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.

CABINET 41(38).

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.,
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.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 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 these 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. 300) 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. Further
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.