endeavour to reach a settlement on the basis of the withdrawal of the Czech Army and State Police from the Sudeten-German areas:

(b) That, if necessary, the next stage should be to propose the creation of some international force.

(c) That if it could be avoided, German troops should not be allowed to cross the frontier until an international force had reached Czechoslovak territory.

(d) That any solution which was adopted should, if possible, include the strengthening of the corps of observers.

(e) That if the Prime Minister could not conclude a satisfactory settlement on this matter, he would consult the Cabinet again.
2. THE PRIME MINISTER reported that Lord Runciman proposed to write him a letter reporting on the work of his Mission and setting out the views which he had formed. He had seen a draft of this letter, in an incomplete form. He suggested that the letter would probably be found to be suitable for incorporation in a White Paper dealing with the Czechoslovak position generally, which would have to be published before Parliament met.

The Cabinet agreed:

That Lord Runciman's letter to the Prime Minister should be included in the White Paper which would have to be presented to Parliament dealing with the Czechoslovak question.
3. The First Lord of the Admiralty said that the previous evening the Foreign Office had informed him that Italy was moving a large number of troops to Libya. After consulting the Prime Minister it had been decided that the units of the Fleet now in the Eastern Mediterranean should be concentrated at Alexandria, and that certain cruises in the Eastern Mediterranean should be cancelled.

The Secretary of State for Air raised the question whether it was now desirable to give effect to any of the other defence measures which had been deferred for further consideration.

The Prime Minister said that he understood that Departments were going ahead quietly with preparations which involved no serious risk of publicity. He thought that, for the time being, there was no need to take measures such as recalling officers from leave, which would entail considerable publicity.

The Cabinet agreed:

That no steps should be taken for the time being to give effect to the further defence measures which had been deferred on the ground that they would involve considerable publicity.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

21st September, 1938.
CABINET 42 (38)

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10 Downing Street, S.W.1., on SATURDAY, 24th SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 5.30 p.m.

AGENDUM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECOND VISIT TO HERR HITLER.

(Reference Cabinet 41 (38) Conclusion 1)

Statement by the Prime Minister.

(Signed) E.E. BRIDGES

Secretary to the Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

24th September, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W. 1, on Saturday, 24th September, 1938, at 5.30 p.m.

PRESENT:

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


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


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

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

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

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

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

E.E. Bridges, M.C. Secretary.
THE INTER-NATIONAL SITUATION.

The Prime Minister’s Second Visit to Herr Hitler.

(Previous reference: Cabinet 41 (38), Conclusion 1.)

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he would first give his colleagues some account of the negotiations at Godesberg, which he would follow with an indication of his own views. He thought it might be convenient after some discussion that evening to adjourn until Sunday morning.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had arrived at Koenigswinter, opposite Godesberg, on Thursday. That afternoon he had crossed the Rhine to Herr Hitler’s hotel and had had a long interview with him, the only other people present being Dr. Schmidt, the interpreter, and Mr. Kirkpatrick, the First Secretary at Berlin, who had taken a note for the Prime Minister. As usual, the discussion with Herr Hitler had been somewhat discursive, although this did not mean that Herr Hitler was not a very astute dialectician.

The Führer had started by saying that he did not know what were the proposals which the Prime Minister had put to the Czechoslovak Government, and it had been necessary to explain to him the nature of these proposals.

Herr Hitler had expressed appreciation of the efforts which had been made to reach a settlement, and had asked whether these proposals had in fact been submitted to the Czechs. When he was informed that this had been done, he said he was sorry, since the proposals were not acceptable to him.

This, said the Prime Minister, had been a considerable shock to him. It was, however, necessary, in considering Herr Hitler’s reaction to our proposals, to remember that he was possessed of an intense dislike of the Czechs.
He had lived among them for many years and had no faith in them. He had no confidence that they intended to give effect in the proposals which they had accepted. Any plan which did not result in handing over the Sudeten-German territory to Germany at once, in his view merely gave the Czechs further opportunities for evasion and delay. Herr Hitler had said in discussion that as a result of the incidents which were occurring daily, and of popular feeling which had been raised to a point of exasperation, the situation was so dangerous that in his view it must be resolved at once. There was only one way in which the transfer could be carried out speedily and effectively without fear of outrages being committed on the Sudeten Germans.

Herr Hitler had then proceeded to explain his plan. He had had a map prepared on the only equitable basis, namely, nationality. He proposed that the Sudeten-German territory should be handed over to Germany at once. The frontier of the territory now to be handed over would not, however, be the final frontier, since that would be determined subsequently by ascertaining the wishes of the inhabitants.

Herr Hitler had said that in his view it was necessary to take a general plebiscite - it was not quite clear whether he meant over the whole of territory to be provisionally transferred, or over large parts of it.

The Prime Minister said that he had thought he detected in this proposal a reference to the Polish and Hungarian minorities.

It would be convenient to explain at this point that at a later stage in the discussions Herr Hitler had said that the question was complicated by the existence of these other minorities, and that these minorities could no longer endure their present situation.
Whereupon the Prime Minister had interjected that, in the Berchtesgaden conversations Herr Hitler had taken the view that the Sudeten-German problem was the one urgent problem, and that he was not interested in the other minorities. To this Herr Hitler had replied that it was true that he could speak only for the Sudeten-Germans, but he thought that the Polish and Hungarian minorities also felt their position acutely.

These minorities had also been touched on at a later conversation in connection with the proposed guarantee. When the Prime Minister had said that the cession of territory would deprive the Czechs of strategic defences and that they must be given some additional security, the Fuhrer had said that Germany could not enter into a guarantee unless certain other Powers were included. In this connection he had mentioned Italy.

The Prime Minister said that he had replied to this that he had not asked Herr Hitler to enter into a joint guarantee with other Powers. He had fully realised that Herr Hitler would have objections to this course. He had hoped, however, that Germany would be prepared to conclude a non-aggression pact with Czechoslovakia.

To this Herr Hitler had replied that he could not conclude such a pact while the question of the other minorities was still outstanding. Their representatives had been to see him; they had his sympathy, and he could not stab them in the back. It was, however, fair to point out that Herr Hitler had not taken the view which he had feared he might take, and insisted that a settlement of the other minorities must be linked with the settlement of the Sudeten-German case. In his last conversation with the Prime Minister Herr Hitler had not even mentioned those other minorities.
Returning to the main issue, Herr Hitler had said that from the date on which the Sudeten German areas were ceded to Germany, it would be necessary that law and order should be preserved, and he proposed that the whole of the transferred areas should be occupied by German troops. In order to avoid any suggestion that the plebiscite was influenced by improper pressure, he would withdraw the troops from the disputed areas while the plebiscite was taking place. November had been suggested for the plebiscite.

The Prime Minister said that he had replied that this was an impossible proposal. Public opinion would not regard occupation of the transferred areas by German troops as acceptable in present circumstances and would view such occupation as the seizure of a conquered territory. Herr Hitler replied that he did not see why objection should be taken. It had then been suggested that they should examine a map of the territory which Herr Hitler suggested should be transferred to Germany, and they had proceeded to a room downstairs where they had been joined by Sir Nevile Henderson, Sir Horace Wilson and Herr von Ribbentrop.

The Prime Minister said that he had been relieved to notice that the area on this map did not appear very different from the 50% area marked on the maps which had been examined in this country. On Herr Hitler's map certain areas in Czech territory were shaded and he proposed that these areas should also be the subject of a plebiscite. Herr Hitler took the view that the country had been deliberately Czechised and that, following the Saar precedent, only persons resident in each area in, and before, 1918 should be entitled to vote.
Continuing, the Prime Minister said that the conversations were continually interrupted by messages brought in at opportune moments reporting fresh outrages, which generally proved to be quite false. At this point in the conversation such a message had been brought in, and the Prime Minister had asked Herr Hitler whether he would not appeal to the Sudeten Germans not to provoke incidents. He (the Prime Minister) would likewise make an appeal to Czechoslovakia. Herr Hitler had replied that the Sudeten Germans were unorganised, that their leaders had been arrested or had fled the country and that he could not control them. He had, however, agreed to the Prime Minister's suggestion that he should issue an appeal to his own people, and in the Prime Minister's presence he had sent for General Keitel and given him an order to this effect.

At this point the conversation had ended, and the Prime Minister had returned to his hotel and discussed the position with his advisers. They had decided that as discussions with Herr Hitler were of such a discursive character, it would be desirable to have definite proposals from Herr Hitler in a written memorandum. Accordingly, a letter had been sent to Herr Hitler.

This letter had been circulated to the Cabinet (Telegram No. 4, from Godesberg to the Foreign Office). This letter had been despatched on Friday morning. On receipt of it, Herr Hitler had expressed some disappointment to Herr von Ribbentrop, and had said that he thought the Prime Minister had come to talk to him and not to write letters. The Fuehrer had, however, decided to send a written reply, and accordingly the arrangement to resume the conversation at 11.30 a.m. had been cancelled.

The reply to the Prime Minister's letter had been
promised before lunch, but in the event it was not received until about 4 o'clock. (This reply had also been circulated. See Telegram No. 5 from Godesberg to the Foreign Office).

The reply showed unmistakable traces of Herr Hitler's style, and was largely a repetition of the speeches he had already made at Nuremberg and elsewhere. The tone was not as courteous or considerate as one would wish, but it was worth remembering that Germans were apt to express themselves curtly. Although in his conversations with the Prime Minister Herr Hitler had occasionally waxed indignant about some subject, he had always spoken courteously.

Herr Hitler's reply had in effect set out the plan which had been explained the previous evening. In considering what step should next be taken, the Prime Minister explained that he had thought it important that we should not allow ourselves to be put in the position of acting as spokesman on behalf of the Czechoslovak Government. The Prime Minister's position at Godesberg was to act as an intermediary, and not to give approval to any particular basis of settlement. He had, therefore, decided that the best plan was to reply to Herr Hitler by a further letter. The Prime Minister then read out the reply which he had sent. (A copy of this letter is appended to these Minutes as an annex.)

The Prime Minister explained that in writing this letter he had two main purposes. The first was to get details in writing of Herr Hitler's proposal, which he could forward to Prague. The second was to obtain an extension of the assurance he had obtained at Berchtesgaden that Herr Hitler would not attack Czechoslovakia while negotiations were continuing. In this connection he had in mind that, on advice received from the French and British Governments, the Czechoslovak Government had hitherto refrained from general mobilisation.
The Prime Minister pointed out that he had secured a continuance of this assurance and that Herr Hitler had given his word that he would not attack Czechoslovakia until a reply had been received from the Czechoslovak Government. No particular date had been specified for the receipt of the reply.

In reply to a question from the Foreign Secretary the PRIME MINISTER said that he assumed that, as we had communicated Herr Hitler's proposals to the Czechoslovak Government, they would reply to us and not direct to Herr Hitler.

A third purpose which he had in mind in writing this second letter was to indicate that he then proposed to leave Godesberg. It so happened that Dr. Schmidt, the interpreter, had mentioned to a member of the Prime Minister's staff that he was not sure that our original proposal had been properly understood by Herr Hitler. The latter had thought that under our proposal no territory was to be transferred until the whole area to be transferred had been delimited. The Prime Minister had not based any great expectation on the possibility that the immediate cession of some part of the Sudeten German territory would affect the negotiations, but he had thought that the point might be explored, and he had therefore asked Sir Nevile Henderson and Sir Horace Wilson to take his second letter down to Herr Hitler's hotel, with instructions that they should see Herr von Ribbentrop, and if possible Herr Hitler.
Herr von Ribbentrop had not agreed to Sir Nevile Henderson and Sir Horace Wilson seeing Herr Hitler. He had taken this suggestion to Herr Hitler and had then informed Sir Nevile and Sir Horace that this suggestion was of no value. Strategical considerations had been urged against it. Herr von Ribbentrop had, however, said that Herr Hitler agreed that a Memorandum should be prepared setting out the Fuhrer's proposals.

Sir Nevile Henderson had also been asked to find out what arrangements should be made for the Prime Minister to say goodbye to Herr Hitler. It had finally been arranged that the Prime Minister and his advisers should go to Herr Hitler's hotel at 10.00 p.m. They would be given an opportunity of looking through the Memorandum in private, and it had been arranged that if the Memorandum appeared to hold out no prospects of further negotiations the Prime Minister should then say goodbye to Herr Hitler.

Accordingly, the Prime Minister said, he had returned to Herr Hitler's hotel about 10.30 p.m. Herr Hitler, who had been waiting for him on the steps of the hotel, had taken the Prime Minister into the lounge. Those present at this interview were the Prime Minister, Sir Nevile Henderson, Sir Horace Wilson and Mr. Kirkpatrick; Herr Hitler, Herr von Ribbentrop, Dr. Schmidt; and Dr. Weissascher for the last hour of the conversation.
At this meeting Herr Hitler had been far more cordial. He had begun by saying that he had not appreciated before what tremendous efforts the Prime Minister had made to reach a peaceful settlement - efforts which involved not merely physical exertion but political risks. He expressed his gratitude for these efforts and said that if a peaceful settlement had been reached it would be largely due to the Prime Minister. He hoped that there was now the prospect of reaching such a settlement.

The Prime Minister had thanked Herr Hitler for what he had said and asked whether they could see the Memorandum (See Telegram No. 11 from Godesberg to the Foreign Office). The Memorandum, which had been in German, was found to contain precisely the same proposals as had previously been put forward. Herr Hitler in a quiet voice had given detailed explanations of the scheme and of the reasons for the arrangements proposed.

Meanwhile Sir Neville Henderson and Sir Horace Wilson had been reading through the Memorandum and informed the Prime Minister that it was an outrageous document, expressed in the most peremptory terms, and demanding that the evacuation of the Sudeten German area by Czechoslovak troops and police should start on Monday, the 26th September and should be completed a day or two later.

The Prime Minister had thereupon said that, if this was the nature of the Memorandum, there was nothing for him to do, and he had half risen from his chair to leave. He had spoken strongly of the folly of the risks which Herr Hitler was running in insisting on these terms, and of the appalling loss of life and suffering which would ensue - suffering which would affect not merely the Sudeten Germans but Germans now in the Reich. He had reproached Herr Hitler for having made no concessions, notwithstanding all that he (the Prime Minister) had done.
Herr Hitler had replied that he had made some response to the Prime Minister. In effect he said that he had made plans to invade Czechoslovakia (though he was careful never to use so direct a word as "invade") and that in that event he would have conquered the country and would have drawn a frontier very different from the frontier put forward in his present proposals: the frontier would have been a strategic frontier instead of the nationality frontier now proposed. (This was confirmed by a remark made the previous evening, when Herr Hitler had said that when the Prime Minister had left Berchtesgaden he had never imagined that he (the Prime Minister) would obtain acceptance of the principle of self-determination, and that he had made his plans on that assumption.)

The Prime Minister had thereupon told Herr Hitler that when the German Memorandum was communicated to the Czechoslovak Government it would be made public and that it would produce a deplorable effect throughout the world.

It had then been decided to go through the Memorandum, and the Prime Minister and his advisers had commented on the dictatorial language used. (In reply to these comments Herr Hitler had pointed out, somewhat naively, that the heading of the document was not "Ultimatum" but "Memorandum").

The Prime Minister said that he had, of course, not sought to suggest amendments to the Memorandum. He had, however, said that the points to which he particularly objected were the peremptory words "German demands" and the dates by which it was proposed that evacuation should be completed. Herr Hitler had
substituted "proposals" for "demands", and he had struck out the original proposal as to dates and substituted therefor the proposal that the evacuation should be completed by the 1st October. Further, he had renewed his assurance that, while the negotiations continued, he would not attack Czechoslovakia.

At this point in the conversation a message had been brought in to say that the Czechoslovak Government had decided on general mobilisation. Herr Hitler had said that this settled matters, but the Prime Minister had pointed out that the Czechs were only acting in self-protection. In the course of further discussion Herr Hitler had said that he would answer the Czech mobilisation by calling up certain other classes. He would, however, abide by his assurance that he would not invade Czechoslovakia while the negotiations continued.

The Prime Minister had said that he would send the Memorandum to the Czechoslovak Government, who would probably consult with Great Britain and France. It was also necessary that he should report to the French as soon as possible.

The Prime Minister then gave his colleagues his views on the position. On the first day at Godesberg he had felt indignant that, notwithstanding the fact that the self-determination of the Sudeten-Germans had been agreed to, Herr Hitler was now pressing new demands on him. After further conversation with Herr Hitler, however, he had modified his views on this point. In order to understand people's actions it was necessary to appreciate their motives and to see how their minds worked. In his view Herr Hitler had certain standards. (He now spoke with greater confidence on this point than after his first visit).
Herr Hitler had a narrow mind and was violently prejudiced on certain subjects; but he would not deliberately deceive a man whom he respected and with whom he had been in negotiation, and he was sure that Herr Hitler now felt some respect for him.

When Herr Hitler announced that he meant to do something it was certain that he would do it. In the present instance Herr Hitler had said that if the principle of self-determination was accepted he would carry it out. The Prime Minister thought that he was doing so, although he had odd views as to the proper way to give effect to the principle. He did not believe that Herr Hitler thought that he was departing in any way from the spirit of what he had agreed to at Berchtesgaden.

The Prime Minister was sure that Herr Hitler was extremely anxious to secure the friendship of Great Britain. The crucial question was whether Herr Hitler was speaking the truth when he said that he regarded the Sudeten question as a racial question which must be settled, and that the object of his policy was racial unity and not the domination of Europe. Much depends on the answer to this question. The Prime Minister believed that Herr Hitler was speaking the truth.

Herr Hitler had also said that, once the present question had been settled, he had no more territorial ambitions in Europe. He had also said that if the present question could be settled peaceably, it might be a turning-point in Anglo-German relations. In speaking privately to him at the end of their last meeting, he had said that he would much like to have further talks with the Prime Minister on other subjects of interest to Germany and ourselves.

On the question of colonies Herr Hitler repeated that this was not a matter of peace and war: that there would be no question of mobilisation about this matter.
The Prime Minister said that he thought it would be a great tragedy if we lost this opportunity of reaching an understanding with Germany on all points of difference between the two countries. A peaceful settlement of Europe depended upon an Anglo-German understanding. He thought that he had now established an influence over Herr Hitler, and that the latter trusted him and was willing to work with him. If this was so, it was a wonderful opportunity to put an end to the horrible nightmare of the present armament race. That seemed to him to be the big thing in the present issue.

In saying this, however, the Prime Minister continued, he was not unaware of the great difficulties in obtaining acceptance of a solution on the lines proposed. He must, however, make it plain that he saw no chance of getting a peaceful solution on any other lines. He hoped, therefore, that the Cabinet would examine very carefully the differences between the proposals made last Sunday and the present proposals, and would consider whether those differences justified us in going to war. That morning he had flown up the river over London. He had imagined a German bomber flying the same course. He had asked himself what degree of protection we could afford to the thousands of homes which he had seen stretched out below him, and he had felt that we were in no position to justify waging a war to-day in order to prevent a war hereafter.

The Prime Minister added that before leaving for Godesberg he had had some talk with Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin as to the ways of keeping order in the areas to be transferred, pending the delimitation of the frontier. Mr. Ashton-Gwatkin had taken the view that the best way of keeping order would be to have German troops in the wholly German districts and British troops in the mixed districts.
That was half way towards Herr Hitler's proposal. German troops were disciplined and could be controlled. The Czechoslovak troops could not be relied upon for this purpose. An international force was admirable in theory but there was no time to organise it, and no one could say what countries could provide the troops. Both Sir Nevile Henderson and Mr. Kirkpatrick had been strongly opposed to allowing the Sudeten Germans to police themselves. Their view, of course, was based on practical considerations and did not take into account the political difficulties involved.

As regards the actual areas to be transferred to the Reich, there was not much difference between Herr Hitler's proposals and the areas which we had had in mind. It had been pointed out to Herr Hitler that in doubtful cases he appeared to have given himself the benefit of the doubt. His answer had been, that he had agreed to a plebiscite and would abide by the results of it. He (the Prime Minister) hoped however that his colleagues would not think that he was making any attempt to disguise the fact that, if we now possessed a superior force to Germany, we should probably be considering these proposals in a very different spirit. But we must look facts in the face.

If Czechoslovakia decided that she would fight, the result would almost certainly be that in future there would be no Czechoslovakia as it existed to-day or as it might exist if the present proposals were accepted. If we were now to have recourse to force it would not be for the purpose of maintaining Czechoslovakia in its present form (that was impossible), but because we thought that we could check Herr Hitler's ambitions more effectively by war now than by war hereafter. We must not lose sight of the fact that war to-day was a direct threat to every home in the country, and we must consider whether the protection which we could afford to-day to the people of this country against German bombs was as effective as the protection which we might be able to offer in the future.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR asked what the position would be if the Czech Government rejected the proposals. Should we still hold out the hand of friendship to Germany?

THE PRIME MINISTER said that if war broke out, we should not hold out the hand of friendship to Germany. If the French decided to back Czechoslovakia the next point would be to ascertain what action they proposed to take to give effect to their treaty obligations. The position in this respect was unchanged.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said that before the Czechoslovak Government replied, they would probably ask for advice.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that in this connection it would be very desirable to have consultations with the French Government.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the Prime Minister had suggested that he should telegraph to the French Government to invite them to send representatives to London to see the Prime Minister. On reflection, he had felt that there were certain objections to this course.

It might be difficult for French Ministers to pay a second visit to us so soon, and the impression might be given that there was some sinister plot afoot to put further pressure on the Czech Government. He attached particular weight to the latter argument.
Another suggestion was that there might be a three-cornered discussion between the French, ourselves and the President of the Czech Republic, which conversation might possibly be held in Geneva. Doubts were pressed whether M. Benes could leave his country at this juncture.

On the whole, the Foreign Secretary thought that the safest plan would be to communicate an account of Herr Hitler's proposals to the French Government through our Ambassador in Paris and say that we were at the disposal of the French Government if they wished to discuss the proposals.

After discussion in which it was pointed out that it was necessary to lose no time in starting conversations with the French, it was agreed that the Foreign Secretary should be authorized to communicate with the French Government in the sense proposed by him in the preceding paragraph.

In connection with the attitude of the French Government, the Prime Minister read telegram 292 from Paris which had just been received.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that if Czechoslovakia was being violently attacked by Germany, he felt sure that public opinion would bring about a position in which we should have to intervene in the war. He feared, however, that unless we acted promptly that intervention might come too late to be effective. Herr Hitler still did not believe that this country would, in any circumstances, go to war.
As regards the promises which Herr Hitler had made to the Prime Minister, he did not feel that confidence could be placed in them, having regard to the previous statement which Herr Hitler had made, and to which he had not adhered. He was afraid that, after the second rebuff which Herr Hitler had delivered to the Prime Minister, the House of Commons and the country would not accept the settlement proposed. What then would become of the influence which the Prime Minister had established over Herr Hitler? He was certain that Herr Hitler would not stop at any frontier which might result from the proposed settlement.

Continuing, the First Lord said he was sure that Czechoslovakia would now fight and he thought that our right course was to order general mobilization forthwith. This would make our position clear to the German Government and might yet result in deterring them from war.

In reply to questions by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, the First Lord said that he proposed that we should mobilize as a precautionary measure, while the Czechs were considering Herr Hitler's proposals. If we went to war, his proposal was that we should rely on the weapon of the Naval Blockade.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that, before reaching a decision, he would like to study the memorandum containing Herr Hitler's proposals in order to see how far those proposals could be said to rest on any principle.

This suggestion met with general approval.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR referred to the report of the Chiefs of Staff dated 23rd September, C.P.207 (38), in which they urged the importance of early mobilization. A number of measures of reinforcement which were now being carried out, would be prejudiced if mobilization was to take place in the immediate future. There were also a number of measures which should be carried out in Palestine and Egypt, if the danger of war was imminent. He also referred to the position of certain battalions in the Far East.

Again, an interval of 48 hours was necessary before the Anti-aircraft Artillery and Searchlights could be fully deployed. This portion of the Territorial Army could be embodied by a proclamation signed by himself without general mobilization.

He thought that action on our part by way of mobilization might deter Herr Hitler. Further, we should not be forgiven if some sudden attack was made upon this country and we had failed to take the necessary steps to put ourselves in a proper state of protection.

On the general issue, THE MINISTER OF HEALTH said that a good deal would depend upon the attitude of the Czechoslovak Government. He thought, however, that it should not be assumed, either that the Czech Government would accept the proposals, or that if they rejected the proposals we should take no action. He was, therefore, in favour of taking the steps suggested by the Secretary of State for War.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought that these defence measures should be considered on the ensuing day. The action to be taken in regard to them depended ultimately upon what decision was taken in respect of Herr Hitler's proposals.

Further, he did not think that we should find ourselves at war, unless we ourselves first declared war. He did not think that the matter was so urgent that a decision was required that night, and he thought it should be postponed until Sunday.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER thought that if the Czechoslovak Government refused Herr Hitler's proposals, public opinion would insist upon this country taking action which would involve us in war. He was afraid that, unless we were prompt, any action which we took might come too late. He, therefore, thought that the Cabinet should consider taking further defence preparations at the Meeting to be held on Sunday. He feared that Germany was quite capable of attacking us at an hour's notice.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that while he recognised the force of what the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster had said, he thought there was much to be said on the other side. To mention one point only, he was convinced that Germany would do all she possibly could to keep us out of war. He, therefore, thought that the right course was that we should make up our minds on our general policy, before deciding on mobilization.
THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE mentioned that he had understood from the Chief of the Air Staff that Germany could not start a heavy bombing attack on this country unless she either concentrated her bombing squadrons in north-west Germany, or flew over Holland and Belgium. The latter course would involve an infringement of neutrality, while the former concentration would involve some delay.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that, during the Prime Minister's absence he had been coming to the conclusion that a decision should be reached at an early date in regard to further defence preparations. It was essential that there should be an interval between the dates when the Preparatory and Precautionary Stages were instituted, and the date on which we embarked on hostilities. He thought, however, that the interval required for essential measures (though falling short of the period of fourteen days or so which would be desirable if it was possible) could be secured on the basis proposed by the Prime Minister.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that the Board of Admiralty had taken all the precautionary measures possible, short of general mobilization. He thought that our naval position was reasonably secure. Nevertheless, he favoured general mobilization as the only way of impressing Herr Hitler. He also suggested that steps should be taken to consult with Egypt under Articles 6 and 7 of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty, with a view to bringing into force the precautionary measures necessary for the defence of the Suez Canal.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that consideration of this measure could be deferred until after a decision had been reached on the issue of general policy.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES also thought that it would be desirable to postpone a decision on further defence precautions until a decision had been reached on the broad issue of policy. If we decide to mobilise now, the Czechoslovak Government might deduce therefrom that we had reached a conclusion, which we had not in fact reached. He would also like time to study the Memorandum and the map, and to consider the Prime Minister's statement.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said he thought that it might be helpful if he indicated the main points of difference between the proposals agreed between the British and French Governments on the previous Sunday and Herr Hitler's present proposals.

As regards areas the difference was not great. The provisions dealing with options and minorities remained in Herr Hitler's proposals, although they were not specifically referred to. There was no provision for a plebiscite in the proposals accepted by the Czechoslovak Government, but Herr Hitler's proposals provided for a plebiscite under the auspices of an International Commission in certain areas still to be defined: and for the German troops to be removed during the plebiscite period.

The real difference lay in the fact that under Herr Hitler's proposals German troops would move in almost immediately. There was also provision for the discharge of all Sudeten-German conscripts and Police, who should be allowed to return to their homes.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR pointed out that the provision that persons who were not in the area in 1918 should not be entitled to vote under the plebiscite made the plebiscite a much more difficult operation to carry out.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS replied that Mr. Masaryk, the Czechoslovak Minister in London, had seen the proposals and had raised strong objections to them. He said that the Czechs would sooner go down fighting than accept them. The Foreign Secretary had replied that he understood the feeling of bitterness in the Czechoslovak people, and that after the pressure which had been exerted upon the Czechoslovak Government to accept the previous proposals, the British Government would be unwilling to urge further sacrifices. At the same time it would perhaps be right to consider what was the alternative course and where the frontiers of the country would ultimately be drawn on the conclusion of the war if war now broke out. He had ended by suggesting that the Czechoslovak Government should take their time before reaching a decision.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY asked whether the inclusion of France, Russia and ourselves in a joint guarantee had been mentioned in the conversations at Godesberg.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that Russia had not been mentioned.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS said that, without suggesting that the argument told one way or the other, he thought it was important to bear in mind that if Herr Hitler's proposals were accepted by the Czechoslovak Government our guarantee must come into force at once. In effect, we should say to Herr Hitler
that, if he attacked Czechoslovakia, France, Russia and ourselves would at once make war upon him.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS referred to the question of the Polish and Hungarian minorities. If it was agreed that the guarantee come into force at once, he thought that that might be coupled with some condition such as that the Polish and Hungarian minorities question should be submitted to arbitration within a specified period. He thought that it was impossible to leave these questions as they stood.

CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed –

(1) To adjourn discussion of the proposals submitted by Herr Hitler until 10.30 a.m. on Sunday, the 25th September.

(2) That discussion of further defence measures, including general mobilisation should be postponed until a decision had been reached on the policy to be adopted in regard to Herr Hitler's proposals.

(3) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to communicate Herr Hitler's proposals to the French Government and to indicate that His Majesty's Government were available for immediate consultation if the French Government so desired.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,

24th September, 1938.
ANNEX.

COPY OF LETTER FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO
HERR HITLER.

As from Hotel Petersberg,
GODESBERG.
23rd September, 1938.

My dear Reichskanzler,

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

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

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

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

In the meantime, until I can receive their reply, I should be glad to have Your Excellency's assurance that you will continue to abide by the understanding, which we reached at our meeting on September 14th and again last night, that no action should be taken, particularly in the Sudeten territory, by the forces of the Reich to prejudice any further mediation which may be found possible.
Since the acceptance or refusal of Your Excellency's proposal is now a matter for the Czechoslovak Government to decide, I do not see that I can perform any further service here, whilst on the other hand it has become necessary that I should at once report the present situation to my colleagues and to the French Government. I propose, therefore, to return to England.

I am,

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) NEVILLE CHAMBERLAIN.

His Excellency the Führer and Reichskanzler.
CABINET 45(58).

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on SUNDAY, 25TH SEPTEMBER, 1938, at 10.30 a.m.

AGENDUM.

THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION: THE PRIME MINISTER'S SECOND VISIT TO HERR HITLER.

(Reference Cabinet 45(58)).

Continuation of discussion.

(Signed) E.E BRIDGES.

Secretary to the Cabinet.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
24th September, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Sunday, 25th September, 1938, at 10.30 a.m. and resumed at 3 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Prime Minister.


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


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


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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E. E. Bridges, M.C. .................................. Secretary.
The Cabinet resumed the discussion which had been adjourned at 7.30 p.m. on the previous evening, Saturday, the 24th September.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that M. Daladier and M. Bonnet were flying over to England and would be available for discussion about 5 p.m. that same day.

He also reported that Mr. Anthony Eden had informed him that he hoped, if the terms of Herr Hitler's proposals were as stated in the newspaper reports, that we should reject them.

In reply to a question, the Foreign Secretary said that no news had yet been received from Prague. He had sent a telegram to Prague to the effect that we assumed that the Czecho-Slovak Government's reply would be submitted to the Prime Minister and not direct to Herr Hitler. He had also stated that if any representative of the Czech Government was able to spare time to come over and discuss the matter in this country we should be glad to receive him.

THE PRIME MINISTER answered certain questions arising out of Herr Hitler's Memorandum. He thought that the object aimed at in the Appendix to that Memorandum was to secure that the area to be transferred was handed over as a working concern and was not first made a desert. Thus there was a provision that no goods or cattle might be removed, but this related only to the period up to the occupation by German troops. What happened afterwards was another matter which would be dealt with by the proposed German-Czech Commission referred to in paragraph 6.

Asking about the guarantee, the Prime Minister said that the position was that the British Government
had offered to join in an international guarantee if the British and French Governments' proposals were accepted. Those proposals had not been accepted by Germany in the form in which they were submitted since the method of transfer was still in dispute. He saw no reason, however, to make any change in the offer which we had made to join in an international guarantee.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY pointed out that part of the plan had been that Germany should sign a pact of non-aggression and that this had not yet been secured. Further, he asked whether the Prime Minister was prepared to give a guarantee before the problem of the Polish and Hungarian minorities had been settled.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that this would be necessary and that the prospect did not alarm him. So great was the mutual mistrust between Czechoslovakia and Germany that it was essential that the assurances which Herr Hitler had given should be reinforced from the outset by some guarantee.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he thought that it would be desirable that we should be clear in our own minds as to the position of the Polish and Hungarian minorities under the Covenant of the League of Nations before we made any approach to Russia. He thought that it would be rather a dangerous course to give a guarantee to Czechoslovakia when matters were in so fluid a position. If the Czechoslovak Government were to accept Herr Hitler's offer were we to undertake to go to Czechoslovakia's assistance if German troops crossed the new frontier? There was a danger of incidents, and he felt uneasy about the position. It was true that the offer of a
guarantee which we had made was not at the moment legally operative. Nevertheless he felt that a moral obligation rested upon us in consequence of the concessions which Czechoslovakia, on British and French advice, had agreed to make although effect had not yet been given to these concessions.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that on the previous Sunday, in agreement with the representatives of the French Government, the representatives of the British Government had reached two important decisions: first, that Czechoslovakia should be asked to give up certain Sudeten areas; secondly, that if she gave up these areas the United Kingdom Government would be prepared to join in an international guarantee of the new boundaries of the Czechoslovak State against unprovoked aggression. (See Joint Message to President Benes Cabinet 40(38) Appendix).

Some of the present difficulties arose from the fact that these decisions had been framed in somewhat vague terms which had not as yet been closely or clearly defined.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA pointed out that the Czechoslovak Government, in accepting the joint French and British proposals, had done so on the supposition that if Czechoslovakia was attacked in the meantime we should come to her assistance.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS said that last Sunday's decisions had been taken on the supposition that the transfer of territory would take place under the control and supervision of an International Commission. He thought it was difficult to conceive that the Czechoslovak Government would readily surrender these safeguards unless we said quite definitely that if Germany ever crossed the new frontier we should at once embark on hostilities. Even if we were prepared to give that definite guarantee he thought
it would be a tremendous responsibility to advise the Czechoslovak Government to accept Herr Hitler's terms. We should be asking them not merely to give up strong military fortifications, but also to accept a moral defeat.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE thought that the first question was to settle whether we should advise the Czechoslovak Government to accept the present offer, and that if it was decided to advise the Czechoslovak Government to refuse Herr Hitler's proposals a number of the points which were under discussion would not arise.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had found his opinion changing somewhat in the last day or so, and even now he was not too certain of his view. Yesterday he had seen, or thought he had seen, certain things fairly clearly. For example, what alternative was open to Czechoslovakia other than acceptance? The answer was war, leading to the almost certain disruption of the country, accompanied by great loss of life and suffering.

A week ago, when the Franco-British proposals had been drawn up, he had felt strongly the immorality of yielding to force; but he felt that we had to some extent overcome that objection by the plans for carrying out the transfer which, it was hoped, would be settled by an International Commission. Yesterday he had felt that the difference between acceptance of the principle of last Sunday's proposal and the scheme now put forward a week later for its application did not involve a new acceptance of principle. He was not quite sure, however, that he still held that view. What
made him hesitate was that it might be held that there was a distinction in principle between orderly and disorderly transfer with all that the latter implied for the minorities in the transferred areas.

Much, of course, turned on Herr Hitler's future intentions and on the Anglo-German rapprochement of which the Prime Minister had spoken on Saturday. Nevertheless, he could not rid his mind of the fact that Herr Hitler had given us nothing and that he was dictating terms, just as though he had won a war but without having had to fight.

While he did not altogether share the First Lord's views as to the "March to the East", he nevertheless felt some uncertainty about the ultimate end which he, (Lord Halifax) wished to see accomplished, namely, the destruction of Nazi-ism. So long as Nazi-ism lasted, peace would be uncertain. For this reason he did not feel that it would be right to put pressure on Czechoslovakia to accept. We should lay the case before them. If they rejected it he imagined that France would join in, and if France went in we should join with them.

Continuing, the Foreign Secretary said that he did not put this forward as a final conclusion, but his reflections through the night had provisionally led him to think that the present proposals involved a difference in principle, and that pointed tentatively to the conclusion that it would be very difficult to put any pressure on Czechoslovakia.
He also remembered that Herr Hitler had said that he had gained his power by words and not by bayonets. He asked whether we were quite sure that he had not gained power by words in the present instance, and that if he was driven to war the result might be to help to bring down the Nazi regime.

The Foreign Secretary concluded by saying that he had worked most closely with the Prime Minister throughout the long crisis. He was not quite sure that their minds were still altogether at one. Nevertheless, he thought it right to expose his own hesitations with complete frankness.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL said that the Prime Minister had told the Cabinet yesterday that he was satisfied of the good faith of Herr Hitler's assurances. The Prime minister had seen Herr Hitler and was in a better position to judge than were his colleagues. Nevertheless, the Lord President continued, he felt that he could not trust Herr Hitler. He quoted in this connection a number of renunciations of territorial claims in Europe which had been made by the Führer or other representatives of the German Government, viz., on the 21st May, 1935, two months after the re-introduction of conscription in Germany Herr Hitler said -

"The German Government has broken away from the discriminatory articles of the Treaty, but it herewith solemnly declares that these measures relate exclusively to the points which involve moral and material discrimination against her people. It will therefore respect unconditionally the articles concerning the mutual relations of nations in other respects, including the territorial provisions, and will bring about the revisions inevitable in the course of time only by the method of peaceful understandings."
On the 7th March, 1936, the day of the re-occupation of the Rhineland, Herr Hitler said -

"We have no territorial demands to make in Europe. We are aware, above all, that all the causes of tension which arise as a result either of faulty territorial provisions or of a disproportion between the size of populations and their living space, cannot be solved by means of war in Europe. At the same time we hope that human wisdom will help to mitigate the painful effects of these conditions and to remove causes of tension by way of gradual evolutionary development in peaceful collaboration."

Again, two pronouncements made on 11th and 12th March, 1938, after the Anschluss. On 11th March Field Marshal Goering assured M. Mastny, the Czechoslovak Minister in Berlin, that Germany had no hostile intentions against Czechoslovakia -

"I give you my word of honour," he said, "and I can add that we wish only for better relations".

On 12th March Baron von Neurath asked M. Mastny to call upon him and informed him officially in the name of the Reich Chancellor that he had been instructed before the latter's departure for Austria to inform M. Mastny that Germany had no hostile intentions towards Czechoslovakia. He alluded to the interest taken by Germany in the Sudeten Germans, but at the same time expressed the hope that "this domestic question of the Czechoslovak State" might be satisfactorily settled.

These undertakings had not been adhered to. He did not feel that we could trust Herr Hitler's declarations in future. The Germans differed from us in that to us a promise was a binding obligation, whereas to them it was a statement of intention.

He thought the right thing to do was to put the facts to the Czechoslovak Government, and if
that Government rejected the German demands and France came to Czechoslovakia's assistance we should come to the help of France. No pressure, however, should be put upon Czechoslovakia to accept.

The President of the Board of Education said that he thought there was some difference between the declarations quoted by the Lord President of the Council and the assurance which Herr Hitler had now given to the Prime Minister, who had clearly exercised a considerable influence over him.

The President said that he viewed the matter realistically. The position of Czechoslovakia was entirely changed as the result of the Anschluss. Germany could now enter the country by the southern frontier and turn the strong western fortifications. Under the present proposals Czechoslovakia would only lose the fringe of Sudeten Germans, on whom she could not place reliance. If she went to war she would lose everything and would be swallowed up in a few weeks. If this country and France defeated Germany in a world war, we could not replace Czechoslovakia on the map as she existed to-day. He therefore felt that the lesser of two great evils, from Czechoslovakia's point of view as well as from our own, was acceptance of Herr Hitler's offer; and he thought that we should advise her to accept.

The Lord Chancellor said that in his view the matter was mainly one of power, and that indignation was the worst guide to the action which this country should take. If Czechoslovakia asked our advice he thought it was right to tell her that France, Russia
and Great Britain could not prevent her from being overrun and destroyed. He referred to the fate of Abyssinia, which might have been saved if the Hoare-Laval agreement had not been overturned.

If we were involved in a world war our position was none too favourable. Russia was useless as an ally; the present state of France's air force was alarming; Italy would come in against us, and perhaps Japan too. The heart of the French people was not in this dispute, and he thought that if heavy losses were inflicted upon them they would probably go out of the war after a couple of months. Such a war would result in the disappearance of Czechoslovakia from the map; and there would be financial ruin which would make it impossible to continue the social services in this country. He came to the conclusion that the proper advice to give to Czechoslovakia in this matter was that she should accept Herr Hitler's terms.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER thought that the view taken of the combined allied air forces was somewhat pessimistic. On the main issue, he thought that the Cabinet could not support the acceptance of these proposals for a number of reasons. On moral grounds the Memorandum was an ultimatum and was couched in almost offensive terms. He thought that before long we were bound to be asked whether we supported or rejected Herr Hitler's proposals. When Parliament reassembled this issue could not be avoided. If we said that we accepted the proposals the result would be such a blow to our
prestige that he thought the Government would fall.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE hoped that his colleagues would think in terms of the difficult questions involved rather than of the Parliamentary situation. In any case it was impossible to foresee exactly what the situation would be when Parliament met.

He would state his conclusion first, which was that we were under a duty to put the full facts of the position to Czechoslovakia. He was not, however, in favour of putting pressure on Czechoslovakia and saying that if she did not accept the proposals we should in no circumstances support her.

The facts which should be put to Czechoslovakia included the certainty that France would be an ineffective and half-hearted ally in this war, unless we put strong pressure on her.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence had considerable confidence in our ultimate victory, yet such a victory might well result in the virtual destruction of both sides. He could not feel that we had any moral obligation to urge Czechoslovakia to fight. While our sympathies must be against acceptance of these proposals, it would be morally reprehensible to refuse to look the facts in the face.

Looking at the matter purely from the point of view of our interests, it seemed to him that the remedy was worse than the disease, and that it was therefore not in our interest to go to war.

Continuing, the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that he agreed that this was not the
end of the matter. We should not exhort Czechoslovakia to accept Herr Hitler's proposals, but we should put the facts clearly before them and explain first, that if they refused the proposals there was no means of saving Czechoslovakia as a political entity. Secondly, that they must not assume that France would come to their aid. This point would need delicate handling.

If France was prepared to put her whole weight into a war against Germany it might be that the position would be more favourable than we had previously thought.

The Minister referred to the latest information, which showed that Germany had only a thin couverture of troops on her western frontier. It was clearly of the first importance to ascertain the real facts as to France’s intentions.

The Secretary of State for Air thought that it was impossible to reach definite conclusions before the Prime Minister had seen the French Ministers that evening. The Air Ministry thought that the French must have received some new information about two or three weeks ago, which had made them hesitate about going to war with Germany.

The Secretary of State for Air mentioned that Colonel Lindbergh had been to the Air Ministry. They thought that he had perhaps become an unwitting tool of the Germans. For all that, he had given them a fair, if somewhat superficial, account of the French, Russian and German Air Forces. There was no
doubt that, from the point of view of the air, both France and Russia were in a comparatively weak position. Russia's armament productive capacity, suffered as the result of the recent widespread purges. Colonel Lindbergh had given figures for German production which were considerably higher than the figure of 600 machines per month, which was given in our calculations. From our point of view, the most hopeful feature was the difficulties which Germany was experiencing in regard to personnel. In recent months, they had had a large number of fatal accidents.

Continuing, the Secretary of State for Air said that he shared the feelings expressed by the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. We had suffered a humiliation for which we must all take the responsibility - a responsibility extending back over many years. It was necessary, however, to look at the matter from the practical point of view, and the present circumstances would show a weak Russia and a doubtful France. He agreed with the President of the Board of Education and the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence that the terms should be accepted. He reached this conclusion notwithstanding his intense disgust at the terms.

He thought that the matter had been put very well by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence, and it was both fair and honourable, as well as our duty, to put the facts of the case before Czechoslovakia.
The Secretary of State for Air said that whatever might be the result of the present negotiations, he had no doubt that all his colleagues were glad that the Prime Minister had paid these visits to Germany. These visits had been received with profound respect and satisfaction throughout the world.

If, notwithstanding his efforts, war came, it would be evident that nothing had been spared in the cause of peace. Further, these visits had made a considerable impression in Germany, and had probably done more to weaken Nazism than any other event in recent years.

The Secretary of State for Air said, therefore, that he was in favour of postponing a final decision until the representatives of the French Government had been seen.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he had just been handed a letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London. The Minister had been instructed to ask to be received by the French and British Ministers when they were in conference that afternoon in order to deliver to them an urgent message from his Government. He assumed that the answer to this request must be in the affirmative. This was agreed to.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that the Czechoslovak Government would ask whether, if she refused Herr Hitler's terms, France and Great Britain would support her. He thought that the Cabinet should reach an answer to that question that morning.

Continuing, the First Lord said that, when great moral issues were at stake, there was no time to weigh out one's strength too carefully. He
discounted much of Colonel Lindbergh's remarks, as Colonel Lindbergh was now a convinced admirer of the Nazi Regime.

The First Lord also thought that it was right to have regard to opinion in the House of Commons, since what happened in the House of Commons was, after all, a fact.

The previous week, the Prime Minister had pointed out that his (the First Lord's) conclusions did not altogether agree with his premises. A week ago, he thought that any delay which could be obtained was worth while and might help to break up the Nazi system. But when Herr Hitler's present terms were published, there would be an explosion of public opinion. The Press was none too favourable to-day, although the terms published in the Press were better than the actual terms. He thought that the revulsion of public opinion would lead to a defeat of the Government in Parliament, with far-reaching consequences. Turning to the actual terms, he thought that it was impossible to ask our Minister in Prague, after the vigorous and perhaps excessive pressure which had been applied last week, to apply still further pressure to get the further terms accepted. He was also disturbed at the fact that an inhabitant in the areas to be transferred, if fleeing from the Nazi terror, could not take his property with him. He was also afraid that the French Government would take the same line as they had taken last week, when they had tried to put all the responsibility for the joint Anglo-French proposals on to this Government. He thought that we should now tell the Czechoslovak Government that we regarded the terms as intolerable, and that, if they refused the ultimatum presented to them, we should stand by them and that we hoped France would do the same. He thought that the future of Europe, of this country and of democracy was at stake.
THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE expressed agreement with what the Secretary of State for Air had said as to the Prime Minister's visits to Berchtesgaden and Godesberg. He had accepted his share of responsibility for these two visits. He had hoped that the Prime Minister would have been able to secure a proper solution of the present difficulty and also would have been able to achieve a result which would do more than postpone war with Germany. At the meeting held before the Prime Minister left for Godesberg he (the President) had stated certain conditions which he regarded as essential. These included:—

(i) Proper time for the delimitation of the areas to be transferred; and

(ii) That pending delimitation, the German troops should not occupy the territories.

Neither of these conditions had been obtained. Indeed, they had been refused in insolent language, which left him under no delusions. In his view agreement on this basis was quite unacceptable. He felt sure that, if these terms were accepted, Herr Hitler's price would only rise again, and we should then find that we had bartered away many of the strong points in our position.

No doubt war was horrible but it would be equally horrible in six months' time. Further, Germany was not now prepared for a long war, whereas, if we waited, she would be able to extend her influence in South Eastern Europe and thereby strengthen her position.
The president agreed that it was impossible for the British Government to act as a post office. If we thought the terms were right, then we should put pressure on Czechoslovakia to accept them. If we thought they were wrong, we should say so, and should make it clear that if France carried out her obligations we would come to her help.

The Secretary of State for the Colonies said that he thought that publication of Herr Hitler's proposals would probably lead to an outburst of public indignation. In the course of days that outburst might be stemmed, although he did not feel very great confidence on this point. The real point, however, was to reach a decision on the merits of the case. He thought his colleagues might like to know the views of the High Commissioners of the Dominions, with whom he had had several discussions in the last few days. Mr. te Water, Mr. Dulanty and Mr. Massey had all definitely taken the view that we had accepted the principle of transfer a week ago, and that we ought now to accept proposals which merely concerned the method of giving effect to that principle. Mr. Bruce was inclined to take the same view, provided we made it clear that we would support Rumania and Yugoslavia and other countries whose support we might need in some future war. Mr. Bruce agreed that we should give a guarantee in such a form as to make it clear that we should fight if Germany went any further.
The Colonial Secretary said that, a week ago, he had felt no difficulty about the principle of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans. The Prime Minister had gone back to Germany to get reasonable terms. Through no fault of the Prime Minister the terms offered were shocking. Nevertheless there were certain points about the proposals which were not quite as bad as they appeared to be. Thus the provision for a plebiscite might mean that Germany got something less than the 50% line. Again, the plebiscite was to be undertaken by an international commission. The main point which shocked him was the demand that these transferred areas should be occupied by German troops. His view was that we should use every effort to ensure decent terms for the minorities. He thought that it must be admitted that the terms really represented a surrender as regards the methods of carrying out the principle on which they had agreed. Nevertheless, the fact remained that the principle had been accepted, and only the method was at issue. Further, war to-day was such a disastrous affair that he did not think we should go to war on a question of method. He did not regard it as in any way dishonourable to suffer the present rebuff in the effort to preserve peace. His view was, therefore, that the present terms should be accepted, but that it should be made quite clear that no further concession could be made, and that our guarantee of Czechoslovakia should
operate from now onwards. He thought we should have a great moral effect if we were to declare that if the German Army crossed the new frontier we should at once go to war with them.

As regards Herr Hitler's intentions, he was afraid that he was not quite so hopeful as the Prime Minister. Nevertheless, he did not take the view that if we avoided war now, war in the future was inevitable. Nevertheless, when all was said and done, he did not think that we could put pressure to bear on Czechoslovakia. We should, however, put these considerations before Czechoslovakia, frankly and fully, and let her make up her own mind. If Czechoslovakia decided that the terms were unacceptable, in that case our decision was as stated in the Prime Minister's speech of the 24th March.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND agreed with the Colonial Secretary that we could not bring pressure to bear on Czechoslovakia, but he thought it would be right that, before Czechoslovakia refused the terms, she should have before her the full facts as to what we thought would happen if the terms were refused, and as to the guarantee we were prepared to give.

THE LORD PRIVY SEAL said that up to now he thought no fundamental difference of opinion had been revealed.
It was now clear that Czechoslovakia would have to make immense concessions, and that Herr Hitler had abated none of his demands. Indeed, his demands became daily more preposterous. He thought that a vital question of principle was at stake. Herr Hitler’s proposals in effect amounted to an ultimatum.

The Lord Privy Seal drew attention to the fact that in his first letter to Herr Hitler, the Prime Minister had described the proposals as such that he could not put them forward. The demands themselves were quite unjustifiable and would permit the Germans to get behind the Czech fortified lines. This would make the guarantee doubly dangerous. He also objected to German troops occupying the areas in which the plebiscite would later be held. The idea of orderly transfer had been completely given up.

All this would be bad enough, but after looking at Herr Hitler’s record, and his intentions as set out in his writings, it was impossible to have any confidence in him. If what was now asked for was conceded, he would only ask for more later.

The Lord Privy Seal was afraid that we were being drawn along and slowly abandoning the moral basis of our case. The result would be that we should lose the sympathy of the world and our own moral conviction. He proposed, therefore, that we should take the full responsibility of making it clear to Czechoslovakia that we were not prepared to ask them to accept the terms. Further, we should
not shelter behind the French, nor the French behind us. We should say to the French that if they fulfilled their obligations we should march with them. If the French did not move, a new situation would arise.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA said that if the case was decided by sentiment, there could be no doubt whatever as to their views. But he could not dismiss from his mind the almost certain result of a decision reached on that basis. He agreed with the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence that it was our duty to place the facts before the Czechoslovak Government as objectively as possible.

The Secretary of State for India said that he had no doubt that it would be said later that if France and Great Britain had made it clear that the terms were unacceptable, since they were based on force, Herr Hitler would have given way, but he felt no confidence in that view. Herr Hitler was not bluffing. On the contrary, he was quite prepared to plunge the whole world into war.

They were all conscious of what a world war would be like. The military and naval aspects were for the experts, but he would like to invite attention to our Achilles heel in the Middle East. Although we were at peace Palestine absorbed daily larger numbers of British troops. He was also afraid of the attitude which the Moslems of India might adopt.

As regards public opinion, he thought that many of those who were now clamouring for us to take up a stronger attitude with Germany would adopt a different view when a world war had
been in progress for a month or so. The Foreign Secretary had said that he would not feel safe so long as the Nazi Regime and Herr Hitler existed in Germany.

LORD ZETLAND wondered what sort of regime would exist in Germany after a world war. Might it not be even more dangerous to us than the Nazi Regime? For these reasons he thought that we should take all possible steps to avoid the calamity of war. He did not suggest that we should impose more pressure, but we must put the full facts objectively to the Czechoslovak Government.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER expressed agreement with the last speaker. There was no dispute about the fact that Herr Hitler's proposals were a shocking document. In particular he drew attention to the provision in paragraph 5 for the withdrawal of the military force during the plebiscite, and pointed out that nothing was said about the withdrawal of non-military forces. He agreed entirely with what the Home Secretary had said about the guarantee. He thought that it should be made quite clear that, if German troops were allowed up to the new frontier, we should give an immediate and unqualified guarantee against unprovoked aggression.

As regards our advice to Czechoslovakia, it was right to point out that, whatever we did, Czechoslovakia could not be saved now or hereafter. Was there a middle course? On this the Prime Minister must be the final judge and he had expressed the view that unless the present terms were accepted Czechoslovakia, as now constituted, must cease to exist.

If Czechoslovakia rejected the terms, did we at once go to war with Germany?
THE CHANCELLOR did not think that we could put ourselves into a position in which we undertook to make our entrance into a world war dependent upon a decision of the Government of Czechoslovakia. That Government might, for example, take some desperate action which, though it might command our respect, could not, in the circumstances with which we were now faced, justify the participation of this country in the war that might follow. He was not prepared to place this country in a position in which Czechoslovakia had the final word on whether this country should be involved in a war. The attitude which he thought we should be well advised to take *via-vis* the Czechoslovak Government was -

1. To set out the facts as we saw them objectively.
2. To indicate that we were prepared to give them a guarantee.
3. That we should not say that, if they rejected the proposed terms, we should come to their aid.
4. That we should ascertain the French attitude. It seemed to be doubted whether the French had definitely decided to stand by their obligations.

THE MINISTER OF TRANSPORT said that a good deal of guidance would be found from studying the map. Whether the areas concerned were ceded now or later they would in any case have to be ceded in a few months time. Many things which it was now feared would happen on the 1st October would inevitably have to take place some months after that date, in whatever manner the transfer was carried out. The main questions which he asked himself were: first, whether these terms were the best which could be obtained for Czechoslovakia, second, whether the present was the best time for us to attack the Nazi Government.
It was to be remembered that our fighting forces were in the main organised for defence and not for attack. He was by no means sure that the best way of disrupting the Nazi Government was to subject it to military attack from outside. He thought that we should tell the Czechoslovak Government that, in our view, they should accept the terms and that, if they rejected them, they could not look to us for certain support.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH said that he rather shared the views expressed by the Foreign Secretary that the alteration in the proposals was not merely one of method but one of principle. The real question to him was whether Czechoslovakia should now be invited to sign terms of surrender. He thought that it was impossible for us to press the Czechs to sign terms of this nature and that this really followed from what the Prime Minister had said in paragraph 3 of his first letter of the 23rd September to Herr Hitler.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that there was nothing to regret in the decision that the Prime Minister should go to Berchtesgaden and Godesberg. His action had rallied the public opinion of the world. The decision to be taken now rested with the Czechs. The question which he asked himself was whether we had increased our moral obligations to them as the result of the action which we had taken. He thought that the issue was now a moral one. Czechoslovakia was a democracy, which was inspired by the same ideals as this country and shared our opposition to Nazi tyranny. If we forced Czechoslovakia to yield, we should not be able to escape strong condemnation. If we put any pressure on Czechoslovakia, we should, in fact, become
allies of Herr Hitler.

When the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary saw the Czechoslovak Minister that afternoon, he thought the best plan would be to lay the facts before him, but also to point out that we took the view that Czechoslovakia would be justified in refusing to accept these proposals.

(The Cabinet then adjourned and agreed to meet again at 3.0 p.m. the same day).
The Cabinet resumed their discussion of the international situation at 3 p.m.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that a message had just been received from the French Embassy that a Meeting of the Council of French Ministers was being held at 2.30 p.m. Arrangements for the departure of the French Ministers were quite uncertain, but they might be able to catch a train at 4 p.m. It was clear, however, that they would not reach London at 5 p.m. In the circumstances he thought that the best plan would be that the Prime Minister and he should offer to see M. Masaryk at about 5 p.m. in order to receive from him the Czechoslovak Government's message.

This was agreed to.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS said that he had been much shocked by the style of the document containing the German Government's proposals. Further, the provision that the whole area should be evacuated by the 1st October gave the proposals the character of an ultimatum. His first impression had been that whatever might be Herr Hitler's real intentions, it was impossible to put pressure on the Czechoslovak Government to accept these proposals.

The issue, however, was much too big to allow one's judgment to be biased by considerations of sentiment. He had reached the conclusion that the proper course was not to put any pressure on the Czechs either to accept or to reject these proposals. If we adopted the latter course he was afraid that we might find that we had urged the Czechs to take steps which would result in their destruction. He also thought that if we urged rejection we were
bound at the same time to say that we would support Czechoslovakia by declaring war on Germany.

The Home Secretary added that he did not disguise from himself the fact that we might soon be involved in war, but he thought it was very important that we should not take a final decision until we knew how we should stand with the Dominions. From private information which had recently reached him he thought there was a possibility that if we entered into a war to assist Czechoslovakia the Prime Minister of Canada would take a referendum on the proposal whether Canada should join with us, and that this proposal might well be rejected.

The Home Secretary also thought that it was of the utmost importance that the countries involved (Great Britain, France and Russia) should together examine the military position as impartially as possible. Until this had been done he thought no final decision should be taken.

The Home Secretary asked whether we could not make something of Herr Hitler's statement that these proposals did not constitute an ultimatum and ourselves suggest counter proposals. He thought that if need be we should offer to send a division of British troops to Czechoslovakia, notwithstanding the risks involved, to see that the transfer of territory was carried out in an orderly way.

Finally, he hoped that before we went so far as to say to Czechoslovakia or France that we would join them in war, we should discuss the military aspects with the Chiefs of Staff. So far as passive defence was concerned, the longer the delay the stronger our position would become. He also thought that consideration should be given to the question whether, if war broke out, it might not be in the
interests not merely of ourselves but of our allies, that we should delay joining in.

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES said that, from the point of view of his Department, if we were to be involved in war the sooner a decision was reached the better, as the ploughing season was now nearly over, and unless a decision was reached in a week or so it would soon be too late to take any steps to increase our food production until next Spring.

On the major issue involved, no-one who knew what would be the consequences of war would lightly embark upon it. But there was a feeling in this country that war with Germany was quite inevitable, and that if the bastion of Czechoslovakia was surrendered the position would really be worsened.

The Minister referred to some of the matters which encouraged this belief in the inevitability of war. Hitherto matters had been discussed in the Cabinet on the assumption that Herr Hitler was a complete autocrat. He doubted whether this was correct. He thought that to some extent Herr Hitler was the servant of the machine he had created, and of the doctrine that he had expounded. He thought that Herr Hitler, with his strong personality and demagogic power, was useful to the Party, but that he was dependent upon the concurrence of the Party leaders for the steps which he took, and that there were other primary sources of energy in the German system. He instanced the mysterious delay in the reply to the Prime Minister's letter and the sequence of events after the Nuremberg speech, when it appeared that the speech had not taken quite the form
expected and the Sudeten-Germans had anticipated the immediate arrival of German troops in Czechoslovakia.

Another matter which fostered belief in the inevitability of war with Germany was the proposed guarantee, which filled him with some anxiety. One possible foreign policy was directed towards ensuring that potential enemies were occupied with frontiers remote from their own country and in which we had no interest. Another possible policy was to encircle a potential enemy with powerful foes. It could not be said that the proposed guarantee to Czechoslovakia had the merits of either of these policies.

There was also the psychological factor, namely that relief at a decision to declare war solved the conflict in the mind. This was a real danger, and he was sure that we must still make every effort to ensure peace.

Herr Hitler's Memorandum containing his proposals was as difficult a document as one could be asked to accept. He found great difficulty in pressing Czechoslovakia to accept it. At the same time he thought that we should express as clearly as possible the military position as we saw it if Czechoslovakia became involved in war. It might not be easy to draw a line between a stark presentation of the facts and pressure, but he thought that the line could be drawn. He also thought it was important to get back to the position of acting as "honest brokers". It was not for us to accept these proposals. His conclusion was that we should abide by the policy formulated by the Prime Minister on the 21st May that we should not commit ourselves to engaging in war.
automatically. By adhering to this policy we were more likely to be able to throw our weight on the side of peace. Perhaps a Latin phrase: *et si vis pacem, para bellum.* We should not take our decision so much on that.

As regards public opinion, war was declared now there would no doubt, in Sir Robert Walpole's phrase, be a ringing of bells, but before long there would no doubt be a wringing of hands on the part of the same people.

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR said that he did not accept the inevitability of war. They all detested the Nazi system and methods, and there was, no doubt, a section of public opinion which was vocal for war. But in his view the section of opinion which thought that this issue should not be allowed to provoke a world war was certainly stronger.

After analysing the various ways in which the issue might arise, the Minister of Labour summarised the position as it appeared to him as follows. All three Governments had agreed to a transfer of territory. The areas to be transferred did not differ materially. The point of difference concerned the precise method of transfer. The terms of the Memorandum were highly objectionable, but we had to face the fact that unless these terms were accepted we should almost certainly be faced with a world war.

The Minister of Labour thought that the Czechoslovak Government would doubtless ask for advice. The Prime Minister had seen Herr Hitler, and the Prime Minister was better able to judge the prospects than any of his colleagues. For himself he found it difficult to know what answer to give, but he was much impressed by what the Prime Minister had said the previous night, when he had stated that although his first reaction to the Memorandum had been one of indignation after weighing...
it up he had come to the conclusion that its real meaning was far less open to objection than its form implied. He was sure that the time had not yet come when we should give up our efforts to obtain peace by negotiation. Nor ought we to shelter behind the attitude of France.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that all his colleagues had now spoken and had disclosed their points of view. There had been some difference of opinion, as was only to be expected. Although he had given expression to certain views which he had formed as the result of his second visit, he never expected other members of the Cabinet to accept those views as a final judgment.

The first point he wished to make was that he was sure that even those of his colleagues who did not see matters in precisely the same light as himself would be the last to wish to magnify differences. They were faced with a critical situation, and it was important that the Cabinet should present a united front. When he came to the position we were in to-day, and to the immediate decision which had to be taken, he did not think he would find any real differences. In the course of the discussion certain of his colleagues had spoken somewhat loosely of "accepting" or "rejecting" Herr Hitler's proposals. It was, of course, clear that it was not for us to accept or reject them, or, indeed, to feel any humiliation in regard to these terms. The proposals were not addressed to us, and we were only acting as an intermediary. The final responsibility for acceptance or rejection lay with the Czechoslovak Government.
The more immediate question was the attitude we should take up at the forthcoming interview with the representatives of the French Government and with the Czechoslovak Minister. The question had been asked whether we should put pressure on the Czech Government to accept the proposals contained in the Hitler Memorandum. He shared to the full the view expressed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Secretary of State for the Colonies as to the character of this document. He hoped that his colleagues would not think that he was insensible to the moral considerations involved. In the past week he had gone through much wrestling of spirit and agony of mind, and at moments the responsibility that lay upon his shoulders had been almost unbearable.

This matter must not, of course, be looked at merely from the point of view of material considerations. All sorts of factors must be weighed up, and it must be realised that on the decision taken depended the lives and happiness of millions of their fellow countrymen.

There had also been talk of "pressure" on Czechoslovakia. What did this mean? Nobody suggested that if the Czechs rejected the terms we should go to war against them. The assumption was ridiculous, but it served to illustrate the point that there was no pressure which we could exert in the literal sense. He felt sure that those who talked about "pressure" did not suggest that we were debarred from putting before Czechoslovakia all the considerations which should properly be borne in mind in reaching a decision. We owed it to them to do no less than this, and not to let them take a decision without knowing what was involved.
The only pressure which we could exercise on Czechoslovakia was negative. We could say that if they rejected the terms proposed we should not come to their assistance. But we could not make any such statement, because it was not only Czechoslovakia that was involved, but France also.

In his speech of the 24th March, and subsequently, he had said that we could not afford to see France defeated and overrun by Germany. From this it followed that, if France went to war, it was almost inevitable that we ourselves should be involved. We could not, therefore, say to Czechoslovakia that if they rejected these proposals we should remain completely aloof, since that might not be the case. The Prime Minister said that he admired the logic of the First Lord's views, but he did not agree with them. The First Lord wished to tell the Czechoslovak Government to reject the proposals and to say that we would come in on their side. It was clear, however, that we could not take that course this afternoon unless the whole Cabinet was united in support of it, and it was evident that this was not the case. For the time being, therefore, that course was out of the range of possibilities.

In the last resort it seemed likely that Czechoslovakia's attitude would be determined by the attitude of France. If encouraged by France (and perhaps in any event), Czechoslovakia might resist Germany. Sooner or later the French Government would have to decide on their attitude.
Continuing, the Prime Minister said that, so far as he had summed up the situation, he thought that there was little difference of opinion among his colleagues. He did not think that it was necessary to take any immediate decision which went beyond the policy which had already been accepted by the Government. Nevertheless it was clear that a position had arisen in which we might before long be involved in war. If that happened, it was essential that we should enter war united, both as a country and as an Empire. It was of the utmost importance, therefore, that whatever steps we took, we should try to bring the whole country and Empire along with us, and should allow public opinion to realise that all possible steps had been taken to avoid a conflict.

The Prime Minister therefore proposed that, in the forthcoming discussions with the French Government and with the Czechoslovak Minister, our action should be on the following basis:

(i) We should not say that if the proposals were rejected we undertook to declare war on Germany.

(ii) Equally we should not say that if the proposals were rejected we should in no circumstances declare war on Germany.

(iii) We should put before the representatives of the French and Czechoslovak Governments the full facts of the situation, as we saw them, in their true light.
The Home Secretary had suggested that in the interval before October 1st counter proposals should be submitted to Germany with a view to ensuring that the transfer of territory was effected in an orderly fashion. He referred to a proposal which the Foreign Secretary had mentioned to him. Sir Frederick Maurice had told the Foreign Secretary that he thought it was possible that a proposal for a mixed force of German and British ex-Service men to act as a screen to occupy the Sudeten German territories before the advance of the German troops might be accepted by Herr Hitler. Arrangements had now been made for Sir Frederick Maurice to fly to Germany to put this proposal to Herr Hitler. He did not know whether this proposal was likely to be accepted, but it was worth examination.

He rather doubted whether in all the circumstances much could be done on the lines of the Home Secretary's suggestion for counter proposals. Herr von Ribbentrop, at the end of the discussions, had told him very earnestly that Herr Hitler's proposals could not be made the subject of bargaining and that he hoped that no counter proposals would be submitted, as from his knowledge of the Fuhrer he knew that they would not be entertained. Nevertheless he (the Prime Minister) did not altogether exclude counter proposals. He thought Herr Hitler wanted peace, and that if the point at issue was not very large he might be induced to accept some compromise.
General discussion followed on the Prime Minister's statement in the course of which the following points were made.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that the Home Secretary's suggestion for counter proposals should be pursued.

It was suggested that the Czech Government were not called upon to give an immediate "yes" or "no" to Herr Hitler's proposals and that, in the meantime, Herr Hitler might be asked to agree to some modification of the terms suggested.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR thought that it was vital to know what were the intentions of the French Government before a decision was reached. On the other hand, if the French said that they were prepared to support Czechoslovakia and asked us what was our attitude, he did not think that we could refuse to give a reply.

The Secretary of State for War also suggested that the position had been somewhat modified by the statement made by the Prime Minister in paragraph 4 of his letter of the 23rd September that if German troops moved into the Sudeten German areas as the Führer had proposed, there was no doubt that the Czechoslovak Government would have no option but to order their forces to resist. He thought that this statement went some way to committing us to support the Czechoslovak Government.

THE PRIME MINISTER said he could not accept this view and this paragraph amounted to no more than a statement of the situation as he
had seen it, according to the information
at his disposal. It was merely a statement
of his view as to what action the Czechoslovak
Government would take.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR suggested that
the Prime Minister should conduct negotiations
with the representatives of France and Czechoslovakia
on the basis suggested and should ascertain their
views. Until that had been done he thought that
no further decision could be reached. He suggested,
however that a further report should be made to
the Cabinet when the views of France and
Czechoslovakia had been ascertained.

The Secretary of State for Air also suggested
that inter-staff talks should take place between
the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the
Chief of the French General Staff. If possible
the Russians might be associated with these talks.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE
thought that it was undesirable that there should
be any further delay in reaching a decision.
Time was an important factor and he thought we
should definitely notify our decision to the
French and Czechoslovak Governments at once. He
also thought that immediate steps should be taken
to set on foot further precautionary measures.
The Prime Minister's speech of the 24th March had
been perfectly correct in the circumstances in which
it was delivered, but the circumstances were no
longer hypothetical and in his view the time had
come when we should define our policy in clear
and unmistakable language. He suggested —
that we should say to France that, if Czechoslovakia objected to the terms proposed, and if France was prepared to support Czechoslovakia energetically, we should join with France.

THE MINISTER OF HEALTH supported the Home Secretary's suggestion that we should endeavour to obtain some modification in the terms proposed. He thought that any conclusion which involved integral acceptance of the terms proposed would be very difficult to justify.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS pointed out that it was for the Czechoslovak Government and not for ourselves to accept the proposals.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES suggested that if the Czechoslovak Government were prepared to accept the proposals, he thought we should be in a position to join in giving them an immediate guarantee without waiting for the transfer of the territory to the Reich. He thought this was one of the factors which we should lay before the Czechoslovak Government.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that there was a risk of a marked difference of opinion on this matter. He agreed, however, that the essential point was to ascertain the views of the French. When that had been done the Cabinet should be reassembled.

In the course of further discussion, the Home Secretary's proposal for joint conversations between Britain, France and Russia in order that the Cabinet might be in possession of the best military information and advice met with support.
The view had also been expressed that it would be desirable for an immediate meeting of the Service Ministers and Chiefs of Staff in order to discuss the further defence measures which do not involve mobilisation set out in Annex A to the Report of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee (C.P. 207 (38)).

It was agreed that the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence should arrange a meeting in the course of the evening, with a view to a Report being made to the Prime Minister.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS reported that he had received a message to the effect that the representatives of the French Government would be available to start conversations at 9 p.m.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE expressed some anxiety that the attitude to be adopted by representatives of His Majesty's Government in these conversations had not been more fully defined, and the latter suggested that the conversations might be divided into two parts. In the first part of these conversations the views of the French Government should be ascertained. There would then be an adjournment, in the course of which the Cabinet should be reassembled and acquainted with the attitude of the French Government before any final decisions were reached.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he agreed with this suggestion. It was clear that the representatives of the French Government would have to stop overnight and he thought that this suggestion could be adopted without inconvenience.

It was agreed that the Cabinet should be ready to reassemble the same evening at short notice.

It was left to the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary to settle whether M. Masaryk should be seen before the meeting with the representatives of the French Government, or whether the interview with him should be postponed.
CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed:—

(i) That no final decision should be reached in regard to the policy to be adopted in regard to Herr Hitler's proposals until the attitude of the French Government had been ascertained.

(ii) That for this purpose the conversations with the French Government should be divided into two parts, and that the Cabinet should be reassembled after the first part of the conversations have taken place, but before these conversations were concluded.

(iii) That the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence should convene a meeting of the Service Ministers and the Chiefs of Staff to consider the further defence measures set out in Annex 'A' to C.P. 207(38), and to report to the Prime Minister thereon.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

25th September, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Sunday, 25th September, 1938, at 11.30 p.m.

The Right Hon. Neville Chamberlain, M.P., Prime Minister.


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


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


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


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


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


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

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


The Right Hon. The Right Hon. E.H. Bridges, M.C., M.P., Secretary.
THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION.

Conversations with Representatives of the French Government.

(Previous Reference: Cabinet 43 (33).)

THE PRIME MINISTER said that during the preceding two hours British Ministers had had conversations with M. Daladier and M. Bonnet. At the outset of the conversation he (the Prime Minister) had asked the Interpreter to read a Memorandum summarising his conversations with Herr Hitler. M. Daladier had then said that the French Government had not received a copy of Herr Hitler's Memorandum until 10.30 that morning.

A Meeting of the French Council of Ministers had been held that day and had reached the following unanimous conclusions:

(1) They rejected the suggestion that the International Commission, the principle of which had been adopted in the joint Franco-British proposals, should be suppressed. The French Government could not recognise Herr Hitler's right to take possession of the Sudeten German areas by force.

(2) They refused to agree to a plebiscite being held in the green areas in which Herr Hitler recognised the existence of a Czech majority.

In the view of the French Government it was no longer a question of reaching a fair arrangement. Herr Hitler's object was to destroy Czechoslovakia and to dominate Europe.

The Prime Minister said that he had then elucidated one or two points in regard to which the French Government appeared to have misunderstood Herr Hitler's proposals. He had pointed out that as regards transfer of territory the proposal was that the red areas should be taken over by Germany by agreement and not by force. Again, the red areas corresponded broadly to the areas with over 50% of German population which it had been contemplated should be transferred under the Franco-British proposals for the cession of areas. Further, M. Daladier seemed to have been in some confusion as to the precise functions of the International Commission under the original proposals.
M. Daladier had also seemed not to have understood that while Herr Hitler had proposed that German troops should occupy the red areas forthwith, he had contemplated that a plebiscite should later be carried out within those red areas. He (the Prime Minister) had, however, been unwilling to spend any considerable time in clearing up these misunderstandings.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer had then given the following brief resume of the salient points of the conversation which followed:-

"THE PRIME MINISTER: What do you propose to do next?
M. DALADIER: I propose that it should be suggested to Herr Hitler that he should return to the plan agreed upon last Sunday.

THE PRIME MINISTER: What will happen if Herr Hitler refuses?
M. DALADIER: I suppose that everyone will do his duty. I have no proposals to make.

THE PRIME MINISTER: Herr Hitler told me that his Memorandum constituted his last word, and that if he could not reach a peaceful settlement he would impose on Czechoslovakia a frontier based on strategic considerations.

M. DALADIER: In that case Germany will be guilty of an unprovoked aggression.

THE PRIME MINISTER: Would France then declare war?
M. DALADIER: France would fulfil her obligations of assistance."

Questions had then been put to ascertain whether France proposed to man the Maginot Line and to take no further action, or whether she proposed to embark on hostilities with Germany by making full use of her land forces. M. Daladier had said
that he could not discuss technical questions, but that France's future action would depend on many things.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had pressed M. Daladier a good deal on this. Finally, M. Daladier had said that it would be ridiculous to mobilise a large force of men and to leave them doing nothing. The German fortifications opposite the Maginot Line were not as yet very solid, and he thought that France could try a land offensive, after a period of concentration. Likewise in regard to the air he had said that it would, of course, be possible to use the French Air Force against certain military and industrial centres in Germany.

At a later stage in the conversation M. Daladier had said that while the French Air Force was inferior to the German Air Force in matériel, its personnel was good. He had also spoken encouragingly of the Russian Air Force, which, he said, was as good as the German. Russia had 5,000 aeroplanes and in M. Daladier's view the Russian aeroplanes had been a match for the German machines in Spain. He had also referred to the strength of the British Navy and the possibility of a blockade.

M. Daladier had then said that in his view the real question was this. Herr Hitler had stated that he had said his last word. Did we accept that position? If we favoured its acceptance he thought that at least we should send for the Czechs and hear what they had to say before they were sacrificed. Finally he had put three questions to the Prime Minister:

(1) Does the British Government accept Herr Hitler's plan?
(2) Does the British Government intend to press the plan on the Czech Government?
(3) Does the British Government think
that France ought to take no action?

To these questions the Prime Minister had replied as follows:-

(1) It was for Czechoslovakia, and not for this country or France, to accept or reject Herr Hitler's proposals.

(2) We had received a message from the Czechoslovak Government which did not represent their complete reply. It was clear, however, that the nature of the interim reply was an unqualified refusal. In any case we were not in a position to put pressure on the Czechs.

(3) He was not sure that it was for His Majesty's Government to answer this question, but it was clear that whatever decision the French Government arrived at might affect us. It was not for us to say what action France should take, but it was important to know what France intended to do.

Having regard to the evasive nature of the replies of the French Ministers to our questions as to their military plans, the Prime Minister had suggested that General Gamelin should be invited to visit England on Monday, as it was imperative to ascertain whether the French really intended to carry out any serious offensive hostilities against Germany. General Gamelin was in a position to speak on behalf of all France's three Fighting Services.

The Prime Minister added that he thought it was significant that never once had the French put the question "If we go to war with Germany will you come in, too?"

THE HOME SECRETARY said that M. Daladier had been very anxious to find some alternative suggestion. He had proposed that an International Commission should be sent out at once, and should start allocating the predominantly German areas to Germany, thus giving to the cession the respectability of an International Commission. He had thought that the Commission might be set up in three days and might complete
its work in ten days. He contemplated that the whole business should proceed very quickly and that the German troops should move in as the work was completed.

In reply to the Secretary of State for Air the Prime Minister said that no clear indication had been obtained as to the French Cabinet's intentions.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that M. Daladier had used the phrase "Drawing the bulk of the German Army against France so as to relieve the pressure on Czechoslovakia.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that, judging by the account that had been given to the Cabinet, the British Ministers had appeared to have contested the French point of view on every point and to have allowed it to appear that they disagreed with the French Government's suggestions without making any positive contribution themselves.

The Prime Minister said that he could not accept this.

The Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster said that he thought the French would man the Maginot Line and would then launch attacks on Germany. Germany was bound to regard such proceedings as a hostile act and war would necessarily follow.

The Minister of Health asked whether it was fair to summarise the French Government attitude as follows: that they considered the German Memorandum unacceptable; that if Czechoslovakia rejected it and Germany attacked Czechoslovakia, that would be an unprovoked aggression, and that the French would in consequence then take some action?

The Prime Minister agreed.
THE LORD CHANCELLOR pointed out that the French Council of Ministers had met that day for three hours, and it seemed that they were undecided what they would do. He thought that the French idea was to keep Germany guessing, in the hope that Europe would take the view that France was fulfilling her obligations by keeping a large number of German troops immobilised opposite the French frontier.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that M. Daladier and General Gamelin had been in consultation for several hours that day. He thought that General Gamelin could not give the answer to what was strictly a political question, namely what decision the French Government would take if and when hostilities broke out. Further, it would be impossible to cross-examine him on strategical issues, or, indeed, to go beyond the point of obtaining a definite assurance that the French Forces were in a state of readiness for war.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had a further suggestion which he would like to communicate to the Cabinet. It was now clear that Czechoslovakia had decided to reject Herr Hitler's proposals, and it was necessary to consider transmitting that refusal to Herr Hitler. As matters stood, Herr Hitler would march into Czechoslovakia, and we should then have to see what France would do. He was unwilling to leave unexplored any possible chance of avoiding war. He suggested that, basing himself on the personal conversations he had had with Herr Hitler, he should write a personal letter to the Führer saying that he had received intimation that the Prague Government were likely to reject Herr Hitler's proposals and making one last appeal to him.
He proposed to ask him to agree to the appointment of a Joint Commission, with German and Czech members and a British representative. This Commission would not start de novo, but would consider how the proposals accepted by the present Czech Government could be put into effect in an orderly manner and as quickly as possible, and without shocking public opinion. This further move would once more demonstrate to the world how hard we had tried to preserve peace. If it was unsuccessful, we should lose nothing by it, and it would help to consolidate world opinion in our favour. It might also help to rally the Dominions to our side. There was a chance that it would be accepted, although he could not pretend that he thought it was likely to be accepted.

The Prime Minister said that his idea was to send this letter by Sir Horace Wilson and Sir Nevile Henderson. Sir Horace had been at the recent conversations and had himself talked to Herr Hitler, and he would go as the Prime Minister's Confidential Adviser. He thought that it was out of the question for him (the Prime Minister) to make a further visit to the Führer.

If the letter failed to secure any response from Herr Hitler, Sir Horace Wilson should be authorised to give a personal message from the Prime Minister to the effect that if this appeal was refused, France would go to war, and that if that happened it seemed certain that we should be drawn in.

The Prime Minister said that it was just possible that there was some element of bluff in Herr Hitler's attitude, but the line which he proposed would afford Herr Hitler a possible way out. He proposed that his appeal should be published as soon as it had been made. It was just possible that Herr Hitler might be induced to take the line that after his conversations with the British Prime Minister he was prepared to adopt that very magnanimous attitude.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that if the Prime Minister, with his knowledge of Herr Hitler, thought that this course was a useful one, he thought the Cabinet should act on it. Herr Hitler was proposing to broadcast on Monday evening and action must be taken at once before he made his broadcast speech.
THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY thought that we should say definitely to Herr Hitler that, if this appeal was rejected, the Czechs would fight and the French would come to their aid, and that we should come in on their side too.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was quite clear that this should not be said in his letter to Herr Hitler. To do so would rule out all chance of acceptance of this appeal.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE said he understood that the Czechs had asked us not to take any action pending their final reply. He thought they might be playing for time.

THE PRIME MINISTER and the FOREIGN SECRETARY undertook to bear this point in mind.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL referred to the Report of the Chiefs of Staff submitted by the Minister for Co-ordination of Defence in which it was pointed out that it was essential to have at least 48 hours' notice before we were engaged in hostilities. He asked whether the present proposal was consistent with this requirement.

THE PRIME MINISTER said he did not anticipate that the step now proposed would be followed by immediate war. He proposed to communicate this suggestion confidentially to the French Ministers. He felt sure that they would agree to it willingly.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that he agreed entirely with the present proposal.
He thought it was of the utmost importance to use every attempt to find a peaceful solution. Further, such procedure was essential if we were to ensure the co-operation of the Dominions. He referred to telegram No. 524 from Berlin reporting the attitude of the representative of the South African Government in Berlin to the effect that the South African Government could not regard war on the present issue as in any way justified. We must watch carefully the possible effect on the British Commonwealth of Nations.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCY OF LANCASTER agreed wholeheartedly with the Prime Minister's proposal. He added that he did not agree with the Secretary of State for the Colonies as to what was likely to happen in South Africa.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY asked whether it was proposed to give any indication that if this plan was not accepted, we should stand by Czechoslovakia.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he did not propose that anything should be included in his letter to Herr Hitler which looked like a threat. Anything in the form of a threat would destroy any chance of acceptance of the appeal. It might, however, be possible to include in the letter some words to the effect that the consequences of the rejection of the appeal could not be measured. As he had explained, however, he proposed that Sir Horace Wilson should be authorised, if his appeal failed, to supplement it by an oral message from the Prime Minister.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE and the MINISTER OF HEALTH expressed their concurrence in the course proposed.
THE PRIME MINISTER added that he proposed to give the French Government an indication of the nature of the oral message which Sir Horace Wilson should, in the last resort, give to Herr Hitler. The precise wording of the message would, of course, have to depend in part upon the fuller knowledge which we hoped to obtain of the French Government's intentions.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR said that he thought General Gamelin would refuse to communicate details of his plans, unless he was sure that we were going to participate in their fulfilment. General Gamelin had been in close touch with the War Office. He thought it would be necessary to consider carefully whether he should be called into the consultations with Ministers or whether he should consult with his opposite number, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

He concurred warmly in the Prime Minister's proposal for a final appeal to Herr Hitler. He wondered whether the psychological effect would be increased if we were to take further precautionary measures. He again referred to the urgency, in his view, for authority being now given to call up the A.A. Units of the Territorial Army.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that all we could hope to get out of General Gamelin was a statement that he had a plan, and that the question for determination was whether French Ministers would give authority to put the plan into effect.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that he hoped it would be made plain to the French that a final communication would be addressed to Herr Hitler to the effect that, if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia and France went to her support, we should go to the support of France.
CONCLUSIONS.

The Cabinet agreed:

(1) That the Prime Minister should send a further letter to Herr Hitler by Sir Horace Wilson on Monday making an appeal to him on the lines proposed:

(2) To authorise the Prime Minister to communicate the proposed plan in outline to the French Delegation (including an indication of the oral message proposed) and to continue discussions with the French Ministers on the lines suggested.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

26th September, 1938.
SECRET.

CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.I., on Monday, 26th September, 1938, at 12 Noon.

PRESENT:-

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.
Lord Waughan,
Lord Chancellor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 Earl De La Warr,
Lord Privy Seal.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C., Secretary.
1. THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had received a message from President Roosevelt urging him to continue negotiations up to the last possible moment in order to arrive at a peaceful settlement.

The Prime Minister said that effect had now been given to the proposal which he had put to the Cabinet at the Meeting which ended earlier that morning that he should send a personal appeal to Herr Hitler. Sir Horace Wilson had now left for Berlin with a personal message from him (the Prime Minister). Sir Nevile Henderson had been instructed to seek an interview for Sir Horace Wilson and himself with Herr Hitler. Although the Prime Minister placed no particular hopes on this last appeal, he thought there was just a chance that it might have some result. The fact that the message was being taken by Sir Horace Wilson was of great value, as Sir Horace Wilson could speak personally on behalf of the Prime Minister as his Confidential Adviser. We should know what measure of success Sir Horace had achieved when Herr Hitler's broadcast was received at 8 o'clock that evening.
2. THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had again seen the French Ministers that morning. There had been a perceptible change in their attitude since the previous night. In the hope of getting a better indication of their mind he had seen M. Daladier alone, with M. Corbin to help in interpreting.

He had told M. Daladier about the message which he was sending by Sir Horace Wilson, and M. Daladier had agreed entirely with this course. The Prime Minister had told M. Daladier of the nature of the appeal which he had instructed Sir Horace Wilson to make on his behalf. He had also informed him that if Sir Horace could get no satisfaction from Herr Hitler, then he proposed that he should speak in the following terms to the Führer:-

"The French Government have informed us that, if the Czechs reject the Memorandum and Germany attacks Czechoslovakia, they will fulfil their obligations to Czechoslovakia. Should the forces of France in consequence become engaged in active hostilities against Germany, we shall feel obliged to support them."

He had asked M. Daladier whether he had any comments to make on the proposed oral statement or whether it would embarrass him in any way. M. Daladier had said that he was absolutely in accord with the proposed statement and had no comment to make on it. He had impressed on M. Daladier the importance of maintaining absolute secrecy in regard to this proposed message, but he had given a copy of it to M. Corbin.

The Prime Minister said that he had then asked M. Daladier whether he wished to say anything further.
M. Daladier had said that, speaking frankly, he did not feel that he had expressed himself well on the previous evening. He stated that if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia and hostilities ensued, the French intended to go to war and to commence hostilities with Germany within five days. He had given certain details of the French dispositions and views.

(A copy of the statement which the Prime Minister made on this point is included in the Secretary's standard file of Cabinet Conclusions.)

That, in essence, was the situation. There was still one last opportunity for negotiation, but if that failed, France and this country stood together.

The Cabinet approved the action taken by the Prime Minister.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR raised the question of the Intermediate Contingent. He said that it would facilitate the discussions with General Gamelin if it could be assumed that the plan of despatch of the Intermediate Contingent could be fulfilled.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER thought that this matter could hardly be described as an "assumption". He thought it was a decision of fundamental importance and must be regarded as an issue which was still entirely open and remained to be decided on its merits.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE mentioned that in a conversation he had had that morning with General Gamelin he had gathered that the French dispositions had been made independently of any British assistance by air or land.
THE INTER-NATIONAL SITUATION.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER read a statement he had received from the Right Hon. Winston S. Churchill, M.P., saying that Parliament should now be summoned.

The Prime Minister said that it was clear that Parliament must now be summoned. The only question in his mind was whether it should be summoned for Tuesday, 27th September, or Wednesday, 28th September. On the whole, he favoured the latter date. The position would be much clearer on Wednesday, and there was much to be done in the meantime.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS suggested that it might be desirable that the Debate in the House of Lords should take place a day after the Debate in the House of Commons, but it was agreed that the House of Lords should be summoned on the same day as the House of Commons. The point which the Foreign Secretary had in mind could be dealt with by the House of Lords meeting formally and adjourning at once on Wednesday until the following day.

The Cabinet agreed:

That Parliament should be summoned to meet on Wednesday, the 28th September.
4. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR HOME AFFAIRS

said that consideration should be given to the
question whether the Defence of the Realm Act
should be passed at once. His view was that it
would be better to postpone the introduction of
this legislation until general agreement had been
reached with the Leaders of the Opposition,
although this might involve a few days' delay.

This course was agreed to.
5. Discussion took place in regard to mobilisation measures and the introduction of the Preparatory and Precautionary Periods.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE mentioned that, on the authority of the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State for War had now been authorised to call up the Anti-aircraft personnel of the Territorial Army, and that the Secretary of State for Air had been authorised to call up the personnel of the Observer Corps.

He explained that it was desirable that the Anti-aircraft personnel should be called up, if possible, 48 hours before mobilisation, in order that the guns and searchlights should be placed in position. This was important, since if mobilisation was regarded by Germany as a hostile action we might be attacked before our anti-aircraft defences were in position.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR stated that steps were being taken to inform the Press that the measures taken in regard to Anti-aircraft personnel did not constitute general mobilisation.

In regard to other precautionary measures, the need for steps to be taken to prevent sabotage, and the installation of censorship, were mentioned.

The general view taken was that it was undesirable to deal with these matters individually.

It was pointed out that the War-Book prescribed a number of steps which formed part of an integral scheme which should be considered as a whole.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence had been authorised by the Prime Minister to assemble a Conference of Ministers at 3 p.m. that afternoon to consider the measures set out in the
Report of the Co-ordination Committee (C.P. 208(38))

with a view to -

(i) Taking immediate decisions on such matters as, in their judgment, it was unnecessary to refer to the Cabinet; and

(ii) Making recommendations in regard to those measures which required Cabinet authority.

It was agreed -

That the Ministers concerned should have authority to take decisions in regard to these matters, subject to -

(a) reference to the Cabinet of such matters as clearly required Cabinet decision;

(b) submission to the Prime Minister on matters of vital importance.

Discussion took place whether it would be necessary to summon a Cabinet in order to reach conclusions in regard to mobilisation. It was pointed out that Herr Hitler's speech that evening would probably make it clear whether immediate mobilisation was necessary.

On the suggestion of the CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER, the Cabinet agreed:

That the Prime Minister, in consultation with the Lord President of the Council, should be authorised to make the necessary arrangements for obtaining the approval of His Majesty in Council to the mobilisation Proclamations and other documents, if he should consider this course was necessary without summoning the Cabinet.

It was agreed that if orders were given for mobilisation, this involved giving effect to other measures.

Note: At a Meeting of Ministers held at 3.0 p.m. on 26th September, it was decided that certain other measures, included in the Precautionary Period, should be taken by Departments immediately on receipt of instructions from the Prime Minister for mobilisation, without further Cabinet authority.
set out in the War Book, which were essentially linked with mobilisation. It was pointed out that should it become necessary to hold a meeting of the Privy Council within the course of the next few days, this might interfere with the visit of His Majesty The King to Glasgow, and it was agreed that a suitable message should be conveyed to the King's Private Secretary.
6. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA referred to the proposal contained in the Report of a Conference of Ministers held at the Admiralty on the 25th September, 1938, that the War Office should have authority to take up the question of the reinforcement of the Singapore garrison from India in consultation with the War Office without further reference to higher authority.

It was agreed:

That if the Ministers concerned were unable to reach agreement on this matter it should be referred to the Committee of Imperial Defence.
7. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR THE COLONIES reported that he had had a discussion that morning with the Dominion High Commissioners. They had all said in the strongest possible terms that, in the view of their Governments, if there was any possible chance of peace by negotiation the opportunity should not be lost. In their view acceptance of Herr Hitler's proposals was better than war. At the same time they had little doubt that if we became involved in war the Dominions would join in too. The Secretary of State added that he thought that while Australia and New Zealand might join us after a short delay, in the case of South Africa and Eire the delay might be rather considerable.

THE PRIME MINISTER reported that he had had a telephone message from Mr. Lyons that morning. Mr. Lyons had expressed entire approval of the attitude which His Majesty's Government had adopted, and had said that he regarded the present issue as a "method of procedure rather than principle."

8. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that information had been received indirectly from the French Government the previous evening that M. Benes had approached Poland and had offered to cede Teschen to Poland in exchange for a guarantee from Poland for non-aggression.
This matter had been put to the French Ministers that morning and they had agreed that this was the position. They had also taken the view that the British and French Governments should both send a telegram to their Ministers in Warsaw instructing them to inform the Polish Government that, in the light of M. Benes's offer, they would regard any further action by Poland to use violent means to secure their aims as unjustified.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY stated that he hoped that, in this way, it would be possible to put a stop to sinister designs entertained by Poland to aggrandize themselves at Czechoslovakia's expense during the present situation.

9. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS mentioned that there were a number of difficult points involved.

In the course of discussion, it was pointed out that the action proposed was a problem involving a technical act of war.

It was agreed that the matter should be discussed by the Ministers concerned, and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should take the necessary steps to convene a meeting.

10. THE PRIME MINISTER mentioned that he thought that it would probably be desirable that he should broadcast on Tuesday evening.

Some discussion took place as to what would be the best technical arrangements for such a broadcast in order to ensure that it would reach the widest possible number of listeners both in this country, abroad and in Germany. If the Ministry of Information had been set up, this matter would fall within their scope.
In the course of discussion, the Minister of Labour and the Secretary of State for Air deprecated the publicity given by the British Broadcasting Corporation in their news broadcasts to rumours which appeared in various journals.

THE CABINET agreed:

that the Secretary should be instructed to invite Sir Robert Vansittart, Sir Stephen Tallents and Mr. Steward to consider, as a matter of urgency, and to make suggestions in regard to the best arrangements for the Prime Minister's broadcast.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
26th September, 1938.
If hostilities ensued and Germany attacked Czechoslovakia, the French intended to enter the war and to launch an attack within about five days. The points in the line where this attack would take place had been indicated, and General Gamelin had said that recent German troop movements showed that they appreciated the weakness of this spot.

Asked whether the French contemplated attack by air, General Gamelin had said "Yes". France was well aware that she would suffer heavily from air attacks. Nevertheless, she would take offensive action, particularly against industrial districts near the frontier.

Czechoslovakia had 34 Divisions, and Germany had the same number opposite her. Until recently those Divisions had been drawn up along the Czech frontiers. More recently, however, the Divisions had moved up to the north and south of the narrowest points of Czechoslovakia. In other words, the position of the troops had been changed from a covering position to a position of preparedness for attack. General Gamelin thought that the Czechoslovak army would give a good account of themselves. They had 500 aeroplanes of their own, and had recently acquired 280 from Russia. They would try to keep open the bottle-neck at all costs, so that even if they were forced to retire their army would still be able to pass out from the western frontier to the eastern part of the country, and they would be able to maintain a fighting force.

The French had 23 Divisions on the western front. Opposite them there were 8 German Divisions.
The Siegfried Line was far from complete. In fact, in many respects it was improvised. The French thought they were in a position to make an attack which would at least draw off troops from Czechoslovakia. They proposed to make use of their aviation in connection with the Army.

...
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1, on Tuesday, 27th September, 1938, at 9.30 p.m.

PRESENT:-

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


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


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


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

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

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

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

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

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


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

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


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

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

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

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

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

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT:-

Sir Horace J. Wilson, G.C.B., G.C.M.G., C.B.E.

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C. ........................................... Secretary.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had thought it right to call the Cabinet together to hear about the developments in the situation since they last met, and also to hear from Sir Horace Wilson an account of his interviews with Herr Hitler.

There were a number of other recent developments of which the Cabinet should be aware.

The Prime Minister read out telegram No. 534 from our Ambassador at Berlin, recording his view of the situation. The Ambassador took the view that, unless at this eleventh hour, we advised Czechoslovakia to make the best terms she could with Berlin, we should be exposing Czechoslovakia to the fate of Abyssinia.

The Prime Minister also reported that that afternoon he had seen the Military Attache from Berlin, who had just returned from a visit to Czechoslovakia. He had found the moral of the country very poor and had formed the impression that they would offer a feeble resistance. Their material arrangements also were not ready.

More disturbing than this was the fact that the Dominions were far from happy about the situation. He read a telegram from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia, of which the most important point was that, the transfer of the Sudeten areas to Germany having been agreed upon in principle, the precise method of giving effect to that decision was not a matter of sufficient importance to warrant a dispute leading to war.
He had also received that morning an aide-memoire from Mr. te Water. General Hertzog had asked Mr. te Water to inform the Prime Minister that he and his colleagues felt that Herr Hitler’s Memorandum should be accepted.

The Prime Minister added that the High Commissioners of the Dominions had all visited Downing Street that afternoon and had all represented that in their view further pressure should be put upon the Czechoslovak Government to accept Herr Hitler’s terms. The situation vis-à-vis the Dominions was thus very delicate. He asked the Colonial Secretary to explain the position more fully.

THE SECRETARY OF THE STATE FOR THE COLONIES said that during the last three or four days the High Commissioners had been expressing the view indicated by the Prime Minister with increasing insistence. That afternoon they had insisted that he should lay their views before the Prime Minister. His own view was that if we were involved in war, all the Dominions would sooner or later come in with us, but it was clear that they would come in only after making a number of reservations.

No doubt it was difficult to be quite certain what view was taken by public opinion in the Dominions generally. It was clear that Mr. Lyons was correctly representing the views of his Government, but he had received a telegram from the Acting High Commissioner in Australia, who thought that Mr. Lyons under-estimated the strength of feeling in Australia against acceptance of
Herr Hitler's proposals. There could be no doubt, however, that the High Commissioners were unanimous in the view that we should urge Czechoslovakia to accept Herr Hitler's proposals.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was our clear duty to lay before the Czechoslovak Government the information which we had received as to Germany's intentions if Herr Hitler's proposals were not accepted. This had been done in telegram No. 367 to Prague, which had been sent off that afternoon with his approval.

He then asked Sir Horace Wilson to give an account of his interviews with Herr Hitler.

SIR HORACE WILSON said that he had had two interviews. The first had taken place on Monday at 5 p.m. and had lasted until nearly 6 p.m. Herr Hitler had been due to deliver his speech at 8 p.m. and had been in a considerable state of excitement. When the second paragraph of the Prime Minister's letter of the 26th September (which informed the Chancellor that the Czechoslovak Government had rejected Herr Hitler's proposals) had been reached, he had risen from his chair and it was only with difficulty that he could be persuaded to resume his seat. After a time the discussion had been continued, and Herr Hitler then stated that he could not depart from the terms of his Memorandum. He said that he had waited many weeks for Dr. Benes to take some action to show that he meant business, but he could wait no longer. He must now take action, and the areas must be handed over to Germany by the 1st October.

Sir Horace said he had felt that it was useless to continue the discussion while Herr Hitler was in that
mood; still less would it have been appropriate to present to him the special oral message which he had been authorised to give, and which Herr Hitler might have regarded as an ultimatum, as this might have made the character of his speech on Monday night more inflammatory. He had therefore concluded the interview and had asked if he might resume the talk on the next day.

The second interview had accordingly taken place at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, 27th September. Sir Horace Wilson had referred to Herr Hitler's speech, and in particular to the sentences in it which had been inserted as the result of what the Prime Minister had said to the Fuhrer at Godesberg. For example, Herr Hitler had publicly declared that when the Sudeten-German question had been settled, he had no further territorial claims in Europe. Sir Horace said that he had then spoken on the lines of the statement made by the Prime Minister to the Press early that morning, and had asked whether, in the light of that statement, the Fuhrer had any message for the Prime Minister, who was willing to consider further efforts at mediation. Herr Hitler had replied that we ought to put further pressure on Czechoslovakia; Herr Hitler had stated plainly that in his view there were two alternatives, and two only: first, acceptance of the terms of his Memorandum; second, that the German troops would over-run Czechoslovakia. Sir Horace had replied that there was no course open to him but to report what Herr Hitler had said to the Prime Minister, who would, no doubt, inform the Czechoslovak Government, upon whom would rest the responsibility for a final decision.
Sir Horace Wilson said that he had then delivered the special oral message. He had led up to the message carefully by emphasising that he had been instructed to present the course of events as His Majesty's Government foresaw them if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia. He had then given the precise terms of the message, very slowly.

Sir Horace said that Herr Hitler had taken the message very quietly and had begun to put questions. Herr Hitler had then said that, first of all, he must tell Sir Horace that he had no intention of attacking France. This had been repeated by Herr von Ribbentrop, who had made no other contribution to the conversation. Herr Hitler then said that if the gist of the message delivered by Sir Horace was that if he (Herr Hitler) carried out his policy in regard to Czechoslovakia, France and England would attack Germany. Sir Horace had then repeated the precise way in which he had led up to the formula, and had again explained that it represented that would bring Britain into war with Germany, the sequence of events. Herr Hitler had repeated that he had no intention whatsoever of attacking France. He was, however, prepared for all eventualities. He mentioned the immense sums which had been spent on the Western fortifications, and had said that we must understand that it was Czechoslovakia who was responsible for this state of affairs. This had been the prelude to the usual tirade against Czechoslovakia.
As they walked away from the meeting, Herr Hitler had asked him to convey to the Prime Minister and His Majesty's Government his thanks for the efforts they had made to avoid a conflict. He could not believe that Germany and England could find themselves at war, and he urged the Prime Minister to do all he could to induce Czechoslovakia to accept his Memorandum.

Sir Horace said that it was clear that they had to deal with a firm conviction on Herr Hitler's part that Dr. Benes was a twister, who would never implement his promises but would continue to prevaricate. He thought that Dr. Benes would refuse his terms because he thought France and Great Britain would support him, and he could not understand why we were under his influence. Herr Hitler, Herr von Ribbentrop and Field-Marshal Goering had all made play with messages from M. Masaryk to Dr. Benes, which they admitted to have tapped. These messages urged Dr. Benes to stand firm, and said that there was no need for them to cede territory since they had got France and Great Britain exactly where they wanted. All this confirmed Herr Hitler in his view that Dr. Benes was procrastinating, and he asked why we allowed our policy to be settled as the result of the influence of Russia, exerted at Paris and Prague. He had repeated that at this hour there were only two alternatives, and he had asked us to do all we could to find a settlement and avoid war.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR asked whether Herr Hitler had indicated that anything was likely to result from the Prime Minister's offer that we would undertake to see that Czechoslovakia carried out the terms of the Franco-British proposals?

SIR HORACE WILSON replied that in Herr Hitler's view this came too late. He thought that Herr Hitler doubted whether we should be able to take effective steps to ensure that Dr. Benes fulfilled his promises.

Assuming that Czechoslovakia would not accept Herr Hitler's Memorandum, and would feel it too humiliating, in particular, to accept the terms set out in paragraph 2, the only question which remained was whether there was any other course which would avoid the complete overwhelming of Czechoslovakia by Germany. Herr Hitler, in his speech the previous evening, had intended to make it clear that he would be content to settle the Sudeten German question on the basis of the cession of areas to be defined by an International Commission. He adhered to the offer of a plebiscite, and to the withdrawal of the German troops while the plebiscite was being carried out. He also agreed to the proposal put before him by Sir Frederick Maurice that British ex-Service men should be employed to assist in keeping order during the plebiscite period.
Assuming that Czechoslovakia would not accept Herr Hitler's terms, the only plan which could prevent the country from being overrun would be for the Czechoslovak Government to withdraw their troops from the red areas and allow Germany to occupy them without loss of life. When this had been done, the determination of the areas to be ceded permanently could be carried out by an International Commission, with a plebiscite. If this happened, the Czechoslovak Government would have the benefit of Herr Hitler's public declaration that Sudeten German territory represented the last of his territorial aims in Europe. They would also have the Franco-British guarantee, as proposed in the joint Franco-British Memorandum. If the Czechoslovak Government would agree to this course on the ensuing day the German Government would co-operate with them. In justification of this course the Czechoslovak Government could urge that they had acted in the interests of European peace and to avoid bloodshed. If they did not adopt this course it was clear that the German occupation of Czechoslovakia would almost certainly be very much more extensive.
In reply to a question from the Secretary of State for Air, SIR HORACE WILSON said that he thought that if Czechoslovakia offered resistance the German troops would not stop at the language line.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE pointed out that this was consistent with information given them by General Gamelin as to the concentration of German troops north and south of the bottle-neck of Czechoslovakia.

THE PRIME MINISTER added that the latest information was that Poland would side with Germany. This would be consistent with the fact that they had rejected the proposals made to them by M. Benes.

THE FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY said that the facts presented all tended to one conclusion. There were, however, other facts which tended the other way. He referred to President Roosevelt's message and to the latest reports from our Ambassador in Paris, which showed a much firmer spirit in France than previously.

As regards the Dominions, he did not think that too much importance should be attached to the opinions expressed at this moment by their High Commissioners. Perhaps the really extraordinary thing was that the Dominions should ever take part in a European war. After all, our position in regard to the co-operation of the Dominions was more favourable than it had been in 1914, when there had been a Revolution in South Africa. He thought that if we waited until there was complete unanimity with the Dominion Governments on issues of peace and war in Europe, that would mean that we should never go to war.
The First Lord rather regretted that the special message, which Sir Horace Wilson had been authorised to deliver, had not been delivered before Herr Hitler had made his speech. Public opinion in Germany still doubted whether we should come into the war and he thought that we had, in fact, given them some justification for this doubt.

The First Lord here referred to the semi-official statement issued in the press on the preceding evening.

The proposal before the Cabinet that evening really amounted to a proposal that, at the eleventh hour, after having seen the French Ministers yesterday, we should urge Czechoslovakia to a policy of surrender. It was no use urging that course on Czechoslovakia unless we also told her that, unless she adopted it, we should refuse to come to her help. He thought that this course was quite unjustified and he could not be associated with it.

The Secretary of State for Scotland said that at the time when the reply of the Czechoslovak Government to Herr Hitler’s Memorandum had been received, he had thought that there had been no opportunity to place before Czechoslovakia a statement of the probable consequences if she rejected the Memorandum. He thought that we were entitled, when laying proposals before Czechoslovakia, to give a clear statement of the probable consequences of their decision.

The President of the Board of Trade asked for some further explanation of the proposal now before the Cabinet.

The Prime Minister said that Sir Horace Wilson, having returned from delivering the Prime Minister’s message to Herr Hitler, had reached the conclusion that it was certain that Herr Hitler would attack Czechoslovakia, unless either his terms were accepted or the further suggestion
now put forward was acted upon. If Czechoslovakia opposed Germany's attack by force of arms, it was clear that German troops would not stop at the red line, but would overrun the whole country until they had reached what Herr Hitler had described as a "strategic frontier", namely a line across the bottle-neck of Czechoslovakia. If, however, Czechoslovakia made the announcement now suggested that, while not accepting Herr Hitler's terms, they would not resist the march of his troops up to the red line, then it would be possible to avoid bloodshed. He did not propose that we should advise Czechoslovakia to take this course, but merely that we should put this suggestion before them.

This suggestion had been considered by the Prime Minister and the three colleagues who were in constant consultation with him. They had thought that this offer was perhaps the last opportunity for avoiding war, and that it would not be right that they should decide against its adoption, without putting all the facts before the Cabinet and leaving them to judge for themselves.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE asked in what respect this proposal differed from acceptance of the German Government's proposals.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that if the Czechoslovak Government, having rejected Herr Hitler's terms, left the matter there, the German advance into Czechoslovakia would take place on the basis of the Czech refusal of the German terms, and the Germans would not stop at the red line. If, however, Czechoslovakia let it be known that she was prepared to withdraw her troops behind the red line, then Germany would be prepared to stop at the
red line. The suggestion now under consideration amounted to tacit acceptance of Herr Hitler’s Memorandum.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said that, before dealing with the present suggestion, he would like to inform his colleagues of one or two matters.

First, the French Embassy had informed him that M. Bonnet thought that there were points in Herr Hitler’s speech which were promising, and which should be taken up and discussed with Germany. He mentioned his references to the International Commission. M. Bonnet had also enquired whether some compromise could not be put forward which would enable the evacuation by Czechoslovakian troops, of the districts which it had been agreed should be ceded to Germany, to proceed swiftly, and for a measure of occupation by German troops to take place rapidly.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had already been working out an accelerated time-table and, after receiving this suggestion of the French Government, he had despatched telegrams, putting forward tentative suggestions for such a scheme to Prague (No. 358), Berlin (No. 428) and Paris (No. 338).

The Foreign Secretary then read extracts from these telegrams.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had never entertained much hope that this scheme would be accepted, but there could be no harm in making this further effort to secure a peaceful settlement. This telegram had been drafted and despatched before he had seen Sir Horace Wilson’s report on his visit to Herr Hitler.
The Foreign Secretary then turned to the suggestion which had been explained by the Prime Minister and Sir Horace Wilson, and the draft telegram in which the suggestion had been embodied. For his part he would feel great difficulty in sending the draft telegram. In the first place, certain decisions had been reached with the French on Sunday, and we could not depart from those decisions without consulting with the French Government. The suggestion amounted to complete capitulation to Germany. He realised that, if we did not adopt this suggestion, the consequences to Czechoslovakia and to many other people might well be very grievous. Nevertheless he did not feel that it was right to do more than to place before M. Beneš an objective account of the position. That had already been done (see telegram 367 to Prague).

Further, the Foreign Secretary said that he felt that there was a much greater difference between the Franco-British proposals and the German Memorandum than one of time, method and degree. We could not press the Czechoslovakian Government to do what we believed to be wrong. Nor did he think that the present suggestion was one which would be accepted by the House of Commons. Finally, we could not adopt this suggestion unless we assured Czechoslovakia that the Germans would stop at the red line, and he would feel some difficulty in giving such an assurance.

The Foreign Secretary therefore felt that there was no alternative but to tell Czechoslovakia that they must be responsible for making their own decision. We should make, however, our co-operation with the French as close as possible, and in consultation with them judge what action we ought to take.
THE PRIME MINISTER said that the Foreign Secretary had given powerful and perhaps convincing reasons against the adoption of his suggestion. If that was the general view of his colleagues, he was prepared to leave it at that.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he was of the same view as the Foreign Secretary. He also pointed out that in telegram 367 to Prague we had stated that we could not take the responsibility of advising the Prague Government. This alone would make it very difficult for us to press on the Czechoslovak Government the adoption of the new suggestion.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE BOARD OF TRADE expressed some surprise that telegram No. 488 to Berlin, referred to by the Foreign Secretary, which suggested the immediate occupation of Egerland by Germany, should have been despatched without consultation with the Cabinet.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that a fortnight ago M. Hodza had suggested the cession of Egerland. The suggestion had also been dealt with in consultation with the French Ambassador, who had concurred in it. Egerland was outside the fortifications, and 90 per cent. of the inhabitants were Germans.

THE LORD CHANCELLOR asked whether the most recent events had been communicated to the French Government.

THE PRIME MINISTER said this had been done, but there had been no time to ascertain what effect this had had on the French Government's attitude.

THE CABINET agreed that the proposal to telegraph to Prague, putting forward the suggestion that the German troops should be allowed to advance up to the red line without resistance should not be proceeded with.
THE PRIME MINISTER read out Herr Hitler's reply to his letter of the 26th September, which had just been received by Telegram 545 from Berlin. It was felt that the letter might be found on examination to afford some ground on which a further proposal for a peaceful settlement could be based. It was thought, however, that the letter, which was obviously very carefully drafted, would require examination before any final conclusion could be expressed upon it.

2. THE PRIME MINISTER said that his broadcast that evening had been couched in rather general terms. In his speech in the House of Commons on Wednesday, it would be necessary for him to go further. He thought that it would be necessary that he should inform the House of Commons of the terms of the special message which he had authorised Sir Horace Wilson to give to Herr Hitler. He did not, however, propose to commit himself to any statement to the effect that, if Germany invaded Czechoslovakia, we should at once go to war with Germany.

There was general agreement expressed with the view that the Prime Minister should base himself on the position that, if in fulfilment of her obligations to Czechoslovakia the forces of France became engaged in active hostilities against Germany, we should feel obliged to support them.
In the course of further discussion it was suggested that the Prime Minister's speech might be based on the theme that he was working for peace up to the last possible moment, and that on that account it was necessary that he should adopt an impartial attitude in regard to the particular matters in dispute. It was thought that this attitude would make for national unity.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER announced that at the meeting held that afternoon, he had authorised the First Lord to proceed with the mobilisation of the Navy. The necessary Order-in-Council would be made early on Wednesday morning. It was explained that this measure did not involve general mobilisation of the Army or Air Force, or the institution of the Precautionary Stage.

4. THE FOREIGN SECRETARY informed his colleagues that General Franco had approached the Portuguese Government and proposed a pact of non-aggression. He had informed the Portuguese Government, who had invited his views, that he thought that they would be well advised to make this pact.

6, Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

27th September, 1938.
APPENDIX.

Appendix

Draft Telegram to Prague.

Most Immediate.

Telegram No. .........

Please deliver following additional message from Prime Minister to Dr. Beneš.

In the light of the considerations set out in my earlier message, it seems to us that it would be wise for you to consider the withdrawal of your troops from the areas to be occupied, in this way leaving the German forces to effect a bloodless occupation. Subsequent developments would, of course, be governed by the arrangements contemplated for the taking of a plebiscite under the International Commission, and you will have noted Hitler's acceptance of the offer of the British Legion to maintain order in the doubtful districts.

2. Hitler's speech last night is a public confirmation of the undertaking he gave to the Prime Minister at Berchtesgaden, namely, that he has no further territorial aims in Europe. Apart from this you have the undertaking as to an international guarantee set forth in paragraph 6 of the joint message transmitted to you on the 18th (9/19) September on behalf of the French and the British Governments.

3. If you should decide that this is in all the circumstances a prudent course to adopt, it would be advisable for you to inform the German Government of your intention at the earliest possible moment and in any case before to-morrow afternoon. No doubt
in any public announcement that was made you would say you had decided upon this action in order to avoid bloodshed and in the interests of European peace.

4. We should be prepared, should you desire it, to make representations to the German Government with a view to ensuring their co-operation in any detailed arrangements which you would find it necessary to make.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Friday, 30th September, 1938, at 7.30 p.m.

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


The Right Hon. Lord Maugham, Lord Chancellor.


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


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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C., Secretary.
THE MUNICH CONFERENCE.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he thought the present occasion justified a departure from the normal procedure at Cabinet Meetings, and that, before the Prime Minister spoke, he should express, on behalf of the whole Cabinet, their profound admiration for the unparalleled efforts the Prime Minister had made and for the success that he had achieved. He would also like to say how proud they were to be associated with the Prime Minister as his colleagues at this time.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was deeply grateful for what the Chancellor of the Exchequer had said, and for the support and help which he had received from his colleagues throughout the crisis. He appreciated that the journeys he had undertaken might easily have failed to achieve satisfactory results. As things had turned out, he felt that we could now safely regard the crisis as ended.

He thought that it was right that his colleagues should meet at once and hear the results of the Conference at Munich.

The discussions had begun after lunch on Thursday and had continued, with occasional intervals, throughout the night until after 1 a.m. on Friday morning. The length of the proceedings was largely due to the inefficiency of the arrangements for the Conference made by the Germans. When the time had come to sign the final Agreements, it had been found that the inkpot into which Herr Hitler dipped his pen was empty!

At the outset of the Conference the Prime Minister had suggested that a Czech representative should be sent for, but it had been represented that the matter was too urgent
to permit of the delay that this course would involve.

The Prime Minister mentioned that Signor Mussolini had arranged for his reception in Rome on his return from the Conference to take place on Friday. This had fixed the latest hour at which Signor Mussolini could leave Munich.

The Prime Minister said that he had done his best for Czechoslovakia in the absence of a Czech Government representative, and he thought that the arrangements secured could, taken as a whole, be regarded as satisfactory.

The simplest method of explaining the arrangement was, he thought, to set out the main differences between the Agreement signed at Munich and the plan put forward by Herr Hitler at Godesberg.

First, the Godesberg Memorandum, though cast in the form of proposals, was in fact an ultimatum with a time-limit of six days.

The Munich Agreement, which had now been accepted by the Czechoslovak Government, reverted, though not in express terms, to the Anglo-French plan (which was referred to in the preamble). The agreement laid down the conditions for the application - on the responsibility of the Four Powers and under international supervision - of the main principle of that plan.

Second, under the Munich Agreement, the evacuation of the territory to be occupied by the German military forces and its occupation by those forces would be carried out in five clearly defined stages between 1st October and 10th October (Article 4), instead of having to be completed in one operation by 1st October.
Third: the line up to which the German troops would enter into occupation was no longer the line drawn by Herr Hitler as laid down in the map attached to the Godesberg Memorandum, but was a line to be fixed by an International Commission on which both Germany and Czechoslovakia would be represented. (Article 4.)

Fourth: under the Godesberg Memorandum, the areas on the Czech side of the Hitler line which were to be subjected to plebiscite were laid down by Germany in the map, while those on the German side of that line were left undefined.

Under the Munich Agreement, all plebiscite areas would be defined by the International Commission (Article 5). The "green areas", therefore, like the Hitler line itself, disappeared. The criterion which the International Commission was to apply was to be the "predominantly German character" of the areas concerned, the interpretation of which was left to the Commission. The Hitler line had taken in some areas which were certainly not of a "predominantly German character".

Fifth: the Godesberg Memorandum provided for the occupation of plebiscite areas by German and Czech forces (as the case might be) up to the plebiscite, and for their evacuation by those forces during the plebiscite.

Under the Munich Agreement, the plebiscite areas were to be occupied at once by an international force.

Sixth: the Munich Arrangement, by stating (Article 5) that the plebiscite was to be based on the conditions of the Saar plebiscite, indicated that the vote was to be taken by small administrative areas such as comunas.
The Godesberg Memorandum did not indicate on what kind of areas the vote would be based, and gave rise to fears on the Czech side that the possible insistence by Germany on large areas might work to the disadvantage of Czecho-Slovakia.

Seventh: The Czech Government, while bound under the Munich Arrangement to carry out the evacuation of the territories without damaging "existing installations" (Article 2), was not placed under the oppressive and humiliating conditions of the appendix to the Godesberg Memorandum, which even provided that no foodstuffs, goods, cattle or raw materials were to be removed.

Under the Munich Agreement, the conditions of evacuation (Article 3) were to be laid down in detail by the International Commission. Under the Godesberg Memorandum the detailed arrangements for the evacuation were to be settled between Germans and Czechs alone.

Eighth: Unlike the Godesberg Memorandum, the Munich Agreement contained provisions in regard to (a) right of option (Article 7) and (b) facilitating transfer of population (Article 7).

Ninth: The Prime Minister explained that provision was made in the Supplementary Declaration for all other questions in regard to transfer of territory not dealt with in the main Memorandum to come under the purview of the International Commission. The reason why this provision had
been inserted in a Supplementary Agreement was that when the time came to sign the main Agreement it was found that Herr Ribbentrop had excised a provision to this effect which had been drafted. Herr Ribbentrop had said that the omission of a clause to this effect would make no difference, as the matter would in any case be dealt with by the International Commission. The Prime Minister had taken the view that the functions of the International Commission would be governed by their terms of reference and that it was necessary to have it specifically laid down that questions which might arise out of transfer of territory should be considered as coming within the terms of reference of the International Commission. The Prime Minister had thought it well worth while to secure this further clause.

As regards guarantees, provision was made in an Annex to the Munich Agreement for a guarantee of Czechoslovakia against unprovoked aggression. The guarantee of France and Great Britain entered into operation at once, while the guarantee of Germany and Italy came into operation after the Hungarian and Polish minorities questions had been settled.

This question of guarantees had been a difficult one to deal with. The Prime Minister said that he had stated that he could not deal with it without an opportunity of further consultation with his Government. Signor Mussolini had wanted to say that the Polish and Hungarian minorities questions should be settled on the same principle as those applied to the Sudeten Germans.
and within a period of one month; and that in the meantime Italy and Germany would guarantee Czechoslovakia. The Prime Minister said that this suggestion had not appealed to him. In the first place, the phrase in regard to the application of the same principles as those applied in the case of the Sudeten-Germans had seemed to him to be rather far-reaching. Again, he was not certain in what terms he wanted Germany and Italy included in the guarantee. In the end an arrangement had been reached which involved no further commitments in regard to our guarantee than we had already agreed to.

Finally, the Four Powers had signed a declaration that if the problems of the Polish and Hungarian minorities in Czechoslovakia were not settled within three months by agreement between the respective Governments, another Four-Power Meeting would be held to consider them.

The Prime Minister said that these were the main points of difference between the Munich Agreement and the Godesberg Memorandum. He thought it could fairly be said that the Munich Agreement was a vast improvement, and that it represented an orderly way of carrying out the Franco-British proposals. He thought it was a triumph for diplomacy that representatives of the Four Powers concerned should have met and reached a peaceful settlement of the matter.
A number of the Prime Minister's colleagues then put questions to him in regard to detailed points arising out of the terms of the Munich Agreement. The Prime Minister undertook to circulate to the Cabinet a Memorandum setting out in detail the points of difference between the Munich Agreement and the Godesberg Memorandum as early as possible.

The Prime Minister was then asked about the Memorandum which he and Herr Hitler had signed that morning, which he read out to his colleagues (copy is appended as an Annex to these Minutes).

The Prime Minister added that he had had some further conversation that morning with Herr Hitler on the following subjects: limitation of armaments, the position in Spain, and South Eastern Europe. The question of Colonies had not been referred to in this discussion. The Prime Minister undertook that he would take an early opportunity of informing his colleagues of the upshot of this conversation, either by making a statement at an early meeting of the Cabinet, or by circulating a written record.

The First Lord of the Admiralty said that after the detailed explanation given by the Prime Minister, he recognised that the
differences between the Godesberg Memorandum and the Munich Agreement were much greater than he had previously recognised. Nevertheless, he thought that it was right that he should say that he still felt a considerable uneasiness in regard to the position. He was afraid that we might get into the position in which we were drawn into making further concessions to Herr Hitler. He agreed, however, with the view which was put forward by several of his colleagues that there had not been time to study the terms of the Munich Agreement in detail, and he said that he was prepared to defer a final statement of his position until there had been a further opportunity to consider the Agreement. He added, however, that he had come to the meeting prepared to resign, and that he still felt it was his duty to offer the Prime Minister his resignation.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought that matters arising out of the First Lord's statement should be discussed between him and the First Lord.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that he felt sure that the Cabinet would wish to associate themselves with what the Chancellor of the Exchequer had said in regard to the Prime Minister's achievement in making this Agreement. He thought it would be desirable that the Cabinet should have an opportunity to reflect on the many important questions which were raised as a result of the Prime Minister's visit to Munich, and that at a later date there should be an opportunity for further discussion on these matters.

This course was agreed to.

THE MINISTER FOR CO-ORDINATION OF DEFENCE said that a meeting of Ministers had been held that
morning to consider what action should be taken to suspend or cancel measures taken to meet the emergency.

The general conclusion reached had been to recommend a standstill order for the time being, but not an extension of the precautions already in force.

The Minister for Co-ordination of Defence said that while the position had, he thought, been adequately dealt with for the time being, it would clearly be necessary to reach further decisions in the near future. He proposed that a further meeting of the Ministers concerned should be held on Monday at 12 noon to consider detailed steps necessary in the light of any general guidance which the Prime Minister might give in regard to the matter when he had had time to consider the position generally.

This course was agreed to.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.
1st October, 1938.
ANNEX.

Text of Joint Declaration signed by the Prime Minister and Herr Hitler at Munich on Friday, 30th September, 1938.

We, the German Fuehrer and Chancellor, and the British Prime Minister, have had a further meeting to-day, and are agreed in recognising that the question of Anglo-German relations is of the first importance for the two countries and for Europe.

We regard the Agreement signed last night and the Anglo-German Naval Agreement as symbolic of the desire of our two peoples never to go to war with one another again.

We are resolved that the method of consultation shall be the method adopted to deal with any other questions that may concern our two countries, and we are determined to continue our efforts to remove possible sources of difference, and thus to contribute to assure the peace of Europe.
CABINET 48 (38).

Meeting of the Cabinet to be held at 10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on MONDAY, 3rd OCTOBER, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

AGENDA.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

Letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, C.P. 213 (38) - circulated herewith.

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

5, Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

3rd October, 1938.
CONCLUSIONS of a Meeting of the Cabinet held at
10, Downing Street, S.W.1., on Monday, 3rd
October, 1938, at 11.0 a.m.

PRESENT:
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., C.B., K.C., M.P.,
Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Right Hon.
Lord Maugham,
Lord Chancellor.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. E.E. Bridges, M.C. .....................................Secretary.
I. THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had asked the Cabinet to meet at short notice in order to discuss a letter from the Czechoslovak Minister in London to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (C.P. 213 (38)) on the subject of financial assistance to Czechoslovakia. In this letter M. Masaryk asked His Majesty's Government to guarantee a loan of £30 millions. This sum was stated to be required for two purposes: first, to deal with the immediate problem of refugees, of whom about 1,000,000 were expected to arrive in the new Czechoslovakia within the next few days; secondly, to deal with the establishment of a basis for the reconstruction of the country's economic life, which would be upset by the cession of districts containing many industrial establishments.

The Prime Minister said that he understood that this request of the Czechoslovak Government had been addressed to this country alone, but that the French Government had been informed of it.

The Prime Minister observed that this matter had been the subject of consideration by the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary, and that he was in general agreement with their views as to the answer to be given. It was impossible to accept every statement made by M. Masaryk, much of which was necessarily based on guesswork. Thus, as regards refugees, it was extremely likely that many of those who were now leaving the ceded territories were doing so, not on account of anything which had happened to them, but for fear of what might happen to them. It was the
intention of the German Government to do their best to prevent incidents, and the Prime Minister thought it was quite possible that many of those who were now leaving the territories to be ceded would before long return to the homes from which they were flying in such haste. The Czechoslovak estimate of the number of likely refugees might, therefore, well prove to be excessive.

The reconstruction of the country and the starting of fresh industries was not a matter which could be dealt with without a careful survey of the position. It was therefore too early to estimate the amount of financial assistance which the Czech Government would require.

The Prime Minister said that he thought public opinion in this country would feel that it was in accordance with our best traditions that this request should meet with a sympathetic response. He said that both the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the Foreign Secretary agreed with him in thinking that our response should be not only sympathetic but generous.

The question of the precise form which our response to this appeal should take was a difficult one, and no final decision had been reached in regard to it. His own idea was that we should state in general terms that we were prepared to come to the help of the Czech Government and to give that Government such immediate advances or credits as might be necessary. But a careful examination would be necessary before we could deal with Czechoslovakia's permanent requirements in the new conditions. He thought that we should offer to provide expert advice, and should undertake to formulate plans which would be submitted to the House of Commons in November.
THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER said that he agreed with the Prime Minister's conclusion, and he thought that we should be prepared, not only to act quickly, but to make a statement on the subject in the House of Commons that afternoon. If no such statement was now made, there was no doubt that we should be forced later on to make financial concessions to the Czechoslovak Government, and it was undesirable that such concessions should appear to be dragged out of us.

The Chancellor said that he did not think this was an occasion on which this country need adopt an apologetic attitude. It was not the case that Czechoslovakia had any legitimate grievance against us, and that we owed her some compensation. On the contrary, the position was that a world war had been averted and thereby Czechoslovakia had been saved.

The position as he saw it was that Czechoslovakia was urgently in need of help, and it was right that help should be given by a big country to a little country, that such help should be given on a generous scale.

As regards the method of affording financial help, there were considerable difficulties. Such assistance might take one of two forms. It might take the form of a free grant, which would require Parliamentary sanction or it might take the form of a loan guaranteed by this country. Such a guarantee would also require Parliamentary authority. The position was complicated by the fact that other countries besides ourselves might join in the guarantee.
The Chancellor said that, on reflection, he thought that the sum to be made available immediately should be described as an advance, and not as a gift. He had discussed this matter on Sunday, 2nd October, with his Treasury advisers and the Governor of the Bank of England. The Governor had been anxious lest the announcement of a gift would be taken as implying some consciousness of moral guilt, and preferred a guaranteed loan. His other advisers had thought that the best plan would be a combination of a gift and a guaranteed loan.

Another factor was that it was not yet known what Germany's attitude would be towards Czechoslovakia's rights and obligations in the ceded areas. There were such questions as the adjustment of the Czechoslovak public debt, and payment in respect of State property and obligations in the ceded areas. In this connection, the Chancellor of the Exchequer mentioned that it would be necessary to ascertain precisely what happened when Czechoslovakia took over the areas in question from the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of the Great War. He was under the impression that
the settlement arrived at had taken into account a substantial reparations claim against ex-enemy countries, and that the effect of the inclusion of this reparations claim had been that Czechoslovakia had made no actual payment in respect of these areas.

The Chancellor said that another argument in favour of an immediate advance was that this would help the Czechoslovak Government to regulate the currency position, which might otherwise become difficult. He also added that, although the comparative smoothness with which the evacuation of the ceded areas had been carried out was remarkable, the process was nevertheless one which would try the patience of the Czechoslovak people. Any offer of help from the British Government would have an important effect in steadying public opinion in Czechoslovakia.

Replying to a question by the Secretary of State for Air, the Chancellor said that the present proposal was that an announcement should be made that afternoon that a sum of money would be put forthwith at the disposal of the Czechoslovak Government, and that the sum would be a substantial one.

The Home Secretary said that he thought it was essential to mention some figure of the amount to be available for relief purposes, even if the figure could only be reached by guesswork. He thought that the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary should say to-day that they were putting
a figure of £X millions (X being a precise sum) at the disposal of the Czechoslovak Government for relief work. It was his view that relief work had better be dealt with by gift, and that the measures of economic reconstruction should be dealt with by a guaranteed loan in which other countries should co-operate.

THE PRIME MINISTER thought that it was perhaps unnecessary to attempt to settle all the issues involved immediately. If we said to-day that we would give £X millions as a gift, some people would say that £X millions was not enough. That difficulty would be avoided if we said to-day that we were prepared to make £X millions available immediately, and more if necessary. The final arrangements, however, would be a matter which would have to be gone into in detail.

The Prime Minister added that he always contemplated that we should to-day mention the figure which we would make available, as an immediate advance. He would, however, prefer not to commit himself to the proposition that the sum to be immediately advanced should necessarily be a gift. He thought that that course would be disadvantageous in the present rather difficult situation. The practical point was that the Czechoslovak Government should know that a certain sum of money was immediately available.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR INDIA enquired whether it would be desirable that the sum of money to be made available should be described as the first instalment of a guaranteed loan.
THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS thought that it would be better to deal with the matter on the lines suggested by the Prime Minister. It was necessary that a sum of money should at once be put at the disposal of the Czechoslovak State to meet immediate necessities. For the rest, the matter was best left over for further consideration. The Czechoslovak Government had only asked for a guaranteed loan. On the other hand, it might well turn out that the sum for which they had asked was too small. For his part, he hoped that words would be used in the Debate that afternoon which would not exclude the possibility of a gift.

Continuing, the Foreign Secretary said that he had been much impressed by the need for doing something urgently. He also thought that it was of great importance that the matter should not be dealt with in such a way as to give ground for the implication that this was payment of conscience money.

Discussion then took place as to what figure should be mentioned in the Debate that afternoon as the amount of the immediate assistance to be afforded by this country.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER thought that the figure should be £10 millions as an advance for urgent needs. At the same time, while not excluding further grants at a later stage, it was necessary that we should not drift into a position whereby, the larger the total claims, the more we had to pay.

After further discussion, in which it was suggested that £5 millions might be adequate for
an immediate instalment, THE PRIME MINISTER said that he thought that the figure to be mentioned in to-day's Debate should be £10 millions. In the opening statement it should not be necessary to say more than that £10 millions would be made available at once and that this should amply suffice for immediate needs. During the present month the general requirements of the situation could be more fully explored. If, during the Debate, criticism was raised on the ground that the amount of £10 millions was inadequate, it could be pointed out that this sum could always be supplemented if the need arose.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WAR asked whether it was proposed that other countries should be associated with us in this matter.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it would be premature to deal with this aspect of the matter in the Debate that afternoon, but the formulation of plans during the next few weeks to set the Czechoslovak State on its feet again should certainly include approaches to other countries.

THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL asked whether anything had been said in the Munich Conference in regard to such questions as the financial adjustment in respect of the territories to be transferred to Germany.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had mentioned the matter to Herr Hitler, who had not responded at all favourably. He doubted, however, whether Herr Hitler understood these questions, and for that reason it had been provided in the Supplementary Declaration that financial matters, including currency questions, should
be referred to the International Commission. His own view was that on merits it would probably be found that Germany should make some payment to Czechoslovakia, though he doubted if the sum would prove to be very large.

The Cabinet agreed:

(1) That the Government Spokesmen in the forthcoming Parliamentary Debate should be authorised to say -

(a) That His Majesty's Government were prepared to arrange for an advance of £10 millions to be made immediately available to the Czechoslovak Government for their immediate needs. (The term "advance" should be used as consistent with either a gift or a first instalment of a guaranteed loan.)

(b) That careful examination of the whole position would be necessary, (towards which we were prepared to offer expert advice) before Czechoslovakia's requirements for economic reconstruction in the new conditions could be ascertained.

(c) That this matter would be fully explored during the present month, and that detailed proposals would be submitted to Parliament in November.

(2) That the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should be authorised to reply on the above lines to M. Masaryk's letter (C.P. 313 (38)).

(3) That the proposal for a guaranteed loan should be approved in principle but that the matter was one which required further examination from a number of points of view: e.g., as regards the approaches to be made to other countries with a view to their co-operation with us in this matter.
3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS said that the Lord Mayor had informed him on the telephone the previous night that he had received a number of letters, enclosing cheques and postal orders, suggesting the initiation of a Fund for Czechoslovakia.

The Foreign Secretary said that he had informed the Lord Mayor that the question of affording financial assistance to Czechoslovakia was one which might well be considered by the Government, and he had asked the Lord Mayor to refrain from taking any action pending such consideration.

In discussion it was pointed out that once it was known that the Government was making a grant, it was unlikely that there would be any substantial volume of subscriptions to the proposed Lord Mayor's Fund. It was thought, too, that the collection of a small Fund would have a bad effect.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he was rather afraid that the opening of a Fund might have a bad effect on public opinion in Germany. He thought that it was impossible to tell the Lord Mayor that he must not have a Fund; on the other hand, he should be warned of the nature of the statement which the Government was about to make that afternoon, and be asked to consider very carefully whether, in the circumstances, it was worth while to open a Fund.

It was agreed that the Foreign Secretary should be authorised to inform the Lord Mayor of the Government's decision, and to point out the disadvantages of opening a Lord Mayor's Fund.
3. THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS mentioned that the Lord Mayor of London was contemplating a State Visit to the Municipal Authorities of Berlin and possibly of Rome. He asked for the advice of his colleagues on the matter.

The view was expressed that the making of such visits in the immediate future would be somewhat premature, and the Foreign Secretary undertook to communicate in this sense with the Lord Mayor.
4. In reply to a question by the Minister of Health, THE PRIME MINISTER said that he hoped to circulate at an early date a note of his further conversations with Herr Hitler.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER suggested that it might be desirable to have a further discussion before long on certain general aspects of Foreign Policy arising out of the Munich Conversations.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that for the most part the Conversations were of general interest and called for no immediate decisions. The only point touched on in the Conversations which might call for early action concerned Spain. It was just possible that an opportunity might present itself for stopping the Spanish War before the winter. He hoped that after a few days' rest, it would be possible to consider this matter.
5. THE MINISTER OF HEALTH asked whether the Prime Minister was in a position to give any guidance as to the line which his colleagues should take in any speeches which they might make, as regards the possibility of limitation of armaments. He said that one view which was strongly held in certain quarters was that we must never again allow ourselves to get into the position in which we had been in the last few weeks, and that every effort should be made to intensify our rearmament programme.

THE FOREIGN SECRETARY said he hoped that nothing would be said which would preclude proper consideration of the need for such intensification.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that while he did not dissent from the views which had been expressed, he would like to make his own position in the matter clear. Ever since he had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, he had been oppressed with the sense that the burden of armaments might break our backs. This had been one of the factors which had led him to the view that it was necessary to try and resolve the causes which were responsible for the armament race.

He thought that we were now in a more hopeful position, and that the contacts which had been established with the Dictator Powers opened up the possibility that we might be able to reach some agreement with them which would stop the armament race. It was clear, however, that it would be madness for the country to stop rearming until we were convinced that other countries would act in the same way. For the
time being, therefore, we should relax no particle of effort until our deficiencies had been made good. That, however, was not the same thing as to say that as a thank offering for the present détente, we should at once embark on a great increase in our armaments programme.

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE DUCHY OF LANCASTER said that he thought that, in recent weeks, people in this country had at last come to realise how dangerous the situation was, and he hoped that nothing would be done to change the position in this respect. He appealed to the Prime Minister to bring home to the country that we could not afford any relaxation of our efforts. Further, he hoped that whatever agreement might be reached in regard to limitation of armaments, we must not allow Germany to maintain her present superiority over this country in the air.

THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR AIR invited his colleagues to visit the Air Ministry on a date to be arranged, in order to see certain information which had been prepared, showing the strength of German air forces available for offence against this country in comparison with the strength of our air defence forces. He undertook to arrange a suitable time for the visit to take place.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.

3rd October, 1938.