INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600



CSP-2

PRESIDENCY OF EDVARD BENEŠ

by

George V. Rimek, M.A.

Thesis presented to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of Ph.D. in Political Science



UNIVERSITY OF OTTAWA
OTTAWA, CANADA, 1975

(C) George Rimek, Ottawa, Canada, 1975

UMI Number: DC52380

INFORMATION TO USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleed-through, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

UMI®

UMI Microform DC52380
Copyright 2007 by ProQuest LLC
All rights reserved. This microform edition is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code.

ProQuest LLC
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346

CURRICULUM STUDIORUM

George V. Rimek was born June 2, 1930, in Prague, Czechoslovakia. Having been forced into exile because of the terror of the Communist regime in his native country, he continued in his studies at the University of Ottawa where he received the Master of Arts in Political Science degree in 1961.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
Preface	i - xi
Introduction	1
Chapter I - Prelude to Presidency	
A. Beneš' Role in the Establishment of Czechoslovakia	
1. Masaryk's Pre-War Influence - The Basis of Beneš' Political Career	3
2. The Early Years of World War I	16
B. The Years of Foreign Ministry	
1. The Latter Years of World War I	20
2. Armistice Negotiations and the Peace Conference	25
3. Unique Status of Dr Beneš	
(a) Czechoslovak Internal Politics	28
(b) International Politics	
(i) Introduction	49
(ii) Dr Beneš' Foreign Policy	52
(iii) Conclusion	69
4. Overture to the 1935 Presidential Election	78

page

Chapter II - Entry Into The Hradčany Castle

A. The Election 84

B. Institution of the Czechoslovak Presidency 106

Chapter III - Presidency of Dr Beneš During the Era of the First Republic

A. Dr Beneš' Political System

1. Theoretical and Conceptual Aspects

(a) Philosophical Preparations 119

(b) Interpretation of the Czech History

(i) Introduction 137

(ii) Palacký's Interpretation 139

(iii) Masaryk's Contribution 145

(iv) Dr Beneš' Elaboration 152

2. Role of Political Concepts in Political Reality

(a) Problems of the Czechoslovak Internal Politics

(i) Necessity for the Democratic Regime 159

(ii) The Slovak Question 184

(iii) The Ruthenia's Question 194

(iv) The Problem of National Minorities 199

page

(v) Role of the Armed Forces 224

(vi) Role of the All-National Organizations 238

(vii) Youth of the Country - Safeguard of its Future 243

(b) Problems of the Czechoslovak Foreign Politics

(i) Fight for the Preservation of the Post World War I Order 256

(ii) Foreign Relations

(aa) Introduction 266
(bb) France 271
(cc) Great Britain 275
(dd) The United States 285
(ee) Italy 293
(ff) The Little Entente 299
(gg) Austria 314
(hh) Hungary 325
(jj) Poland 331
(kk) Germany 338
(ll) Soviet Russia 345

Chapter IV - Disaster of Munich 373

Chapter V - From Munich to The War

A. Era of the Second Czechoslovak Republic

1. At Home 400

page

2. Into the Second Exile as a Private Personality

(a) In Great Britain 408

(b) In the United States 417

B. The Aftermath of German Occupation of Czechoslovakia - Return to Politics

1. Activities in the United States 432

2. Return to England 457

Chapter VI - Second World War

A. Struggle For Recognition by the Allies and For Their Rejection of Munich

1. Question of Leadership - Towards Unity in Struggle For the Czechoslovak Cause 469

2. Dr Beneš' Triumph - Recognition Granted - Munich Rejected 496

B. Quest For Post-War External Security of Czechoslovakia

1. Idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation 527

2. Beneš' Dilemma: East or West? - Beneš' Answer: East and West. 544

C. Quest for Post-War Internal Harmony in Czechoslovakia

1. Question of the German Minority 594

2. Plans for the Post-War Political Organization of Czechoslovakia 598

page

Chapter VII - Return to Prague, Towards a New Personal and National Disaster

A. Liberation of Czechoslovakia - A Pyrrhic Victory

1. Tragedy at Košice 605

2. Abandoned by the West, Prague Occupied by the Russians 610

B. In the Shadow of Moscow - Beginning of the End of Withering Czechoslovak Democracy

1. First Symptoms of President Beneš' Personal Disaster 617

2. A New Tragedy - The Loss of Czech Northern Territories 621

3. Transfer of the German Minority 630

4. The Slovak Question 638

5. The Post-War Czechoslovak Internal Order - Continuity and Revolution 643

C. Main Factors Contributing to the Czechoslovak Tragedy of 1948

1. Prelude to Tragedy - The US Post-War Policy Towards Czechoslovakia 651

2. Tragedy in the Offing - Munich's Legacy of Fear and Moral Decline 671

3. Tragedy Completed - Communist Coup d'état of February, 1948 689

Epilogue 706

Bibliography 716

Résumé 746

Preface

This study of political behaviour and personality of Edvard Beneš during the last thirteen years of his life - the period of his Presidency - was prompted by the author's desire to understand the role which President Beneš had played during that period in which two disasters befell Czechoslovakia within a decade - Munich in 1938 and Communist coup d'état in 1948. These two calamities occurring with President Beneš at the helm of his state, have caused enormous suffering to his countrymen and immense spiritual and material impoverishment of his country.

There are numerous questions which arise in regard to President Beneš' political behaviour: what were his political ideas, actions and decisions, and what type of leadership did he provide his country with? Was his election to the Presidency a happy choice for his country? Was he a suitable successor to T.G. Masaryk - was the latter's determination that only Beneš could be his successor justified in view of the subsequent developments? Was President Beneš able to prevent, change or modify the outcome of the Munich and the February 1948 disasters? Were his decisions of not using force against the aggressors, arrived at in both disasters, in the best interest of his country?

An account of Beneš' Presidency alone would not provide answers to those and other relevant questions; to do so, it has to be accompanied by an account of Beneš' political development from the time he had first met T.G. Masaryk in 1901 to the conclusion of his Foreign Ministry thirty-four years later.

T.G. Masaryk's profound influence on Beneš' political personality caused that the latter's entire political career can be divided into the two main periods: during the first period which began by his first appearance on the political scene, he was continuously acting under the guidance, protection and, it may be said, in the shadow of Masaryk, whose supreme authority in Czechoslovak politics from the formation of the Republic until his retirement in 1935 and his death two years later was never seriously challenged. The second period which is the subject of this study commences with Masaryk's departure from the active political scene and the election, mainly, if not entirely, because of his resolute efforts, of Beneš as his successor in December, 1935 and ends by Beneš' tragic death in September, 1948.

During his Presidency which witnessed enormous changes in the political, social and economic structure of the world in general, and of Europe in particular, President Beneš was continuously in the forefront of Czechoslovak politics. He also exerted considerable influence on the international political scene, first because of his activities in the League of Nations and then because of his incessant struggle against nazism and fascism; he became during World War II one of the most prominent leaders whose countries were overrun by Nazi Germany and who lived in exile. He was by then the only democratic head of state who had taken part in negotiating and signing of peace treaties after the conclusion of World War I and who continuously held political office since that time.

While Beneš led an active political life long before his election to the Presidency, and many of his ideas and actions prior to that time had vehemently been criticized, especially those in relations with Soviet Russia, and his own personality became a continuous target of several political parties within his country, it is his Presidency that has become during the past few decades a subject of bitter controversies among the several schools of thought on Beneš: on the one extreme, one school maintains that Beneš played a leading role in the destruction of democracy in Czechoslovakia, firstly by implementing, and persisting on following, unrealistic foreign policies based on "friendship" with France and with Soviet Russia - "friendship" with the former led to the disaster of Munich in 1938, with the latter to the communist coup d'état a decade later, and secondly by completely failing to display that type of resolute and courageous leadership which Czechoslovakia had the right to expect from him at the very time when each of these two disasters was taking place: by having decided to bow to the aggression instead of fighting it, he is said to have destroyed the spirit of his nation in order to save its body. Since spiritual matters are always above those involving material things, Beneš had therefore committed a fundamental error in giving preference to items of secondary instead of primary concern. This school claims also that while Beneš spoke and wrote very eloquently about ideals which have to be followed by democratic statesmen and politicians, he himself did not always practice these and demonstrated on occasions that his actions were of anti-democratic, authoritarian character.

On the other extreme, another school of thought maintains that he was a national hero and martyr who sacrificed himself in his unrelenting fight for the preservation of democracy in Czechoslovakia, and it clears Beneš of any blame for the two conquests of Czechoslovakia; it is stated that he had done everything that a democratic political leader of a small state, fighting a hopeless battle against overwhelming odds, was able to do in order to preserve the very existence of his country. Protagonists of this school claim that by accepting the terms of the dictate of Munich, Dr Beneš had actually saved his country from a disastrous defeat and physical destruction. They also claim that Beneš was unable to prevent the communist coup d'état of February 1948 because by the Yalta Agreement the Allies had agreed that Czechoslovakia would lie in the Soviet sphere of interest and that ipso facto Beneš was left at Stalin's mercy knowing well that he was unable to count on any help from the Western Powers in case of a conflict between Prague and Moscow, and that Stalin, understanding correctly the extreme importance of Czechoslovakia because of its strategic geographical position in the very heart of Europe, would not tolerate in Prague any regime actually or potentially hostile to the Kremlin. They are convinced that by his dealings with Stalin, Beneš was able to bestow upon Czechoslovakia almost three years of relative peace and freedom after the end of World War II in Europe - something that the Polish democratic leaders in exile were unable to achieve because of their consistent refusal to enter into any agreement with Stalin.

While it would seem reasonable to expect that the truth about President Beneš may be found somewhere between the extremes of these two schools of thought, no comprehensive study has yet been written which would present an objective appraisal of political ideas, and actions of President Beneš. To close this gap is therefore the purpose of this study.

The evidence has been arranged in chronological order, so that the complex story of Beneš' political personality and behaviour might more readily be seen in the proper perspective. It was inevitable that all the aspects of the subject-matter could not receive equal treatment; the narrative has therefore concentrated on those parts which the author considered to be either the most relevant ones or which have never been dealt with in earlier studies.

The main problem confronting the author was the lack of accessibility, or extreme difficulty in obtaining accessibility, to primary sources. A number of extensive field trips was required to gather most of the relevant documents which, outside of Czechoslovakia, are widely scattered throughout Western Europe and North America. The present political situation behind the Iron Curtain which prevented the author from visiting Czechoslovakia, the Soviet Union or any other Communist country as well as the existence of very restrictive policies of states in Western hemisphere in classifying their records prevented the gathering of certain documentary data, some of which are available only in an incomplete form in secondary sources. However, this study has benefited to a considerable extent by the fact that some of the

classified documentary data have either recently been released by various Western countries or have been made available to the author through special arrangements with officials of their governments; in this way the author was able to study many items which were previously not available and thus to add new dimensions, originality and verity to his work.

Other problem in writing a political biography of President Beneš was basically caused by Beneš himself through his own secretiveness. He never wrote a diary which would contain, on a subjective basis, his daily activities, ideas, judgements, decisions, policies he advocated and reflections on his own past activities and ideas. While he had made many statements in various countries, on various occasions and in regard to various important issues, such statements lack to provide, in a similar fashion as do all his publications, a sufficiently developed subjective element. Furthermore, with the exception of T.G. Masaryk, Beneš had never had any really intimate associate to whom he would freely confide his intimate thoughts. Even people who closely worked, and dealt with him, frequently in the course of the daily activities and knew him well, at least the surface of his personality, stated over and again that they always had had the feeling they had been separated from Beneš by a wall which the latter had always kept closed. This barrier prevented them to truly discover his private political personality.

Since many of the issues surrounding President Beneš' political personality are very much alive at the present time and constitute bitter controversies among protagonists of different schools of thought, a

certain degree of caution was necessary in handling and evaluating that evidence which might contain some subjective influences of interested parties to these controversies. Although in some areas the dearth of data presented a difficulty in gathering and evaluating relevant material, other areas were submerged by an avalanche of documentary data; to assemble the pertinent evidence from such an immense collection of multi-lingual material, physically scattered in many Western countries, constituted a very tedious and time-consuming task. Many of the witnesses interviewed by the author during the past seven years of his research have since followed President Beneš - some of them whose testimony were especially valuable because of their particular aspects of knowledge in regard to Beneš, had stated in their talk with the author that they had never been asked to present evidence devoted entirely to this subject prior to that talk - their contributions could, therefore, be described as unique and priceless. On the whole, the author has always striven to present an objectively evaluated picture of a given situation.

Structurally, this study consists of Preface, Introduction, Seven Chapters and Epilogue; with the exception of Chapter I which describes Beneš' political personality and behaviour during the years of his public life prior to his presidency, and Epilogue which deals with the brief period between his resignation from the Presidency on June 7, and his death on September 3, 1948, Chapters II to VII cover, in chronological order, the entire epoch of Beneš' presidency which

was divided by the author into the five distinctive periods: the First Republic, Munich, from Munich to the outbreak of World War II, World War II and the Third Republic.

In concluding this preface, the author would like to express his sincere appreciation to Professor Dr. Théofil I. Kis, director of this thesis who devoted much of his time to ensure that by his constructive criticism many improvements have been implemented and under whose guidance this work has taken its final form. The author would also like to extend his thanks to Professor Dr. Eduard Táborský of the Department of Government of the University of Texas at Austin who is the most outstanding expert on the subject, for his invaluable assistance in the preparation of this work.

Grateful acknowledgement is also being made to the following personalities and institutions for their generous help without which this study could never have been written - such help included informative letters, interviews, background material and documentary data:

The late Prof. Dr. Václav Beneš, Department of Political Science, University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana, a relative of the late President Beneš;

Dr. Petr Zenkl, former Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia, Washington, D.C.;

The late Václav Majer, former Minister of Nutrition of Czechoslovakia, Washington, D.C.

The late Dr. Ladislav K. Feierabend, Washington, D.C. - Minister of Finance in the Czechoslovak Government in London during W.W. II;

Prof. Dr. Vladimír Krajina, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.;

Ota Hora, former member of Czechoslovak Parliament, Ottawa;

Mr. Alois Rozehnal, Radio Free Europe, New York City;

The late Dr. František Polák, Coxsackie, New York;

Dr. Jan Stránský, Radio Free Europe, New York City;

Mr. R.M. MacDonnell, Canadian High Commissioner for Ceylon (1970) and the first Canadian chargé d'Affaires in Prague (March 1947 - October 1949);

Msgre. Th Dr. Jaroslav Polc, Library of the Pontifical University Lateranense, Rome;

The late Msgre. Th Dr. Josef Bezdíček, Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome;

Prof. Dr. Vojtěch Mastný, Columbia University, New York City;

Dr. Václav Laška, Univeristy of Chicago Library, Chicago;

Mr. Vojtěch Nevlud, Voice of America, Washington, D.C.;

Dr. Otto Boess, Director of the Ost-Europe Institute's Library, Munich;

Dr. Heinrich Kuhn, Director of the Collegium Carolinum, Munich;

Dr. Karl Richter, Director of the Sudetendeutsches Archiv, Munich;

Dr. Rudolf Urban, Director of the J.G. Herder Institute, Marburg an der Lahn;

Mrs. Gita Eicherová, Radio Free Europe, Munich;

Dr. Mark C. Eckhoff, Director of the Legislative, Judicial and Diplomatic Records Division, National Archives, Washington, D.C.;

Miss Mary Johnson, National Archives, Washington, D.C.;

Dr. Rudolf Wolfe and Dr. George Wagner, Captured German Documents Section, National Archives, Washington, D.C.;

Dr. Anton Hoch, Institut fuer die Zeitgeschichte, Munich;

Prof. Dr. R.G. Plaschka, Institut fuer Osteuropaeische Geschichte und Suedostforschung, Vienna;

Mr. James E. O'Neill, Director of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York;

Dr. Arthur G. Kogan, Historical Office of the Department of State, Washington, D.C.;
Dr. Paul T. Heffron, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C..

Staffs of the:

Library of the University of Ottawa;
National Library, Ottawa;
Public Record Office, London;
National Archives, Washington, D.C.;
Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.;
F.D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York;
Archives Nationales, Paris;
Haus - , Hof - und Staatsarchiv, Vienna;
Sudetendeutsches Archiv, Munich;
Ost-Europa Institut, Munich;
Bundesarchiv, Koblenz;
New York Public Library;
Johann Gottfried Herder Institut, Marburg an der Lahn;
National Library, Vienna;
Institut fuer die Zeitgeschichte, Munich;
Oesterreichisches Ost - und Suedost Institute, Vienna;
Library of the University of California, Berkeley, California (Masaryk-Benes Collection);
Library of the University of Vienna;
Library of the University of Salzburg;
Library of the University of Toronto;
Library of the University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana;
Library of the University of Texas, Austin, Texas;
Sued-Ost Europa Institut, Munich;
Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich;
Library of the Pontifical University Lateranense, Rome;

Library of the Maximilian University, Munich;
Library of the University of Cologne;
Library of the University of Innsbruck;
Library of the United States Information Service, Ottawa;
Library of the Carleton University, Ottawa.

Finally, the author is greatly indebted to the Canada Council for the doctoral fellowship without which he would have been unable to undertake and complete this study.

Introduction

> .....in my conception, the ideal statesman should have all the qualities of the real democratic leader combined with some of the qualities of the authoritarian leader... He should combine in his personality in a very harmonious synthesis a high type of man of great intellectual culture and scientific erudition with keen intuition and instinct, of spirit, of rapid decision and quick action, and of physical and moral courage...[1]

December 18, 1935 marked a new era both for Dr Beneš and for Czechoslovakia: by having been elected second President of Czechoslovakia and successor to T.G. Masaryk, the former has reached the zenith of the Czechoslovak political structure; by having elected Beneš as its political head, the latter hoped for further continuation of peaceful and prosperous democratic development which it enjoyed under the leadership of its President, Masaryk - "President Liberator".

Yet, less than three years later, an immense disaster - Munich - seemed to have destroyed both President Beneš' political personality and his state. There was a period of utter despair and bitterness among his countrymen and Beneš became the main target of the most violent attacks. Due to German pressures he was forced to resign and to leave shortly afterwards his country. The subsequent German occupation united the Czech people and brought about the beginning of Beneš' long and unceasing fight waged abroad, for the liberation and restoration of

---

1 Beneš, E., Democracy Today and Tomorrow, New York, 1939, p. 212.

his state. At the end of World War II he seemed to have succeeded in restoring, with the exception of Ruthenia, the former Czechoslovak Republic, and in regaining its sovereignty and some of its democratic institutions. Having then enjoyed great prestige among the vast majority of his people, he was proclaimed "President Builder".

Yet, less than three years later, a new immense disaster struck at both President Beneš and Czechoslovakia - the Communist Coup d'état; it swiftly destroyed the former, and ruthlessly wiped out all the signs of democracy within, and of sovereignty without, of the latter.

Long before these two tragedies occurred, however, Beneš' swift and brilliant development of his political personality and career and of the patterns of his political behaviour had seemed to indicate that he was destined to personify the ideal statesman which he so aptly and eloquently described in the above quotation.

CHAPTER I

PRELUDE TO PRESIDENCY

A. Beneš' Role in the Establishment of Czechoslovakia

1. Masaryk's Pre-War Influence - The Basis of Beneš' Political Career

> With the exception of T.G. Masaryk, Beneš never had any really intimate associates ... [1]

Edvard Beneš was a poor, seventeen-year old student when he met Professor Masaryk for the first time in 1901. He was greatly impressed by Masaryk's cosmopolitan outlook which stretched out far beyond the contemporary horizon of provincialism of Czech politics within the Habsburg Empire, humanitarian views, sincerity, honesty, his continuous search for the truth, boldness and courage to stand behind what he believed to be the truth and to fight for it even alone against all. Before Beneš was ready to study formally at the Charles University of Prague, he attended Masaryk's

---

1 Zinner, P.E., "Czechoslovakia: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš", in Craig, G.A. and Gilbert, F., ed., The Diplomats: 1919-1939, Princeton, 1953, p. 101.

lectures and had decided at that time that he would be a professor like Masaryk[2].

---

2 Beneš described his youth in general, and his student years in particular, in his book "My War Memoirs" (London, 1928), Chapter 1 - "My Preparations for War and Revolution"; this subject had also become a favourite topic in his addresses to young people: e.g. to young men in the YMCA in Prague on March 22, 1929 (Beneš, E., Podmínky úspěšného života, Praha, 1938, 4th edition, 12 p.); to the Czechoslovak school children in Prague on May 25, 1938 and the reply to the Czechoslovak students' greetings of June 11, 1938 (Beneš, E., "Dvě řeči Presidenta republiky k mládeži, in Československá skautka, Vol. III, No. 6, June 1938, pp. 51-54; very important was his speech to the Czechoslovak Students on January 15, 1938 (Fialka, J., ed., President republiky československému studentstvu roku 1938, Praha, 1938, 24 p.)

For further information about Beneš' life, the following books, listed in detail in the Bibliography of this study, are of assistance:

Crabites, P., Beneš, Statesman of Central Europe;
Foustka, R.N., Život, dílo a příklad Dr. Edvarda Beneše;
Hajsman, J., Dr. Edvard Beneš;
Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš - Filosof a státník;
Hitchcock, E.B., I Built a Temple for Peace;
Hník, M., Edvard Beneš - Filosof demokracie;
Jakovenko, B., Edvard Beneš als Denker;
Kapras, J., President Dr. Edvard Beneš;
Kubka, F., Mezi válkami;
Lechner, O., A Great Czechoslovakian;
Lias, G., Beneš of Czechoslovakia;
Mackenzie, C., Edvard Beneš;
Obrátil, K.J., Čítanka Dr. Edvarda Beneše;
Opočensky, J., ed., Edvard Beneš - Essays on his 60th Birthday;
Paneth P., Edvard Beneš - A Leader of Democracy;
Papoušek, , J., Dr. Edvard Beneš: Sein Leben;
Salda, F.X., Dr. Edvard Beneš ve Fotografii;
Stránský, J., ed., 70. výročí narození Dr. E. Beneše;
Stroh, H., Der grosse Europäer - Edvard Beneš;
Werner, A., Edvard Beneš - Der Mensch und der Staatsman;
Werstadt, J., Dr. Edvard Beneš, Spoluzakladatel nové Svobody a tvůrce zahraniční politiky československé.

There were three main traits of Beneš' personality which had been formed and had clearly been discernible during his youth, and had profound influence on his entire political behaviour. The most important of these was his natural inclination, strengthened greatly by circumstances in which he found himself in his student and pre-war years, to work always alone and to develop confidence that he, and only he - with the exception of Masaryk - could arrive at correct answers to problems in which he became involved. This trait grew continuously stronger until it became the overriding factor of his political behaviour[3]. This development was further strengthened by his determination to sacrifice his personal life to his work, by his unceasing eagerness to always work harder than anyone else and, above all, by his belief that it was his mission to improve the political and social conditions of the Czech people. This belief gave him boldness to ignore, already during World War I, other Czech politicians who also wanted to make their own contribution to the Czechoslovak cause and who, after

---

3 As will be seen and documented later, both his supporters and his enemies stressed this trait of Beneš' personality; the former attempted to justify it on grounds that possessing unique knowledge and qualifications, Benes alone, as the only true disciple and follower of Masaryk, was able to arrive at decisions most beneficial to his country; the latter saw in this trait a proof that he was really a dictator who imposed his will on others and who did not tolerate any opposition to his views and actions.

having continuously been frustrated in their efforts by Beneš, turned into his bitter personal enemies.

The second of the early traits of Beneš' personality was his rebelliousness. As a student he was always arguing and quarrelling, not only with his fellow-students but also with his teachers. In debates, especially in those of political nature, he was continuously in opposition to expressed ideas - this was, according to his own account, his method of getting at the facts and of arriving at his own conclusions - yet it had demonstrated his rebellious nature in the same way as it had done in his attitude towards religion during the same period. He had seriously doubted even the existence of God whom he had considered a creation of wishful thinking and the belief in God a handicap to the free development of his personality. The main reason for his hostility towards the official religion of the Habsburg Empire - the Roman Catholic Church - was its close association with the Habsburg Court at Vienna. He was brought up in an atmosphere of vehement opposition to German oppression of the Czechs by Vienna and any ally of the Habsburgs had therefore been, ipso facto, an enemy to Beneš.

His passionate Czech nationalism had been the most important reason for his rebelliousness towards the

established order of German domination and oppression of the Czechs. Yet it was the same rebellious nature which caused Beneš to be intolerant of, and to be impatient with, the prevailing political atmosphere in the Czech Provinces, and he violently attacked the Czech political life which existed in the pre-World War I period arriving at the sweeping conclusion that the Czechs had no "political culture"[4] and that most of the Czech politicians of that period were backward and semi-democratic. Reaction of these politicians later became, during the First Republic, one of the greatest sources of the continuous barrage of attacks on Beneš who had, in return, called their attacks and criticism of himself and his actions a proof of their political immaturity and backwardness, complained bitterly about the continuous attacks he had to face and asked for "higher political culture and spiritual revolution"[5].

The third early trait of Beneš' personality was his hostility towards wealthy students because most of them ridiculed his poverty and inability to take part in their

---

4 Beneš, E., Povaha politického stranictví, Praha, 1920, p. 7. (Written in 1913-14).

5 Beneš, E., Pro čistotu veřejného života, Praha, 1926, pp. 1-4.

social activities which were for him financially out of reach. Transferred into his political life, this trait had been instrumental for Beneš' yearning for social justice and had brought him into the leftist, socialist camp because he believed that far-reaching social reforms were unavoidable -- indeed necessary. While his political stand of a radical leftist underwent a gradually moderating change, he always remained a politician of the Left and a proponent of democratic socialism.

The choice of profession had not been an easy matter to settle for young Beneš: having been brought up by his mother as a strict Catholic, and before he developed his rebellious attitude towards religion, he had wanted to be a priest. Afterwards, he had decided to be a teacher, and finally, after a meeting with Masaryk, to become a professor. While undergoing these changes of mind in regard to his profession, Beneš had never doubted that he would eventually enter politics[5A]. He had been determined to do all in his power to help in bringing about the end of German oppression of the Czechs and this determination made his future political activity inevitable. To be able to pursue successfully

---

5A Beneš, E., Podmínky úspěšného života, p. 8 - (The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1036).

his political ambitions, he had decided, again after having been influenced by Masaryk, to study philosophy, politics, law, languages, sociology and history. Like Masaryk who spent many years abroad and kept on frequently visiting foreign countries to study their peoples, history, institutions and current problems, Beneš went in 1905 to France, originally intending to study modern languages and to prepare himself for a university professorship in this subject. His fondness for political matters, studies of social problems and also material considerations had caused him, however, to turn to journalism, political science, sociology and law - he had earned a doctorate of law at the University of Dijon. As a young student who had been through hardships during his entire studies at Prague and who had been repelled by the political and social conditions at home, he was soon impressed by everything he saw in France in general and in Paris in particular. He eagerly studied and observed the French and Parisian revolutionary tradition, the revolutionary and radical phraseology of the French socialists, syndicalists and other Left-wing parties as well as extremist movements, revolutionary syndicalism, anti-militarism and anarchism. In 1906 he made in Paris contacts with Russian revolutionaries who had taken part in the unsuccessful Russian revolution of 1905 and who had made such a deep impression upon him that he had become

a member of their societies, studied their activities and kept in touch with them even after his return to Prague. Experience and knowledge which he was able to obtain from them was invaluable for his own revolutionary activities during World War I.

During his first stay in France, he had succeeded, by writing in French newspapers about the Czech cause for independence, in impressing Masaryk and in earning his friendship: by this activity he became the first active propagandist for Czech nationalism abroad in modern Europe.

While Beneš had also visited England and Germany, he became attached to France because of its tradition of the Great Revolution, the broad perspectives of its national history, its love for liberty of thought, the abundance of its philosophic, scientific, literary and artistic culture and its traditional humanitarian, universal and cosmopolitan tendency which sought a genuine cult of humanity. Beneš was also attracted by the idealistic and revolutionary impulse underlying the social and socialist thought and the practical movement of non-doctrinaire French socialism. But above all it was his love and admiration of France and his unshakeable belief in the great mission of France in the cause of

democracy and humanity[6] which was to prove so fateful for Benes and his country three decades later.

The three years spent abroad strengthened Benes greatly in his pronounced opposition to the political and social conditions existing in the Habsburg Empire which, disorganized by its welter of nationalities, struck him as the prototype of a reactionary, aristocratic-bureaucratic state, resembling in many aspects the reactionary, militaristic and bureaucratic character of Germany but without its administrative and financial order and its inner strength; he had returned to Prague in 1908 as a convinced radical and revolutionary. He joined Masaryk's Progressive (Realist) Party but did not take any significant part in its political activities. He devoted himself to vigorous sociological and political studies as a preparation for his subsequent political practice[7]; he also held a full-time teaching post.

---

6 See Benes, E., La France et La Nouvelle Europe, Paris, 1932, 87p.

7 During this period he had earned his Doctorate in Philosophy at the Charles University of Prague and wrote a number of books and articles in the fields of sociology and political science. Among the most important were: The Political Partisanship, The Evolution of Modern Socialism, Our Political Education and the Necessity For a College of Social Sciences, Socialism in England and The Problem of Alcoholic Production and Abstinence (all were written in Czech and are listed in the Bibliography).

He was twenty-five years old when he married, in 1909, Hana Vlček whom he had met three years earlier in Paris where she had been studying.

His direct and frequent meetings with Masaryk helped Beneš to complete, during this pre-war period, his philosophical development[8]. Until then he had been struggling within himself to reach a definite philosophical attitude and system. Having devoted some time to the study of socialism from which he acquired a leaning towards positivism and materialism, he got imbued with Masaryk's realism which provided him with the "realistic method of working"[9]. He gradually began to arrive at his own conclusions which he applied in metaphysics, ethics, psychology and sociology. Later, during the war, he transferred these conclusions from theory to practical politics; he had explained that he always consciously practised politics in a scientific spirit and all his political success during and after the war was mainly due to the fact that he consistently applied his philosophy and scientific method to political problems: he sought to project pragmatic problems against a precisely-defined and

---

8 For Beneš' political philosophy, see Chapter III.

9 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 20.

unchanging philosophical frame of reference[10].

During this period Beneš was compelled to re-examine his views in regard to religion; he departed from his earlier religious negativism - from positivist opposition to religion and anti-clerical radicalism - and by adopting a positive attitude towards religion, he arrived at firm religious views accepting the belief in immanent teleology and in Providence as destiny; he never had returned to Roman Catholicism. Besides Kant, Hume and Descartes, it was again Masaryk, who exercised in this regard the greatest influence on Beneš.

By the summer of 1914, when the war broke out, the thirty-year old Beneš felt himself fairly secure in his philosophical and political assumptions; he based his ethical views on the principle of full respect for mankind and he worked out in a detailed manner the ideas of critical realism in sociology and politics. The political meaning of the war was, on the whole, obvious to Beneš - he was convinced that the end of the Austro-Hungarian Empire became inevitable and

---

10 He was often ridiculed for his scientific approach to politics. Typical remark of this kind was made by an English writer who after accusing Beneš that he did not "play an honest game in his diplomatic actions", added with sarcasm that "Dr. Beneš wanted to make his scientific foreign policy with a logarithmic ruler". (Robbins, K., Munich 1938, London, 1968, p. 73.).

that it was his duty, indeed his sacred mission, to enter upon revolutionary activity to hasten its end. Having accepted Masaryk's interpretation of Czech history he believed that

> ... our own national traditions, our age-long contest for freedom of opinion, our democratic ideals as expressed in our Reformation and national revival, and our political struggle during the 19th century, predestined us for the Allied camp from the very beginning ...[11]

It was again Masaryk who enabled Beneš to participate in, by himself organized and led, revolutionary activities for Czech independence, and both of them described vividly that autumn day of 1914 in Prague, so fateful for them and their people, when they joined together in their mutual effort to destroy the autocratic Austro-Hungarian Empire and to liberate their people[12].

From that day, to which could be traced the very root of the future Czechoslovak Republic, until Masaryk's

---

11 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 490; for further details see Chapter III.

12 Beneš, E., Ibid., pp. 25-26.
Masaryk, T.G., The Making of a State, London, 1927, p. 45.
Beneš, E., Problémy nové Evropy a zahraniční politika československá, Praha, 1924, pp. 11-12; (Listed hereafter as Problémy).

death twenty-three years later, Masaryk and Beneš co-operated in a closest possible fashion, both in the exile and at home, in pursuing their common objective - the establishment, preservation and peaceful development of their state along the lines they believed to be in its best interest. Professor Seton-Watson[13] provided an appraisal of the relationship between Masaryk and Beneš, and of the former's influence on the latter:

> In reality there never was a political partnership based upon such close accord and loyal friendship, despite the difference of thirty years of age between the two men. ... Beneš had his enemies, and there were moments when Masaryk's utmost effort only just sufficed to keep him in office ... it was above all his (Masaryk's) influence that secured to Beneš' career a political stability altogether unique in the period between the two wars. To point out that no other statesman in Europe held office continually for so long is a complete understatement of the truth[14].

---

13 A well-known authority on the Central European History at the University of London who was a friend of both Masaryk and Beneš, who had received several honourary degrees from the Czechoslovak universities and who had written a number of books and articles on the history of Czechoslovak people.

14 Seton-Watson, R.W., "Edvard Beneš", in The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 27, No 69, May 1949, p. 360.

2. The Early Years of World War I

It is a paradox but it seems to me that Masaryk believed in God but Beneš in Masaryk[15].

Masaryk left Prague in December, 1914, to continue his revolutionary work in the West while Beneš was to remain as long as possible. As the Secretary of an underground Czech organization named "Maffia", patterned "after the fashion of the Russian secret societies"[16] whose members comprised progressive Czechs who were ready to fight, under Masaryk's leadership, for the cause of independence, Beneš was the intermediary between the inner circle of the "Maffia" and other members who, not knowing each other, were distrustful of all except Masaryk, and after his departure, of Beneš, of whom it was known that he was Masaryk's lieutenant. Due mainly to Beneš' thorough knowledge of Russian secret societies, "Maffia" continued to work smoothly and effectively; on the one hand it had been supplying Masaryk abroad with confidential and secret information from Vienna and Prague, and on the other hand it had been spreading among the Czech people information received from Masaryk from the West.

---

15 Kubka, F., Mezi válkami, Praha, 1969, p. 117.

16 Masaryk, T.G., op.cit., p. 26.

Early in 1915 Beneš undertook two dangerous missions to Switzerland in order to hold there meetings with Masaryk; in the fall of the same year the situation in Prague became for him so dangerous that he had to escape to Switzerland to avoid an immediate arrest and probable execution.

Beneš' departure from Prague forced Masaryk to alter his plan of operations: Beneš' new assignment was to proceed with his revolutionary work in Paris, which he knew and admired so greatly, while Masaryk was to concentrate most of his efforts in London and elsewhere as needed[17].

Masaryk was soon impressed by Beneš' unceasing diligence, initiative and boldness of action in all the fields of his endeavours, and by his systematic and scientific approach to the problems requiring his action; he gave a clear description of Beneš' work and the harmony which existed between them during the war:

> ...Work with him was easy and efficient. There was little need to talk. Politically and historically he was so well trained that a word was enough. He thought out and executed plans in detail: for he was soon able to act by himself. As long as I was in Western Europe we met often and worked out everything minutely. By telegram and letter we kept up

---

17 Čapek, K., Hovory s T.G. Masarykem, London, 1951, pp. 149-150.

> a lively correspondence. Later, when I could write or telegraph little from Russia, Japan and America, our thought and our work ran on parallel lines: As things developed, Beneš grew. While keeping strictly to our agreed policy, he dealt very independently with the main issues. He had great initiative and was an untiring worker. For both of us it was good that we had led what is called a "hard life". We had made our own way, worked ourselves up from poverty which means acquiring practical experience, energy and boldness... Indeed, there was no misunderstanding between us during my whole stay abroad and our cooperation was exemplary...18

Beneš' boldness of action, his youth and mainly his tendency to work alone, to consult nobody except Masaryk and to put skillfully and speedily his own ideas and decisions into effect, caused many Czech politicians who were also abroad and who were unable to make their own contribution because of this Beneš' attitude, to feel frustrated and to soon become his bitter personal enemies19.

---

18 Masaryk, T.G., op.cit., pp. 45-46.

19 See for example one of the earliest purely anti-Beneš' books: Horký, K., Durychův národ a Benešovo obecenstvo, New York, 1917, 52p., in which Horký attacks most violently Beneš, claims that "all evil comes from Beneš" who got completely Masaryk under his power and uses the latter's good name for his own evil interests, and brands Beneš "a despot, usurper and dictator who pushed all men into the background to wait only for his instructions and orders". Horký also adds that the way in which Beneš took over the leadership of the Czechoslovak struggle for freedom in Paris "immediately on his arrival and after he had hardly time to wash himself in his hotel room", was made with "courage, boldness and skill which I admire even today" (p. 21).

See also Pichlík, K., Zahraniční odboj 1914-1918 bez legend, Praha, 1968, pp. 261-291.

This negative outcome of the earliest period of Dr. Beneš' political activity had significantly contributed, in the long run and especially during the First Republic, to an almost incessant barrage of attacks and abuses on his personality, and played a prominent role in the internal politics of his country. In the short run, during the war, this negative aspect was no less evident, yet it was soon overshadowed by the positive aspects of Dr. Beneš' achievements which were of such magnitude that even his personal enemies were unable to have them effectively belittled.

As Secretary-General of the Czech National Council in Paris he had succeeded in making it the governing centre of all Czechoslovak independence activities throughout the world and, together with Masaryk and Štefánik, in impressing the Allied governments with the unity of their movement. Masaryk's appraisal of Dr. Beneš' role in the establishment of the new state was given in his usually simple and concise manner: "Without Beneš, there would have been no Czechoslovakia"[20].

---

20 Čapek, K., op.cit., p. 150.

B. The Years of Foreign Ministry

1. The Latter Years of World War I

> ...I mention these beginnings to emphasize the spirit of our activity abroad. It was conducted with a clear and firm program. We had several ideas, engraved deeply in our hearts, and we followed them faithfully .... We were far apart but the co-operation of us all was extremely harmonious...21

On November 14, 1918, Dr. Beneš had formally been appointed the first Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia -- the position which he was to continuously hold until his election to Presidency more than seventeen years later. This formal appointment meant for Dr. Beneš that he was to continue, in the official capacity as Foreign Minister of the newly established and internationally recognized sovereign Czechoslovak state, in the work which he had conducted, with Masaryk's approval and blessings, during the latter years of the war, first in the private, and then in the semi-official capacity as Secretary-General of the Czech National Council in Paris and self-appointed Foreign Minister of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government abroad, having been recognized in this position by the Allied Powers even before the National Committee in Prague proclaimed on October 28, 1918, that the independent Czechoslovak state came into being.

---

21 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 12.

It was mainly because of unceasing and determined efforts of Dr. Beneš that Czechoslovakia was accorded recognition by the Allies before Austria-Hungary sued for an armistice. He had succeeded in securing a declaration of the British Government of August 9, 1918, which had recognized the Czechoslovak nation as an Allied nation and the right of the Czechoslovak National Council as the supreme organ of the Czechoslovak national interests, and, as the present trustee of the future Czechoslovak Government, to exercise supreme authority over this Allied and belligerent army[22].

Dr. Beneš thought of the complex and extremely difficult negotiations which resulted in this declaration as the most important political achievement of the National Council during the entire war[23] because of the wide scope in its bearings on international law -- it constituted the actual recognition of the independence of Czechoslovakia while the war was still raging and the territories of the future state had still formed an integral part of the

---

22 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 407.

23 For more details about this declaration see Steed, W., "Edvard Beneš", in Opočenský, J., ed., Edvard Beneš - Essays and Reflections Presented on the Occasion of his 60th Birthday, London, 1945, pp. 57-59.

Habsburg Empire. Furthermore, by issuing this Declaration, Great Britain had not only established a precedent for the recognition of a new Czechoslovak state, to be soon followed by the other Allied Powers, but it had adopted a course which de facto meant the destruction of the Habsburg Empire.

As the next step, Dr. Beneš had worked out the transformation of the National Council into an effective provisional government, received Masaryk's complete approval and the Allied Governments' recognition of his Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia. He became its Foreign Minister; since all the other members of the new Government, including Masaryk (President) and Štefánik (Minister of War) were away from Paris, Beneš was able, in harmony with his main personality trait, to proceed with the involved work alone -- he "combined in himself for a while the functions of all his colleagues"[24].

In its last desperate attempt to save the Habsburg Empire by a federal resolution, which it hoped the Czechs at home would support and would succeed in persuading their countrymen abroad to follow their lead, Vienna had granted

---

24 Mackenzie, C., op.cit., p. 104.

permission to the leading Czech politicians at home to travel from Prague to Geneva to hold there a conference with the Provisional Czechoslovak Government abroad, represented by Dr. Beneš[25]. It was on this occasion that there appeared, for the first time, the large gap separating the two camps of Czech political leadership; while Beneš had succeeded in reaching an agreement between these two groups on the unity of the struggle for liberation at home and abroad, he had told an English friend of "the bewilderment he had felt when he met in Switzerland the members of a deputation which had come from Prague to confer with him..."[26]; by this agreement, however, the Provisional Czechoslovak Government abroad had thus received, after having been recognized by the Allied Powers, "its final and most important token of recognition from Prague"[27].

---

25 See Drábek, J., Z časů nedlouho zašlých, Vzpomínky Dr. Mořice Hrubana, Rome, 1967, pp. 191-194.

26 Steed, W., "Edvard Beneš" in Opočenský J., ed., op.cit., pp. 59-60. Steed explains further that Dr. Benes ..." had found that his views of the war and of its meaning, formed during his three years' work in Allied countries, were almost incomprehensible to equally patriotic fellow-countrymen who had lived in Central Europe and had unconsciously come under the influence of Austrian and German misrepresentations. As he talked with them he felt that a long process of unlearning as well as of learning might have to be gone through before the Czechoslovak people could perceive why Germany and Austria-Hungary had been defeated, or could gain a sound knowledge of the past and a constructive outlook on the future."

27 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 443.

The struggle which Masaryk, Beneš, Štefánik and their supporters were waging for the liberation of their country for more than four years, ended in victory. Dr. Beneš had attributed this achievement to the fact that in fighting for their cause, they had had a precise plan and a goal, had made correct decisions on the methods of their political work and had immediately organized a national army which participated in the war[28].

---

28 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 15.

2. Armistice Negotiations and the Peace Conference.

> ...it is a tribute to Beneš and his adroit diplomacy, as well as to his unceasing activity on behalf of his people that the Czechs were the only people of the new states which grew out of the World War to be represented at the Armistice conferences...[29]

Dr. Beneš had recognized the significance for his new state in being able to participate in the Armistice negotiations; through his usual hard work and determined efforts at the Quai d'Orsay he had succeeded in receiving an invitation from the French Foreign Minister to attend these negotiations as the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister. This presented a second stage of Beneš' diplomatic career - the first stage which comprised a self-imposed task of persuading the Allied Powers that it was imperative to establish an independent Czechoslovak state he had by then, together with Masaryk and Štefánik, successfully concluded.

The significance of this commitment the Allied Powers had undertaken in regard to Czechoslovakia strengthened Dr. Beneš' position in setting forth the political and territorial demands at the Peace Conference. In his first speech after his return to Prague, he stated that

---

29 Hitchcock, E.B., I Built a Temple for Peace, The Life of Edvard Beneš, New York, 1940, p. 162.

"...the fight for our territories at the Peace Conference was difficult but ... our delegation was one of those who insofar as the territorial question was concerned, have comparatively achieved the most"30.

> Dr. Beneš was a terrific worker at the Peace Conference, a human dynamo with unlimited energy and stupendous driving power. He wore out all his associates in the Czech delegation. Starting in the morning before they arose, he would be hard at it when they reached headquarters. And when they left late at night, he was still going strong. He took no time for amusements, ... it was work, and nothing but work.31

Giving an account of his work in Paris after his meeting with President Masaryk who stopped there on his way from the United States to Prague early in December, 1918, Dr. Beneš wrote:

> After the President's departure I was unable to leave Paris, although the members of the Government had summoned me to Prague. At this time I was overwhelmed with work ... This was the beginning of my new activities for securing peace and the post-war reconstruction of Central Europe. This period was no less exhausting and difficult than had been the war itself. Thus I did not return home until a whole year later, on September 24, 1919, after four years of toil and struggle abroad, during which there had been no respite and no moments without anxiety32.

---

30 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 18-19.

31 Hitchcock, E.B., op.cit., p. 169.

32 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 487.

Dr. Beneš' appraisal of the Peace Conference was governed by his satisfaction of the Czechoslovak achievements and optimistic outlook in the future:

> Proceedings of the Peace Conference will belong to the beautiful moments of our national history. We should often turn to these, several-months' activities for the future of the Republic. It will always be possible to draw from them instruction for our national policy[33].

---

33 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 16.

3. Unique Status of Dr. Beneš

(a) Czechoslovak Internal Politics

> Dr. Beneš who had left secretly and alone, having support of no influential party, returned in great triumph, having support of whole nation. With President-Liberator, to whom he was in the revolution the most effective co-worker ... he was united by deep and lasting friendship which was subsequently to Dr. Beneš a powerful and reliable support...[34]

Dr. Beneš' accomplishments abroad during, and immediately after World War I were impressive; yet his immediate attainment, mainly because of Masaryk's determined support, of a unique status in the Czechoslovak internal politics was no less phenomenal, and so was the intensity and continuity of attacks on his personality by his personal enemies and political adversaries.

When Beneš had left Prague in 1915, he was virtually unknown. Only Masaryk and a very close circle of his political friends and collaborators had known Beneš or had, at least, heard of him. Since he did not become involved in the politics during the pre-war period, the vast majority of the Czech politicians had never heard of him at

---

34 Werstadt, J., "Osobnost" in Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš - Filosof a státník, Praha, 1937, pp. 266-267.

that time; one of them who held a very prominent position in the Czech political life of that period, had stated, while describing the war situation in Austria-Hungary in 1916: "About Masaryk's activities abroad there were first only uncertain and partial news, and in this connection with Masaryk, there emerged, for the first time, the name of Dr. Edvard Beneš"[35].

Regardless of his trait to work alone and to arrive at his own decisions, it is a fact that while working abroad during the war, Dr. Beneš had no opportunity, even if he had wanted to do so, to consult either the Czech public opinion or the Czech politicians who remained at home. This trait had caused, however, that he rarely had consulted any of the Czech politicians who were with him abroad, and that even when he had done so, he had arrived at his own conclusions. Masaryk was the only exception to this rule, but because of his almost continuous travels, Beneš was frequently unable to reach him and had to work out problems in question by himself[36]; yet in the end both of them had independently reached the same conclusions on essential

---

35 Drábek, J., op.cit., p. 168. - See also Kubka, F., op.cit., p. 114.

36 See Beneš, E., Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk, Reprint from Bibliothèque Internationale de Philosophie, Vol. 2, No. 2, Février 1936, Praha, 1936, 24 p.

points of their work and this fact had further strenghtened Dr. Beneš' trait of working alone. Writing about Beneš' activities in war-time Paris, a close observer remarked:

> ...It is quite typical for Beneš that he always prefers and likes to work alone, and only in extremely rare cases where this is absolutely necessary, he decides to work with others; he feels himself to be in his work at home, and he is capable to undertake alone, and to overcome alone, the greatest and most difficult tasks...[37]

Other writers did not fail to underline already at that time that it was an integral part of Dr. Beneš' personality to work on all problems by himself[38].

Dr. Beneš' prerogative to run Czechoslovakia's foreign affairs virtually at will became a fait accompli at the proclamation of the new Republic. With the exception of President Masaryk who wanted to devote himself to the internal politics of his country, he really had no competitor with comparable ability and familiarity with the international political scene who would be in a position to challenge effectively his exclusive authority; furthermore, it was well known that President Masaryk had utmost

---

37 Fierlinger, Z., "Několik vzpomínek na válečnou Paříž", in Padesát let Edvarda Beneše, Československá obec legionářská, Praha, 1934, p. 197.

38 See e.g. Silberstein, L., Die Entstehung des tschechoslowakischen Staates nach Benesch's Memoiren, Sonderdruck aus "Europäische Gespräche", Vol. 6, No. 3, 1928, p. 23.

confidence in Beneš' conduct of foreign affairs, provided him with his unceasing support, and considered him to be his successor in the case of his own illness of death. For these reasons Beneš was able to disregard the Czechoslovak Government's requests for his return to Prague for consultation with the members of the Cabinet and of the National Assembly, most of whom had never met him before. He had decided that his work at Paris was more important to his country, and having received complete support from President Masaryk, did not allow anyone or anything to interfere with his determination to continue working at Paris. The Government and the National Assembly at Prague were, in the meantime, forced to refrain from any action in the whole field of foreign affairs -- "The fate of the newborn Republic was in Beneš' hands".39

In the years which followed, Dr. Beneš' sway in foreign affairs remained in effect. His unique status in the Cabinet enabled him to be above the formal constitutional controls governing the Cabinet members - in 1921-22 he was for a period of more than a year both the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia. He alone was free, during the early period of the Republic, from the rigid party controls which fettered every other member of Cabinet and of Parliament.

---

39 Peroutka, F., Budování státu, Praha, 1933-1936, 4 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 1308.

His unique position had further increased the number of Beneš' enemies, especially among the elder conservative politicians, who having had to work their way up the political ladder for many years, if not decades, felt bitter about Beneš whom they considered an intruder in their field of activity and an upstart enjoying as Masaryk's closest friend, protégé and heir-apparent to the Presidency, such a privileged position which, as they well knew, they could never achieve for themselves. They also resented Beneš' thorough knowledge of international affairs which he continuously kept up-to-date and his many personal connections and acquaintances with prominent political personalities abroad as well as the fact that he became, besides Masaryk, the only Czechoslovak political figure well known abroad - something they also were unable to match. It was mainly due to this hostility towards Beneš that the chiefs of the main Czechoslovak political parties had unanimously agreed that he would not be allowed to continue staying out of party politics like Masaryk. They had succeeded in forcing Beneš to enter a political party, although of his own choice -- the National Socialist Party. While this entry was mainly nominal and did not de facto curtail Beneš' political activities, there were incidents that he would have been dismissed on several occasions by Prime Ministers of the day, mainly because of his leftist convictions and

his stand on Soviet Russia, if it were not for President Masaryk's most vehement support[40].

Among the most powerful and dedicated personal and political enemies of Beneš were, from the very beginnings of the Republic, Dr. Kramář and his National Democratic Party[41], and later, after the climax of anti-Beneš campaigns and struggles of 1926, when he was even forced to make public his financial accounts because he was accused of misappropriation of public funds, and to resign his deputy

---

40 Masaryk had an extremely difficult task of preserving Foreign Ministry for Beneš in 1926 when not only the majority of Rightists parties wanted his dismissal but also a portion of his own National Socialist Party; in 1928 and 1929 it was mainly Dr. Kramář and the Agrarian Party who hoped to be able to get rid of Beneš from the Cabinet - yet, in the end, President Masaryk's all-out intervention, which went so far that he had used the threat of his own resignation in case of Beneš' dismissal, had always been successful and Beneš retained his portfolio.

41 Dr. Kramář's original conception of a new Czechoslovak state was a monarchy with a Russian prince in its head; he was violently anti-bolshevik, but pro-Russian. He wanted to employ all the available resources towards the destruction of Bolshevism and the restoration of Czarism in Russia. He was convinced that by doing so, Czechoslovakia would gain a prominent position among the Slavic nations in general, and vis-à-vis Russia in particular. He never forgave Beneš for his opposition towards the full employment of the Czechoslovak Legion in Russia against the Bolsheviks, and for his anti-Czarist attitude which he considered a betrayal of Slavism. Beneš was branded by the National Democratic Party press a traitor during the height of the Těšín dispute, and in 1926, during the campaign against the recognition of Soviet Russia, Dr. Kramář and his Party claimed that all the European states were hostile towards Beneš because of his friendly attitude towards the Soviets.

mandate[42], Stříbrný's National League and Mareš' National Front, as well as the majority of the prominent conservative representatives of the parties of the Right, including the most powerful political party in Czechoslovakia - the Agrarian Party[43].

---

42 In his letter to the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaires, addressed to its meeting on September 12, 1926, Beneš defends himself against the continuous attacks against his person by the "Národní listy" (Dr. Kramář's Party paper); he explains that as a protest against these attacks he has resigned his deputy's mandate, and continues: ..." I could go on writing about the enormity and continuity of these attacks on myself for a long time. To the shame of my adversaries, the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister was forced this week even to make public his personal financial accounts. This is perhaps the best illustration. One lie I expose as such and my adversaries immediately bring forward a new insinuation. I expose that and there is immediately a new one. Finally my enemies start crying that even if I were right, my methods and tactics were incorrect. And if I chose different method, they would find a fault even in that one. Tomorrow, day after tomorrow you will hear new attacks: I conduct propaganda on my own behalf through the usage of public funds, I have ambitious political plans, etc. If I will answer these accusations, there will come something else. And so it goes on for seven years already, and, according to the political situation, for a while with a smaller and then with a greater intensity..." - Beneš, E., Pro čistotu veřejného života, pp. 8-10.

43 Mackenzie, C., op.cit., and Hitchcock, E.B., op. cit., deal in detail with the almost incessant attacks which were directed by Beneš' opponents at his person or his actions. Among the many articles on this subject, the most descriptive is: Scheinpflug, K., "Národní Listy Včera a dnes" in Přítomnost, Vol. 12, pp. 206, 221, 237, 265, 285 and 294. - Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 114-117 speaks in this connection about "Dr Beneš' Calvary", because "at home he had continuously been an object of insinuations and slanders which he had been enduring with amazing patience ... he kept on doing his own things, worked without rest, did not

Explanations for reasons for the incessant attacks on Beneš within his country were numerous: his personal conduct of foreign policy claimed to be autocratic, his willingness to recognize Soviet Russia, his socialist views, his unique position due to Masaryk's support, his alleged betrayal of Czech interests in regard to the Tešín territory, feelings of dissatisfaction among the Czechoslovak minorities, his personality becoming Masaryk's "Pruegelknabe", his thinking being alleged to be influenced by foreign ideas to such an extent that he became a stranger in his own country; his countrymen, according to their political convictions, had either put blame for these attacks on Beneš or on his enemies. Judged objectively, however, it must be stated that both sides had contributed to the development of this most unfortunate situation; however, there was another fundamental reason for this hostility towards Beneš which has not yet been brought to light and explored. It was actually Beneš who began, although unintentionally, this battle by his violent attack on the existing political situation in the Czech Provinces just before the war. He had then stated:

---

move from his own place, although they pushed him from everywhere as at a football game, and at the same time he smiled with the knowledge that he also had his claws..".

> We have no political culture. It is painful and embarrassing for a reasonable man to look on our public life, to look on that our giddy, devastated and uncultured atmosphere, ruled by vile passions and dirty and petty interests. And it is therefore necessary to state: we have in our country no political culture[44].

This was a devastating attack on the Czech politicians of the pre-war period, most of whom remained in the political life of the new Republic. A violent reaction from them was inevitable, and equally devastating. While Beneš' observations of the Czech political atmosphere were true in comparison with that existing in France, they were not so compared with that existing within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire in general and that in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia in particular. The Czech politicians of the period who had neither an opportunity nor time to study and observe foreign countries like Beneš, had been preoccupied with their main task of the preservation of the Czech nation under the most adverse political situation, prevailing in the Empire. They had been employing methods which they knew and which were, to a large extent, effective since they grew out the needs of their nation and were appealing to the sentiments of their people. To the

---

44 Beneš, E., Povaha politického stranictví, p.3. This book written in 1913-14 had subsequently caused Beneš many difficulties since it was then used by his enemies as a proof of his anti-Czech and anti-nationalistic sentiments.

same extent that Beneš was imbued with Western political ideas and general political spirit, these Czech politicians were imbued with a mixture of Czech nationalistic feeling, reaching even the heights of chauvinism, of reaction to the German oppression of the Czechs, of ultra-conservative spirit of the Vienna Court and, finally, of provincialism prevailing at Prague. To them Beneš' attack was directed not only at themselves but at something they considered sacred - at the Czech nation[45].

Even before his return to Prague after the war, Beneš was accused that he did not sufficiently fight for the Czech interests when it became known that he was moderate in his presentation of the territorial claims of Czechoslovakia while Dr. Kramář who personified the passionate nationalistic feelings of the old Czech politicians, was aggressive in his demands at the Peace Conference[46]. The two different approaches used in Paris

---

45 They honestly believed in a wide-spread saying "Co je české, to je hezké" (That what is Czech, is nice) and considered, as did the vast majority of the Czech people, any criticism of anything Czech by a Czech as being a treasonable and sacrilegious act. While this attitude would be considered, sub specie aeternitatis, to be politically immature, when the particular circumstances of the situation in the pre-World War I period in the Czech Provinces are considered, its value and inner strength in its unifying aspects were of the utmost importance for the

by Dr. Beneš and Dr. Kramář were caused by the fact that while the former, after having struggled for recognition of the Czech national aspirations by the Western Allies, had a very clear perception of the quid pro quo basis of the policy of the West, the Allies' lack of interest in the Central European affairs and the Big Four's impatience with small nations and their claims, the latter, and the vast majority of the Czechs, were under the nationalist over-optimism to which they fell prey after the defeat of the Empire, and believed that they gained a specially privileged position which enabled them to receive everything they would ask for.

Prime Minister Kramář, who became a spokesman of the majority of older Czech politicians regardless of their political affiliations in their relations with Beneš, had expected, and rightly so, upon his arrival to the Paris Conference, that his Foreign Minister would follow his

---

growth and strengthening of national consciousness among the Czech people.

46 See Secretary's Notes of a Conversation of Council of Ten, February 5, 1919, FRUS, PRC, 1919, III, 876-877; Perman, D., The Shaping of the Czechoslovak State, Diplomatic History of the Boundaries of Czechoslovakia, 1914-1920, Leiden, 1962, pp. 125-129; Vochoc, V., "Dr Beneš a mírová konference pařížská" in Werstadt, J., ed., Dr. Beneš - Spoluzakladatel nové svobody a tvůrce zahraniční politiky československé, Praha, 1924, p. 101.

instructions; he had soon discovered, much to his surprise and annoyance that Beneš had most of them either greatly modified or completely disregarded using, to justify these changes, arguments that Dr. Kramář was neither equipped to deal with effectively nor to be able to refute; relations between the two men became thereafter strained[47].

The question of the Těšín territory had profoundly affected not only the well-known irreversible deterioration of the Czechoslovak-Polish relations but the already strained relations between Beneš and Kramář and his followers; until then some truce between them could have been arranged - after Těšín the gap between them became unbridgeable[48]. The former had considered the latter as

---

47 Dr. Kramář's dilemma was that while he had possessed the theoretical predominance over Beneš by being his Prime Minister, he was unable to use his authority effectively in practice because he did not possess, as did Beneš, the knowledge of procedures, personalities and places behind the stage where the real decisions had originated and were taking shape. Because of these contradictions of his position, Dr. Kramář, who as an ardent patriot wanted to achieve for his country even greater gains than those asked for, and gained by his Foreign Minister whom he disapproved of, yet was unable to dismiss, became neither a popular nor an effective figure at the Peace Conference. Yet Dr. Kramář was instrumental in some Czechoslovak victories which would not have been gained by Dr. Beneš - the most interesting was his refusal to withdraw his demand for the Gmuend railway station and the surrounding territory which was a part of the old Czech Vitoraz region - against the objection of all the delegates at that particular meeting, including Beneš, he persisted

backward and lacking the enlightened qualities required from its politicians and citizens by a democracy, and who had a lot to learn about politics in general and democracy in particular[49]; the latter, on the other hand had believed that Beneš was an autocrat who was determined to force up on his country his own ideas gathered abroad and was influenced by them to such an extent that he became a 'stranger in his own house', ceased to understand the

---

in his stand; in the end, Dr. Kramář had won for his country this territory and the demarcation lines, showing it on the maps in Austria, had to be speedily changed. For further details see: Beneš, E., Světová válka, II, pp. 503-504; Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 16-20; Perman, D., op.cit., pp. 140-153.

48 Dr. Beneš had been dealing on many occasions with the question of Těšín; he had to defend himself against very violent attacks, some of which had branded him a traitor of his country. He had explained that Dr. Kramář had agreed with him that they would divide their roles on the question of Těšín: Dr. Kramář would on principle and radically defend whole of Těšín while he would be willing to make compromises. (Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 61-82).

49 As mentioned, Dr. Beneš had brought up this point, for the first time, after his meeting with the Prague delegation at Geneva in October, 1918. Masaryk dealt with it on many occasions, and in a most explicit manner in his speech on the tenth anniversary of the Republic. (See Note 55 of this Chapter).

problems of his own country and to act in harmony with its historical mission[50]. They also claimed that he was ruling as a dictator over foreign affairs and was only waiting for Masaryk's death or resignation to conquer for himself the whole country as its President which he could then bring to ruin[51].

Finally, there was yet another aspect of attacks by Czech politicians and leading personalities on Beneš: it was conducted by those who wanted to attack Masaryk but considered it unwise to attack him directly because of his great popularity in the nation. They instead kept on attacking him indirectly by attacking Beneš who thus became Masaryk's "Pruegelknabe"[52].

Minorities in general and the German and the Hungarian minorities in particular, constituted also a very significant

---

50 This concept was explained in the terms that Masaryk and Beneš had won abroad in 1914-1918 the Czechoslovak independence but had lost the state later because "their whole concept of the new state had been false and erroneous from the very beginnings". - Svátek, R., O smysl českých dějin, New York, 1963, p. 161.

51 This was the main theme of the National Democratic, Agrarian and other Right Wing parties' press during the entire period of the First Republic, sometimes with a higher, sometimes with a lower intensity.

52 "Whipping-boy" -- see Kubka, F., op.cit., p. 116.

source of attacks on Benes. These two largest minorities, after having enjoyed several centuries of privileged and dominant position in the country, were not prepared to become equal citizens in a new state where the Czechs and Slovaks formed a decisive majority. They held Benes responsible for this development and did not miss any occasion to launch an attack on his personality and actions. Spokesmen for the German minority claimed that Benes, in order to preserve the historic boundaries of the Kingdom of Bohemia, had used at the Peace Conference "numerous falsified maps and population statistics and gave the solemn undertaking that this state would be a type of more advanced Switzerland" but that this promise was broken in 1920 when the Republic was constituted as a state of Czechoslovaks and the other nationalities "became practically second-class citizens"[53].

A foreign observer of the Czechoslovak domestic scene gave an interesting account of Benes' relation with the general public of his own country in the early years of the Republic:

> Because of his scientific studies, a great worker like Benes has the need to see everything himself,

---

53 Kuhn, H., Tschechoslowakei, Nuernberg, 1965, pp. 96-97. This aspect of the German minority's attack on Benes will be dealt with in Chapter III.

> and has an inclination to do too much quite alone. From this there was only a step to being accused from unnecessary secrecy, inadmissible arrogance and authoritarianism... Between the public opinion of his country and him there is, therefore, from time to time a light tension ... Services, which Beneš gave to his nation cannot be compared; but he has accomplished them by his work abroad, and his greatness has because of this fact something which is far away and even a little foreign. In the same way as Beneš, Masaryk is way above the frame and level of the former provincial Bohemia. But Masaryk had behind himself at the beginning of the war more than a quarter of a century of political and national struggles on his native grounds: he is surrounded by mountainous popularity, in which honourable admiration is being united with a true and simple love like that of a son. Toward Beneš, who was still six years ago unknown, is being directed only admiration forced by his knowledge, his energy and authority which he has gained abroad and the status which he is ensuring his country in the world...[54]

In Parliament, Beneš frequently gave lengthy speeches, providing in a precise scholarly manner an account of past events, their historical significance and his actions related thereto, but only of the past events and actions. It was only on very rare occasions that Beneš would consult with members of Parliament, of the Cabinet or with the Chairmen of the main political parties about some diplomatic action which he was about to take, and even then his consultation was more of a nature of information than of true consultation - he had

---

54 Eisenman, L., "Edvard Beneš" in Werstadt, J., ed., op.cit., pp. 199-200. This article was also printed in the Revue Bleue of July 2, 1921.

made his decisions alone or in consultation and agreement with Masaryk. He was firmly convinced that only by the employment of that personal diplomacy of which he was the exponent and practitioner par excellence, was his country able to obtain the maximum benefits from its foreign policy on the one hand, and make the greatest contribution towards the maintenance of international peace and security which was for it so vital, on the other.

Dr. Beneš' exclusive authority in the field of foreign policy had for Czechoslovakia both advantages and disadvantages. Among the former was the fact that his long and uninterrupted tenure in office and his practice of politics, based on a firm philosophical foundation and arrived at in a scholarly manner, gave Czechoslovak foreign policy stability, unity and purpose which it otherwise would not have had. Since Czechoslovak governments during the First Republic had always been coalition governments consisting of at least the five main political parties representing fundamentally opposing views, it would have been impossible for any individual not enjoying Beneš' unique status to remain in the portfolio and to carry out a consistent foreign policy. There had been quite a few political crises on the domestic scene at Prague, and Cabinet after Cabinet fell victims at such times; new Prime Ministers

and Ministers had appeared only to be soon replaced by others - there were only two permanent figures in the Czechoslovak politics who until 1935 remained in their offices - President Masaryk and Foreign Minister Beneš[55]. The more preoccupied were the politicians with domestic problems, the more prepared they were, regardless of all their attacks on Beneš which were treated almost as a matter of routine, to agree with his actions in the field of foreign

---

55 On the occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Czechoslovakia's Independence, President Masaryk had explained, inter alia, the reason for his determined support of Beneš' position. After having spoken about the difficulties encountered by Czechoslovakia on its road of transition from monarchism to democracy, he had continued:

> Democracy is truly a great task, a great problem. Problems, however, are solved by people who think and possess knowledge and are not merely elected. This is the crux of the matter: Be it noted that our Parliament, disregarding the protest of fractions and parties, is wise enough to facilitate political continuity and tradition: we have repeatedly had Beneš as Foreign Minister ... and also non-Parliamentarians such as ... Beneš are accepted as Cabinet Ministers. In a democracy and especially in a body of citizens who are politically and culturally backward, (author's note -- this is exactly what Beneš thought of his adversaries but was unable to pronounce it as clearly as Masaryk because he would thus intensify further attacks by his adversaries) there is always political agitation and party conflicts, but in the long run reason and reflection must prevail. Stated politically, an elected Parliament must of necessity recognize the need of expert knowledge; that this is already the case in Czechoslovakia is one of the reasons why we may await the future with confidence and quiet minds..." - Czechoslovak Sources and Documents No. 4, Speech of T.G. Masaryk, President of the Czechoslovak Republic on the 10th Anniversary of the Attainment of the Country's Independence on October 28, 1928, Prague, 1928, pp. 16-17.

policy or, at least, to completely abstain from their interference therewith - with the exception of the question regarding recognition of the Soviet Union.

Among the disadvantages of Beneš' exclusive authority in foreign affairs was his further alienation from the country's political circles and masses, caused by his tendency to deal with matters within his domain alone, by his failure to take political leaders into his confidence and by his lengthy and frequent absence from Prague; at times he became relatively isolated. His failure to discuss openly, and at regular intervals, at least the main aspects and problems of foreign policy with political leaders before a particular action was taken, resulted in frequent lack of co-ordination of domestic and foreign policies although such co-ordination was imperative for a country like Czechoslovakia whose crucial problems involved both of these policies. This development caused by his political behaviour, presents the most serious criticism of Beneš during the entire period of his Foreign Ministry.

Dr. Beneš' reluctance to delegate the authority, to work with other people and to draw them into his confidence, had also affected his relations with the staff of his Ministry. He showed little concern with its organization

and personnel, and "made no serious effort to pack it with people carefully chosen because of their ability and loyalty to him. He had a small coterie of loyal underlings, some of whom served as his personal secretaries at one time or another and then were rewarded with more exalted posts in the foreign service"[56]. Since Beneš attended personally all the international conferences, spent a great deal of time at Geneva and visited one European capital after another in order to conduct personally discussions and negotiations with heads of states and Foreign Ministers in regard to matters of international and Czechoslovak interests, his diplomats and officials were rarely entrusted with matters of importance and were thus unable to learn from their own practical experience. Even after his election to Presidency, and after Dr. Krofta[57], one of the members of

---

56 Zinner, P.E., op.cit., p. 106.

See also Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 121-123 - inter alia, he comments that "Dr Beneš who by his nature liked to do all the things alone, had no time for instructing his high departmental officials". Prof. Dr. Václav Beneš of the University of Indiana at Bloomington, Indiana, had also stated to the author during an interview held at Bloomington on March 2, 1971 that one of the most fundamental weaknesses of Benes (who was his uncle) during his entire political career was his inability to surround himself in his Department, and later in his Presidential office, with good, loyal and able men, one of whom could have been prepared to become later his successor - as the situation developed, there was none at the time when the country needed him most.

57 That this fact was fully appreciated abroad, especially in the British Foreign Office show the various diplomatic

the staff of his Ministry closest to him became his successor, Dr. Beneš retained a decisive, if not exclusive, control over the conduct of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy.

---

dispatches, and remarks made thereon, where Foreign Minister Krofta had been referred to as "Dr. Beneš' henchman" and his statements were continuously either disregarded or commented upon as if they were made by Dr. Beneš himself: See British Foreign Office - General Correspondence Files: R689/188/12, FO 371/21/127; in R 7166/234/12, FO 371/19492, Foreign Minister Dr. Krofta was referred to as Dr. Beneš' "henchman, mouthpiece and tool".

(b) International Politics

(i) Introduction

> Dr. Beneš was the cleverest, the best informed and for many years the most successful of European ministers[58].

Dr. Beneš was the only statesman in Europe who continuously held office in the period between the wars which alone would have given him a unique status on the international scene; his status, however, contained also other elements. Of all the statesmen who represented the lesser European powers, Dr. Beneš had left the greatest imprint in the European political affairs of that period: he was most often and most intimately involved in the most significant events which occurred during that time. No other representative of a nation of comparable size tried so assiduously and consistently to play the 'great game' of international politics traditionally reserved for a Great Power[59].

---

58 Walters, F.P., A History of the League of Nations, London, 1952, 2 Vols., Vol. 2, p. 116.

59 This point had continuously been emphasized by his critics at home who claimed that he acted as if Czechoslovakia were a Great Power, did not take into account that in any possible conflict between states, it would be a small

Dr. Beneš was imbued with a compelling sense of a national and international mission. To him, in the same way as to Masaryk, nationalism and internationalism were not competing but complementary doctrines and beliefs. He understood that the welfare of a democratic Czechoslovakia coincided with the maintenance of a stable and peaceful Europe. In him, high moral purpose and the recognition of obvious national self-interest blended to such an extent that it became impossible to determine the primacy of one or another as the underlying motive for policies he advocated; the confluence of two such powerful motivating elements strengthened further his unique status abroad because it caused the presumptuous prerogative which he so often exercised in meddling in the affairs of the Great Powers with an intent to steer them to the adoption of policies which were to them frequently unacceptable or disagreeable. There were occasions, however, when Great Powers had asked Beneš to solve their differences, as confirmed by the British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon when he was introducing Beneš

---

power which would suffer first and most, and that interpretation and enforcement of any treaty made between a Great and a Small power would ultimately be made solely by the former. - See e.g. Lisický, K., Československá cesta do Mnichova, London, 1954-1958, 5 vols., Vol. 3, pp. 5-31; also Kubka, F., op.cit., p. 119.

to his Prime Minister, Baldwin:

> Here is that small man for whom we are sending when we do not know what to do. And, my gosh, so far he was always able to help us[60].

Dr. Benes also played such an important role in the League of Nations that went far beyond the capacities of his state, a role that would traditionally have belonged to a representative of a Great Power.

---

60 Lockhart, Sir R.B., Retreat from Glory, New York, 1934, p. 42.

(ii) Dr Beneš' Foreign Policy

> The basis of all our foreign policy right from its very beginnings was that we would be able to conduct our own policy, a truly Czechoslovak policy[61].

Masaryk's wartime plan for the reorganization of Central and Eastern Europe was intended to form the original basis in Beneš' system of foreign policy, and was accepted by the Quai d'Orsay as the French policy for this area: Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Rumania were to be part of a political block which, under the French guidance and support, would be able to stem the German and Hungarian revanchionist attempts [62].

Events which took place in Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary during the summer and fall of 1919 had already rendered such a plan inoperative. The foreign policies of Poland and Hungary were actuated by their mutual desire for a common frontier which they could have achieved only at the expense of Czechoslovakia. As the Těšín dispute increased in violence

---

61 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 186.

62 See: Masaryk, T.G., The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918, London, 1927, pp. 131-136.
Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, pp. 278-282.
Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 26-32.
Perman, D., op.cit., pp. 256-257.

and bitterness, and in 1920 the Polish-Czechoslovak friendship had disappeared, it became obvious that the new Czechoslovak state, instead of being able to rely in the future on a friendly Slavic State in the North, would have to reckon with another hostile neighbour[63].

Another set-back to Masaryk's wartime plan was the rejection, by the Peace Conference, of his proposal to establish a corridor joining Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia: this had caused that "...in reality, Czechoslovakia was born as an isolated state and it remained as such. Regardless of the type and nature of dangers which she was to face, she had to face them alone"[64]. It therefore became imperative that the supreme objective of Czechoslovak foreign policy was the attainment of sufficient guarantees of security to safeguard the existence of the state. While this is true of the foreign policy of every state, in the case of Czechoslovakia it became not only the supreme, but in the last resort nearly the sole objective. Being encircled by hostile neighbours - the only exception being

---

63 See Beneš' detail exposé, given to the Permanent Committee of the Czechoslovak National Assembly on August 4, 1920 about the fights for Těšín - Problémy, pp. 61-82.

64 Perman, D., op.cit., p. 4.

a very short common frontier with Rumania on its extreme southeastern end encompassing the most difficult geographical terrain and therefore strategically insignificant -- it was situated in the most endangered region of the world in the heart of Europe between two Great Powers of which one was the traditional enemy bound soon after its recovery from defeat to fight for the revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty and for the reconquest of its lost hegemony in Central Europe, and the other trying to spread the cancer of Bolshevism. Moreover, Czechoslovakia was a democratic state in a region where democracy had no roots and where it formed a politically alien wedge.

Having identified Czechoslovak interests and politics with European and world politics, foreign policy which Beneš pursued with such persistency, was based on principles of democratic equalitarianism and international co-operation, and on the four pillars of his country's security: on the closest co-operation with France, on the system of collective security as embodied in the League of Nations, on the continued collaboration between the Great Western Powers who had defeated Germany, supplemented later, if possible, by co-operation between these Powers and Russia, and finally on a network of alliances between

Czechoslovakia and those countries that had with it certain vital interests in common - the Little Entente being the only successful endeavour[65].

France was the only Great Power genuinely interested in the new countries of Central Europe; by creating ties with them she had hoped to be able to encircle Germany and also to be provided with compensation for her pre-war alliance with Czarist Russia. On the other hand, Beneš had considered the Czechoslovak-French Alliance supplemented by the Treaty within the frame of the Locarno Agreements, as the most fundamental and solid pillar of Czechoslovakia's security and existence, and of peace in Central Europe[66].

From the very beginnings of his new state, Beneš paid his continuous attention to Germany[67]. Relations

---

65 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 23-29.

66 Dr. Beneš had acted in harmony with President Masaryk's statements given on December 22, 1918 in the National Assembly and, a day later, in the Ministerial Council in Prague: "My over-all plan for the future concept of our foreign policy has been to get on our side France. We have to have one friend who would always give us support, and that will be the French..." - Masaryk, T.G., Cesta demokracie, Soubor projevů za republiky, Vol 1 - 1918-1920, Praha, 1933, p. 47.
See also Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 26-31; 103-104; 295-303.

67 He had followed Masaryk's statement of December 1918: .."As a result of the geographical position of our state, our relation with Germany will be one of the most

between Czechoslovakia and Germany never were nor could have been, relations between two equal partners. Even at the time of its defeat, Germany did not cease to be one of the leading Great Powers of Europe, while new Czechoslovakia was comparatively a small state in an area which Germany considered the most vital sphere of its interests, and where before the war there was German hegemony[68]. Realizing that the mutual relations between these two states had always had a very significant political overtone, Masaryk and Beneš believed that as long as their internal political development would be progressing along the same lines of democratic republics, there would be a good foundation for their good relationship. The correctness of this concept had been proven by the fact that until the crisis of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's take-over, the Czechoslovak-German

---

important. We are fully aware of this situation and our historical development designed this relation to be most important..." - Masaryk, T.G., Cesta demokracie, Vol.1, p. 48.

68 A Czech historian noted that "the origin of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 appeared in the official policy of the German Reich to be to an extent as an antithesis. There cannot be any doubt that without its defeat in World War I, Germany would have never given up its former, fundamentally negative attitude towards the existence of a strong Czech or Czechoslovak state in the heart of Europe. To overcome this traditional concept of every Pan-German or Great-German policy of the 19th and 20th centuries was even in the fall of 1918 extremely difficult and was never complete..." - Koralka, J., "Vznik ČSR roku 1918 v oficiální politice Německé Říše", in the Československý Časopis historický, Prague, Vol. 16, 1968, pp. 819-847. See also Mastný, V., The Czechs Under Nazi Rule, New York, 1971, pp. 9-12.

relations had always been correct, even friendly[69].

While Beneš had never been able to establish friendly relations with Hungary and Poland due to circumstances beyond his control, and he and his policies were in both of these countries regularly under severe attacks, his policy of friendship and economic help to Austria was successful: it was guided not only by his fear that economically bankrupt Austria would demand an Anschluss with Germany but by his genuine desire to help a neighbouring state with which Czechoslovakia had so many ties in the past, at the time of its great financial crisis. An Austrian observer wrote after the 1921 Hallstatt meeting between Beneš and Austrian leaders where he had effected his policy:

> ...Beneš is a humanist. His approach to politics is thoroughly realist, but he allows his decisions to be guided by strongly humane principles ... the humanity reflected in all that Beneš said made a strong impression, and not on me alone, but also upon everyone else who was present...[70]

"A solid foundation for the reconstruction of Central Europe was laid by the creation of the Little Entente which

---

69 This subject will be dealt with to a greater detail in Chapter III.

70 Lennhoff, E., In Defence of Dr. Beneš and Czech Democracy, London, 1938, pp. 18-19. - For further details on the question of the economic reconstruction of Austria see Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 205-215.

deserves to rank as Beneš' diplomatic masterpiece"[71]. This Entente, comprising Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania, had contributed greatly, under the recognized leadership of Beneš, towards the stabilization of Central and Southeastern Europe, and was able, during the 1920's and early 1930's, to wield an influence comparable to that of a Great Power[72].

Beneš did not oppose the readmission of the defeated Powers into the international community but he resolutely fought against any form of revisionism which would have upset the balance of power of the new European structure[73]. He

---

71 Vondráček, F.J., "Diplomatic Origins and Foreign Policy" in Kerner, R.J., ed., Czechoslovakia - Twenty Years of Independence, Berkeley, 1940, pp. 354-355.

72 Much had been written about Beneš and the Little Entente - the best example is perhaps a selection of contributions and oratories given by some of the most prominent Czechoslovak, Yugoslavian and Rumanian personalities on this subject on the occasion of Beneš' 50th birthday: Edvard Beneš a Malá Dohoda, K padesátinám Dr E Beneše, Výbor pro vydání sborníku Praha, 1934, 167p. In general, after having praised Beneš, they had agreed that he was "The Father of the Little Entente", as stated by Jan Černý (Czechoslovak Minister of the Interior), p. 33. By then, however, this Entente had already begun its rapid decline on the way to its eventual disintegration (See Chapter III).

73 See Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 1-3.

had realized that if the defeated Powers were permitted to challenge the Versailles status quo rather than being gradually absorbed into it, a new contest for supremacy in Europe would develop in which Czechoslovakia would be the primary target. The maintenance of the Peace Treaties was therefore to Beneš of vital and paramount importance. From the time these treaties had been signed, he devoted most of his time to bringing about an Order which would give Europe security and peace through the co-operation of independent national states rather than through the domination of a Dynasty or a Great Power; this Order called for the establishment of democracy in international affairs as the necessary and logical parallel to the rise of democracy in the individual European states[74].

It was the League of Nations which Beneš had considered immediately after its foundation to be the chief guarantor of European peace; during the 1920's and early 1930's he spent at Geneva most of his time by attending regularly all the meetings of the Assembly, he was repeatedly elected to the Council, was its Rapporteur for the security matters, was a member of numerous Committees, served several

---

74 See Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 33-42 and 193-203 and also Hudec, K., e.d, Edvard Beneš in His Own Words, New York, 1944, pp. 114-130.

times as President of the Council, and once, during the Abyssinian Crisis, and at the end of his Foreign Ministry, as President of the Assembly. He made it a practice to bring with him to Geneva the chief officials of his Foreign Office on the grounds that he could do his official work more effectively there than at Prague and Geneva virtually became an alternate seat of Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry:

> ...Dr Beneš had soon become one of the most popular people in Geneva. He was known as an indefatigable mediator in all the most difficult situations. He worked for the cause of international peace with the same passionate devotion and sacrifice he had given to the liberation of his people and the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic. The Czech Statesman, who had earned from his colleagues of all countries and from the international press the proud title of "a European", saw only too clearly the mistakes inherent in the League of Nations. But he believed that the idea of collective security would ultimately triumph...75

Beneš had continuously and vigorously worked towards his goal of establishing a solid basis for the preservation of international peace and security by improving the League's Covenant which did not provide the League with sufficient powers required for the enforcement of its Articles. He was not a member of the Commission of the Paris Conference that drafted in 1919 the League's Covenant. An English politician, speaking about Beneš' absence from this

---

75 Lennhoff, E., op.cit., pp. 21-22.

Commission, had remarked:

> ...It may be that, had he been there, the document would have been a better one. It is possible that his admirable realism would have made it even clearer than it was that no international agreement of this kind can succeed unless the parties to it are ready to carry out its provisions, if necessary by force...[76]

Beneš also strove to make the League an effective instrument for arbitration and settlement of international disputes by enlarging the scope of its jurisdiction over such disputes, and at extending its moral sanction to regional and bilateral treaties.

Protocol for Pacific Settlement of International Disputes, introduced at the Fifth Assembly of the League in 1924, in which the League had reached the zenith of its efforts in the field of international security, and which was designed to tighten the League's machinery and to provide for compulsory arbitration in international disputes, compulsory sanctions against the offender and compulsory disarmament, "could be traced to the skillful hands of Beneš -- Beneš, of whom, more than of any other European Minister it could be said that he knew exactly what he

---

76 Viscount Cecil, "Dr Beneš at Ceneva", in Opočenský, J., ed., op.cit., p. 18.

wanted, and that what he wanted was in full harmony with the purposes of the League..."[77] He himself had declared in the Assembly of the League which had adopted this Protocol in October, 1924, that the Assembly was "in the presence of a system the adoption of which may entirely modify our present political life"[78]. Yet, Benes who also had the pleasure of succeeding in having Czechoslovakia the first state to ratify the Protocol, had all his hopes dashed when a change of the British Government had resulted in the rejection of the Protocol by England.

Treaties and agreements of Locarno had really meant the first defeat of Benes' and the French status-quo policy[79]. His tendency of over-optimism and intermingling

---

77 Walters, F.P., op.cit., Vol. 1, pp. 271-272. - While introducing this Protocol to the Fifth Assembly of the League, Benes had declared: ..."Our purpose was to make war impossible, to kill it, to annihilate it. To do this we had to create a system"...(League of Nations, Fifth Assembly, p. 497).

78 League of Nations, Official Journal, 1924, Supplement no. 26, p. 207.

79 Kubka remembers that Benes who used to visit during the 1920's the Čapeks family at Prague, mainly to discuss international situation, "was unable to speak about Locarno with pleasure and had prefered, therefore, to say nothing". - Kubka, F., op.cit., p. 120.

reality with hopes and wishful thinking which was to become another important trait of his personality, and so fateful for him and his country, could have already then been seen in his telegram sent from Locarno to President Masaryk:

> ...In all the negotiations here our interests and guarantees have been fully defended. We have succeeded in obtaining in the general agreements important new guarantees for the future. Indisputably great progress has been made for our peace and for the peace of all the states here represented. Our Arbitration Treaty with Germany is of far-reaching political importance and our Guarantee Treaty with France comfirms our existing peace policy...[80]

In 1928 it seemed that Beneš' efforts of almost a decade on behalf of peace, security and disarmament made a very significant progress when Czechoslovakia became one of the fifteen original signatories of the Pact of Paris, known as the Treaty for the Renunciation of War or the Kellogg-Briand Pact. This Pact had condemned recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, had renounced it as an instrument of national policy in relations between states and had provided for the specific settlement of all international disputes[81]. Having signed this Pact, Beneš

---

80 Quoted by The Central European Observer, October 23, 1925, p.1.

81 Fenwick, C.G., International Law, New York, Third Edition, 1952, p. 684.

declared that

> ...today we do not speak of the right to go to war. The Kellogg Pact declared that wars were criminal. We struggled for this new conception. Theoretically, it had already been recognized and worked out, and the states had now signed the principles upon which it should stand...[82]

In the generally optimistic and hopeful outlook of the world in the late 1920's when it was thought that the forthcoming Disarmament Conference would be the culmination of the long efforts for a permanently peaceful world and when the spirit of international co-operation was at its zenith, the explosion of world-wide economic crisis had devastating effects on the international political scene and administered a shattering blow to Beneš' ideals. The spirit of international co-operation was quickly replaced by egoistic nationalism, disregarding the fundamental rights of others. In their attempts to improve their critical economic positions, many countries aggravated the trend towards international chaos by seeking to alter even those portions of the status quo that appeared detrimental to their own vital interests. These developments brought about a blow to the League of Nations which was particularly painful to Beneš - Geneva ceased to be the center where policies were formulated and decisions made.

---

82 Hudec, K., ed., op.cit., p. 118.

One of the results of the world economic crisis was the revival of agitation for an Anschluss between Austria and Germany. In 1931 these two countries had made an attempt to enter into a Customs Union; this scheme was frustrated by the energetic and determined intervention of the Little Entente under the leadership of Beneš, and also by France and England[83]. It was evident that any form of presence of Germany on the Austrian territory constituted grave danger to the independence of the three states of the Little Entente, especially of Czechoslovakia, and would have completely destroyed the equilibrium in Central and Southeastern Europe. Beneš stated that "a Customs Union was only the first step toward complete economic and political union"[84].

The long-awaited Conference on Disarmament was finally convoked at Geneva in 1932, and Beneš who "alone of

---

83 This was the last determined united action of England, France and the Little Entente for the preservation of the status-quo in the ever increasing battle for the revision of the Peace Treaties.

84 Beneš, E., The Austro-German Customs Union Project - Speech in the House of Deputies on April 23, 1931, Prague, 1931, p. 34. - Nothing demonstrates clearer the deterioration of the position of the status-quo powers than the fact that when Germany occupied militarily Austria seven years later, similar intervention by these powers did not take place.

the men well-known in Geneva had the right grasp of detail and the capacity to give precision to complicated diplomatic machinery"[85], was, as the Rapporteur of the General Commission, instrumental in formulating the draft resolution which was accepted by the majority of delegations. However, Germany presented demands for arms equality which were designed to destroy the very essence of the Disarmament Conference. When Hitler came to power in Germany, he withdrew his country from both this Conference and the League of Nations, and Japan, which had already defied the League by its invasion of Manchuria, followed the suit. When Beneš had returned, during the recess of the Disarmament Conference, to Prague in July, 1932, he summoned immediately the Czechoslovak General Staff and the Minister of National Defence, told them that from what he had heard and seen at Geneva, the Disarmament Conference would most likely fail and issued his warning that "...If the Conference fails ... a dreadful crisis is inevitable... I give you four years. The crisis will probably come in 1936 or 1937. By that time the Republic must be fully prepared militarily..."[86]

---

85 Bolton, G., Czech Tragedy, London, 1955, p. 117.

86 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 22.

While Beneš continued to seek compromises which would reconcile the divergent interests of the participating powers, it was becoming more and more evident that his methods had little relations to the realities of the new era of power politics which was rapidly becoming a predominant feature in the whole field of international relations[87]. He did not believe, however, that he was fighting a lost battle for the preservation of the European status quo; he was convinced that France was determined to play the role which it took upon itself at the signing of the Peace Treaties. He continued to believe in the correctness of his statement about the great mission of France made in 1932 in Paris on the occasion of the hundredth anniversary of the Academy of Social Sciences and Politics[88].

---

87 Early in 1939 Beneš, looking back gave his interpretation of the impact of Authoritarian states on international relations in 1930's: ..."Since 1932 the Covenant of the League of Nations has been systematically sabotaged and violated in its most fundamental articles; one treaty after another violated and destroyed; the intrusion of the authoritarian states in the internal affairs of their neighbours has become a system of their daily politics; their leaders continued to make public speeches, declarations and manifestations which have been revealed as a lie, a public treachery ... they have hundreds of times given their word, and they have hundreds of times broken it; they have made every kind of pledge, and they have respected none; they have solemnly signed new treaties, and they have violated them all..." (Beneš, E., Democracy Today and Tomorrow, p. 194)

88 See Note 212 of Chapter III.

Czechoslovakia, being the most industrialized new state in Central Europe was greatly affected by the world economic crisis, and her foreign trade in 1933, for example, amounted roughly to only a quarter of that of 1928, and her unemployment grew more than tenfold during the same period. Yet Beneš' optimism kept on growing beyond the boundaries of reality even at this time. While speaking on the subject of the new phase in the struggle for the European equilibrium, Beneš attempted to justify his optimism to the Czechoslovak Parliament:

> ...These are the reasons why I remain to be an optimist. I believe in the success of the Republic. I have faith in our democracy. I believe in the possibility for all the political parties and for all the ethnic groups to live side by side under the democratic justice and I am convinced that at the time when we begin to struggle for a new phase of the European equilibrium, our government and our foreign policy will conduct it, for the benefit of the Republic, right to the victory...[89]

---

89 Beneš, E., Une Nouvelle Phase de la Lutte pour l'équilibre Européen, Prague, 1934, p. 62.

(iii) Conclusion

> I am afraid the Dr Beneš' views cannot be taken very seriously. He is getting more and more in the habit - and perhaps he has caught it from M. Titulescu - of talking for effect and with little regard for facts...[90]

Dr. Beneš' tendency to paint an overly optimistic picture of the true situation was gradually becoming more and more pronounced until it constituted another trait of his personality by the last year of his Foreign Ministry; the British Foreign Office had diagnosed clearly and quickly its symptoms[91]. During that year, Beneš found himself to be continuously in the forefront of the European conflict fevereshly trying to forestall the incoming catastrophy which was being designed by the totalitarian revanchionist countries. He was then able to effectuate his

---

90 Note written by E.H. Carr, then working at the Foreign Office, London (author of The Twenty Years' Crisis 1919-1939; he knew Beneš well because he was previously British Minister at Prague), dated September 23, 1935 on a confidential message from, and signed by, Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare to the Foreign Office of September 13, 1935, describing his talk with Beneš held the previous day at Geneva: Beneš had given him an optimistic picture of the internal situation in Czechoslovakia, had assured him that although his government had entered into a treaty with Soviet Russia, Czechoslovakia would continue to look to the West and not to the East for its political orientation and told Hoare "more than once" that if Britain and France held together, and particularly if Britain showed strength, whether by a wise measurement of rearmament or by clear pronouncement of its

long-standing program of entering into a formal treaty with Soviet Russia, in conjuncture with the Franco-Soviet Treaty[92]. His general attitude towards Russia was based on the premise, stated in 1922, that "without Russia, European politics and European peace are not immaginable"[93]. Ever since that time he strove after Soviet Russia's seating in the League of Nations - this event took place a dozen years later -, and by a means of agreements and treaties, ensuring that Russia would be on the side of the Western democracies in any future conflict between them and Germany. His efforts in this direction were accelerated by the triumph of Nazism in Germany; he wrote that at the time when Nazi Germany left the Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations in October, 1933 "I had to admit to myself that this was probably the end of the policy of seeking general agreement,

---

intentions, he was not "nervous of a European upheaval in the immediate years to come." - (British Foreign Office, General Correspondence Files (listed hereafter as BFO, R 5886/234/12, FO 371/19492).

91 This trait of Beneš' political personality will be dealt with in detail in Chapter III.

92 The whole complex subject of Beneš and Russia is being treated in Chapter III and the following Chapters.

93 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 292.

and that we in Europe were being driven into a terrible conflict"[94].

Above all, Beneš was extremely fearful of the consequences for Czechoslovakia, if, in a future conflict, Germany and Russia found themselves on the same side; he believed in the correctness of what a German Colonel had said during World War I: "United, Germany and Russia are invincible. They complete each other in the happiest way"[95]. Since both of these countries had been totalitarian and imperialistic in character, their victory would have been disastrous for the very existence of Czechoslovakia. Furthermore, Beneš knew about the considerable influence of Professor Haushofer's geopolitical theories in Germany in general and among its military circles and General Staff in particular; Haushofer's followers looked eagerly towards a possibility of a Russo-German alliance first, and of military co-operation later, and they heartily approved of the two comparatively recent steps taken in this direction at Brest-Litovsk and at Rapallo. Fears of such a development

---

94 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 5.

95 Colonel Von Niedermayer, "Militärwissenschaftliche Rundschau," the German Military Organ, (date and number of this issue are not given), quoted by Wolfe C.H., The Imperial Soviets, New York, 1940, p. 7.

played later an important part in Beneš' role in the Tukhatchevsky affair.

Beneš explained the basic ideas of his policy towards Soviet Russia during his Foreign Ministry:

> ...I never agreed with the policy of the Western democracies which for so many years isolated the Soviet Union and excluded it from co-operation in Europe and in the world. It seemed to me that victory would go to the side to which the Soviet Union ultimately gave its support. I therefore tried systematically, and before it was too late, to incline it towards the ranks of the European democracies... Professor Masaryk and I ... always held that without the participation of the Soviet Union there would be neither balance nor real peace in Europe and the world and because we feared that the Western European policy of isolating the Soviet Union would push it, if perhaps only tactically and temporarily, into an agreement with Germany against the rest of Europe which could have been extremely dangerous at that time for the whole future of Europe. And for us, for Czechoslovakia, this would have spelt mortal danger... We therefore considered it a great triumph of our peace policy and that of Europe, when the Soviet Union joined the League of Nations ..., and together with France and ourselves began to carry out a consistent policy of collective security, finally concluding treaties of mutual aid with France and ourselves and non-aggression pacts with the other two members of the Little Entente and Poland...[96]

Shortly after Beneš had returned from his first visit of Moscow where he had signed the 1935 Russo-Czecho-slovak Pact of Mutual Assistance, Hitler launched against

---

96 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 6-7.

him a violent campaign of attacks alleging that Benes was chiefly responsible for bringing Bolshevism into the heart of Europe by allowing the Russians to use Czechoslovak airports, and that he was continuously refusing to improve his relations with Germany. To answer the latter part of such attacks, Benes had dealt with the question of Czechoslovak-German relations in his last speech to the Czechoslovak Germans as Foreign Minister:

> ...In general, there are no direct differences between Germany and us. Insofar as such do exist, these are the difficulties which simply grow out of the European situation as a reflex of the differences, difficulties and vexations between Germany and Europe as a whole. However, I believe that these also will be corrected and I hope for an agreement of Europe with Germany. I myself work on it and will always honestly work on it. I hope that Germany will again return in the future in the League of Nations and that all the eventual problems will always be settled in the spirit of the League of Nations. That was, is and will also remain in the future my politics!...[97]

In his last year of Foreign Ministry, Benes was elected President of the Assembly of the League of Nations at one of the most crucial and delicate moments in its history when Mussolini was preparing his military invasion of Abyssinia. The British Foreign Secretary Hoare had at

---

97 Benes, E., Rede an die Deutschen in der Tschechoslowakei, Prague, 1935, pp. 46-47.

that time rallied the League in defence of collective security and had issued a statement which provided the rarest and the most definite pledge ever made by the British Government to defend the collective maintenance of the Covenant of the League in its entirety, and to provide for steady and collective resistance to all acts of unprovoked aggression. Delegates of other countries at Geneva were eager to follow this type of resolute British leadership, and Beneš, who saw in this development the rectification of all humiliations inflicted upon the League since the times of the Manchurian crisis and the German and Japanese withdrawals, took as the highest official of the League a very resolute stand: he consistently refused to allow the issue of Italian aggression to be evaded by any side-tracking manoeuvre of Italy because he believed that "it is the mission of the League to defend the system of international law and to compel states to settle their disputes not by force but by recourse to international law"[98].

Mussolini who had never forgiven Beneš for this

---

98 Beneš, E., The Struggle for Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, A Speech in the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament in Prague on November 5, 1935, Czechoslovak Sources and Documents No 8, Prague, 1935, p. 48.

stand directed against his imperialistic plans, had nevertheless ignored the League and had attacked Abyssinia. The League, having declared Italy an aggressor, became engaged in the fierce battle on the subject of sanctions. The burden which was imposed on Beneš during this time by his high office in which he "substantially and without reservations assisted Sir Samuel Hoare in his efforts to apply sanctions against the aggressor"[99], was extremely heavy in view of the shattering effect of the fight over these sanctions. Czechoslovakia participated in League sanctions because Beneš regarded this question as vital to her own future and to the principle of collective security. Had Czechoslovakia refused to support the League against Italy at this time, it would have forfeited its own right to invoke the League's help in the case of future German aggression against herself. Beneš who was one of the foremost advocates of the indivisibility of peace, had explained his stand in the League of Nations:

> We have always been faithful to the Geneva policy and therefore today, too, I uphold the principle that it is in the interest of our state to abide faithfully by it not merely on ideological

---

99 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 12; he also admitted therein that for this stand he was "much criticized at home by our right-wing parties".

grounds but also for realistic, practical reasons."[100]

When the League had finally imposed, under the British leadership, sanctions against Italy, it soon became evident that the British Government had changed its attitude and had decided that it was not willing to risk a war with Italy. By doing so, it dealt the League a fatal blow from which it was never to recover; Mussolini had triumphed and Hitler, by observing closely this situation became convinced that the Western democracies would be unwilling to stop his own future aggression.

It was during these developments on the international political scene, in their implications so alarmingly dangerous for Czechoslovakia that Beneš having been elected President of the Republic, was forced to resign the Presidency of the Assembly of the League, and by having left the highest office of the League he came into the highest office of his own country. Sentiments of all those who shared Beneš' ideas and activities in regard to the establishment and enforcement of international peace and security were expressed, at the time of Beneš' departure from Geneva in December, 1935, by

---

100 Beneš, E., The Struggle for Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, p. 50.

the President of the Council of the League, Guinoz:

> Beneš' voice led us on many occasions, his wisdom, his comprehension of reality, life, his intellect, his wide culture had impressed on his words an extraordinary importance. We are convinced that he will remain a faithful friend and an incessant supporter of the League of Nations[101].

---

101 Quoted by Obrátil, K.J., Čítanka Dr. Edvarda Beneše, Brno, 1936, p. 74.

4. Overture to the 1935 Presidential Election

> While Dr Beneš has been unable to strengthen himself politically within country, he has found it possible, as a result of much labour, to maintain his position, which, as everyone knows, has never been particularly satisfactory[102].

Prior to his election to Presidency in December, 1935, Beneš already was a very prominent political personality both at home and abroad; "few people remained indifferent to him or to his policies, and he was either admired or hated by those who knew him"[103]. His struggles for the establishment of the Czechoslovak state, his successes at the Armistice negotiations and the Peace Conference, his work in the League of Nations, his conduct of personal diplomacy, of which he was the exponent and practitioner par excellence, on a level that would have traditionally belonged to a representative of a Great Power and the sharp controversies about his political behaviour, were the main reasons for his prominence. His policy towards Soviet Russia became a matter of great controversies not only within his country and Germany but also within the Western

---

102 Dispatch 129 from the U.S. Minister at Prague, J. Butler Wright, dated March 21, 1935; Dept. of State, National Archives, Record Group 59, Purport Book 623, 860F.00/380 (hereafter listed as USDS)

103 Zinner, P.E., op.cit., p. 100.

democracies where the fear of Russian Bolshevism was generally greater than that of the newly emergent German Nazism and Italian Fascism[104].

From the very beginnings of the Republic, President Masaryk had been determined to make certain that only Beneš would be his successor, yet this was an extremely difficult undertaking even for a man of President Masaryk's prestige and status. Beneš always had at home many passionate personal enemies and powerful political adversaries; the basic weakness of his political position stemmed from the fact that he actually violated, by holding the Foreign Minister's portfolio as an "expert" in harmony with President Masaryk's ideas, the well-established democratic procedure

---

104 The British fear of Bolshevism is clearly evident in British diplomatic dispatches emanating not only from Prague but also from other European capitals, and in remarks made by Foreign Office officials, which continuously expressed concern about Beneš' Russian policy, evidence of the Russian and Comintern activities in Czechoslovakia, strength of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and especially about the personal attitude of Beneš to Soviet Russia. An example of highly critical, even sarcastic comments is contained in the Dispatch from the British Minister at Prague, Sir J. Addison, dated June 24, 1935 to Sir Samuel Hoare, the Foreign Secretary, about his meeting of the same day with Beneš in which he had stated that Beneš described in the most favourable terms his visit to the Soviet Union and what he had seen there, and added: ..."Beneš' enthusiasm rose to lyrical heights when he was describing his reception which was 'marvellous'..." Foreign Office notes thereunder..."Beneš sounds a gullible creature ... He bases his enthusiasm for conditions in Russia on state receptions. Of course M. Stalin gave him caviar and naturally it was well served - what did he expect!..." (BFO, N3240/160/38, FO371/19461).

concerning the tenure of a Cabinet portfolio. The most fundamental law governing the conduct of every politician in a democratic country who wants either to gain accession to, and to remain in, an office, or to be elected to a higher office such as a Cabinet post, prescribes that he must either be in the possession of sufficient popular support and following in his own constituency to enable him to gain therein an electoral victory on a personal basis, or to be backed up by a powerful political-party or parties - coalition machinery. Yet Beneš who had neither of these two prerequisites had his position further weakened by the fact that he was known to be a socialist in a country where the most powerful political party was the Rightist Agrarian Party and where many coalition governments comprised exclusively the parties of the Right. Analyzing his position[105] in this

---

105 U.S. Minister at Prague, J.B. Wright, gave in November, 1934 an interesting appraisal of Beneš' internal position and of the general feeling about his foreign policy, which remained basically valid throughout the remainder of his Foreign Ministry. He had stated that there appeared a "higher degree of uneasiness and apprehension for the future in Czechoslovakia than any other time since its foundation," and after explaining that any deviation from the fundamentals of Beneš' foreign policy "had always been automatically ruled out", described the growth of the belief in the country that this one-sided foreign policy was a mistake because it alienated Germany and had brought no real security in return, that France which was looking after her own interests would support Czechoslovakia only so long as it suited her, and one day might come when she would have no further use for Czechoslovakia; that the country had no real friends among her immediate

light, it is evident that Foreign Minister Beneš was not an ordinary and true politician of a democratic country who had to follow and submit himself, to all the rules, prescriptions and usages of a democracy. He really was an official, an expert -- that he was an extremely capable diplomat and negotiator not even his enemies were able to deny -- but he was not a democratic politician in a strict sense of this term. It was only President Masaryk as his closest, and in reality the only real friend, whose continuous determined support made up for all the other elements of democratic politics which he was lacking and defended him against his personal enemies and political adversaries.

Beneš' strength, on the other hand, comprised, besides President Masaryk's political power, a negative and a positive element: the former was the fact that there was an absence of any suitable, generally acceptable candidate for Presidency whose qualifications would have then appeared to be either comparable to those of Beneš or who would have been able to present to his countrymen a program of better

---

neighbours and the organic weakness of the Little Entente was becoming more apparent every day. Wright concluded that "Dr. Beneš' position has become appreciably weaker during the past few months ... it is clear the new Parliament will be more hostile to Beneš than the present one. Dr Beneš has failed, for the moment at any rate, to secure the political support necessary to consolidate his position..." (Dispatch 28 from the US Minister at Prague, J.B. Wright, dated November 27, 1934; USDS, 860F.00/369).

security at the time when the established European order was so rapidly collapsing. The latter element of Beneš' strength was generally well known and acknowledged: he was at that time, with the exception of President Masaryk, the only Czechoslovak political personality widely known abroad, who was just elected to the highest official position of the League of Nations as President of its Assembly. Since he had known and worked closely with many statesmen of other countries, he was able to make claims to his people that he was best equipped to safeguard their security in the dangerous period which had by then already begun.

Beneš' efforts to preserve the European status quo, to maintain peace and to ensure peaceful settlement of all international disputes, received also abroad acknowledgement and support. A French writer described in 1935 perhaps most eloquently the hopes placed in Beneš by those who believed in the ideals he was fighting for, and in his abilities to preserve peace:

> I think of war and peace in terms of men. I look upon Adolf Hitler as the embodiement of War and upon Edvard Beneš as the personification of Peace ... I am convinced that Edvard Beneš is the one man who has the courage, the driving power and the brain to save the world. It has struck me that his career should be made better known so that the English-speaking nations may not lose faith in the future of civilization. He accomplished wonders for his race between 1915 and 1919.

He has since achieved repeated diplomatic triumphs for Czechoslovakia. If the Occident will but give him its moral support I feel certain that he will find ways and means to prevent the holocaust which appears to be imminent.

I have never seen Beneš. I have not corresponded with him. I know but few of his intimates. There is not a drop of Slav blood in my veins. I have been led to write of him because I look upon him as being Central Europe's soundest statesman...[106]

---

106 Crabitès, P., Beneš - Statesman of Central Europe, London, 1935, Preface, pp. VII - IX.

CHAPTER II

ENTRY INTO THE HRADČANY CASTLE

A. The Election

> In the forefront of the Republic stands again the enlightened personality of historical and world significance who, after T.G. Masaryk, and besides Dr Štefánik, deserved most of the Czechoslovak Republic ...[1]

During the summer months of 1935 President Masaryk began to feel fully the weight of his eighty-five years. Having held the Presidency for the past seventeen years, he had realized that his powers and health were failing and that the time had finally arrived when he had to submit his resignation[2]. He was afraid that his death might come

---

1 Roj, J., "K osmnáctému prosinci 1935", in the Rytmus, December, 1935, p. 1, Vol. 1172 of the Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, California.

2 During the last two years of T.G. Masaryk's presidency, especially around the 1934 Presidential elections, there persisted in Czechoslovakia wide-spread rumors about his resignation. Thus the US Chargé d'Affaires, J. Webb Benton reported from Prague already on April 30, 1934 that there had been circulating rumors that "President Masaryk will immediately resign after his re-election and recommend the election to the Presidency of Dr Beneš". Benton added that he had personally felt that these rumors did not appear to be correct and that President Masaryk would accept re-election and would continue in office "indefinitely" --

during a period of international crisis when chaotic situation would not permit an orderly election of his successor. On previous occasions of illness, President Masaryk had left no doubt that he regarded Beneš as his obvious successor[3]. He did not intend to run in the presidential elections of 1934 believing that Beneš would become

---

(USDS, 860F.00/362). The subject of presidency, besides having been dealt with in daily newspapers almost on a daily basis, became the most frequently discussed topic of the contemporary political, sociological and arts revues and magazines such as the: Naše Doba, Přítomnost, Fronta and Panorama.

3 As early as 1918 when he had returned to Prague from his exile during World War I, Masaryk had succeeded in having reduced, in a draft of the new Constitution, the minimum requirement of age for future Presidents of the new Republic, from forty-five to thirty-five years so that, as he had explained, Beneš who was then only thirty-four, would be able to succeed him. This Masaryk's announcement, then made for the first time, was in reality a political bomb which exploded in the faces of the several most prominent political figures who had considered themselves to be logical successors to Masaryk, and who were two decades or more older than Beneš, especially Prime Minister Dr. Kramář, and the Chief of the Agrarian Party, the most powerful political group in the Republic, Švehla. - For further details see Hitchcock, E.B., op.cit., pp. 204-211. A very interesting testimony about a conversation of President Masaryk with Prime Minister Švehla held before the Presidential elections of 1927 indicates that after the rapid increase of the political power of the Agrarian party, its leaders did not intend to accommodate further Masaryk's requests concerning Beneš being his successor to the Presidency; Švehla at that time had not only told Masaryk that he would not fulfil his original promise concerning Beneš given at the very beginnings of the Republic but that he himself had no intention of becoming the President: "...Realizing that Švehla's determination had

his successor by unanimous acclamation; it was only after he had discovered that Beneš would have been opposed that he decided to accept one more period of office[4]. In the meantime, Beneš in an attempt to strengthen his precarious domestic position, had undertaken a tour of the country giving a series of speeches on the contemporary international political situation, on the struggle between democratic and dictatorial regimes in theory and practice, and on the Czechoslovak role in this conflict[5]. While he had been directly

---

formed an unsurmountable obstacle, Masaryk altered also his original plan. He now requested that Švehla be his successor and that he would work in the closest contact with Beneš... Švehla...thought this idea over for some time, but finally decided against it. He told Masaryk that he would not be a candidate for presidency because according to his own opinion he had not an interest in social and representative functions which were important for contact with diplomats and added that his knowledge of foreign languages was quite insufficient. 'Well' replied Masaryk, 'you will be the venerable President-Farmer; Beneš can talk to diplomats'. 'Not so' replied Švehla, 'neither Beneš nor I will find ourselves in this position'. 'Who then?' 'Some president of an academy could always be found; it is quite sufficient for us to have some monstrance to be shown to the people'". (Peroutka, F., Budování státu, Praha, 1933-1936, 4 Vols, Vol 4, p. 1505).

4 See Osvald, V., Po Tomáši Masarykovi nastoupil Edvard Beneš, Praha, Svaz národního osvobození, 1936, 149p.

5 The US Minister at Prague, Wright had considered these speeches to be of considerable importance and gave them in his dispatches a prominent place:

(i) In Dispatch 92 dated February 12, 1935, he dealt with Beneš' speech given at Jihlava on February 9, 1935, on "The Crisis in Democracy and the Struggle Against Dictatorial Regimes". In it, after having sharply critized the

attacking the authoritarian governments in general, and the Nazi regime in Germany in particular, he was ipso facto indirectly attacking those elements of the Czechoslovak

---

Nazi regime in Germany, and to a lesser extent, the regimes in Italy and Poland, he had expressed his conviction that a democratic regime was the only one suitable for Czechoslovakia and had concluded: "Dictatorial systems of government are symptoms of illness and therefore only transitory. I trust that sound reasoning and social development of mankind will assure the victory of democratic ideals, not only political, but economic and social as well". (USDS, 860F.00/377).

(ii) In Dispatch 119 dated March 12, 1935, he dealt with Beneš' speeches given at Plzeň, Brno and Zlín on the occasion of Masaryk's 85th birthday in which he had emphasized Masaryk's views on democracy, humanism and patriotism, had condemned authoritarian regimes of the Communist, Nazist and Fascist varieties, had assured his listeners that "we are determined to defend the Czechoslovak democratic Republic and if necessary, we will employ all available means to do so", and had concluded: "...Everyone in Czechoslovakia must know that any regime, other than a democratic one, is bound to lead to internal political conflict, result in the oppression of Czechoslovak minorities abroad, make difficulties with our German and Hungarian neighbours and lastly, bring us into conflict with Geneva and the world in general". (USDS, 860F.00/379).

(iii) In Dispatches 160 and 169, of April 30 and May 9, 1935 respectively: the former dealt with Beneš' speech to the German Social Democrat Teachers' Association of Czechoslovakia given at Teplice on April 29, 1935, the latter with his address to the "Scholar Society Šafařík" at Bratislava on "Masaryk's Comprehension of the National Idea and the Problem of the Czechoslovak Unity". The US Minister Wright had noted that Beneš' remarks were intended for home consumption with a view to strengthening his position in the forthcoming election, and had drawn the Secretary's attention to the fact that since the Stresa and Geneva meetings, Beneš had been more open in expressing his strong disapproval of the German policy and of the Nazi regime. Wright believed that Beneš considered that the Czechoslovak position had been strengthened as a result of the solidarity recently evinced by the Great Powers and by the conclusion of the Franco-Soviet pact of military assistance, both of

Right-wing parties who wanted to install an authoritarian government in Czechoslovakia and who presented the most determined opposition to Beneš' election to the Presidency[5a].

Supporters of Beneš, both at home and abroad, while expressing their optimism that Beneš was going to be the next President[6], were nevertheless considerably worried by

---

which he hoped would go a long way towards checking Germany's aggressive aspirations. (USDS, 860F.00/387).

Besides dealing with Beneš'speeches, Wright kept on analyzing the possibilities in regard to President Masaryk's successor, and in turn to Foreign Minister Beneš' successor. He was the first diplomat stationed at Prague who had reported a rumor that in the event of Beneš' election to the Presidency, he would appoint Hodža as the Prime Minister and that the Foreign Affairs portfolio would go to "colorless non-party man Krofta who would follow President's dictates". (Dispatch 75 of January 28, 1935, USDS, 860F.00/375).

5a In his Dispatch from Prague of December 24, 1934, US Chargé d'Affaires Benton reported that in view of the fact that "a strong Central Government of the Fascist variety is demanded by many people in Czechoslovakia - one which, according to them, would have scant regard for minorities as such, and would place the country's economic house in order", Beneš made a statement that the democratic regime in Czechoslovakia had not failed, that Czechoslovakia did not need a dictatorial regime because only a democratic regime was in harmony with the meaning of its history. - (USDS, 860F.00/373).

6 In Dispatch 1516, the American Consul-General at Prague, F.C. Lee reported, on January 31, 1935 about his conversation with Dr Papánek from the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry who was "Dr Beneš' right-hand man" and who had stated that "Dr Beneš would be given the Presidency at such time as it may be necessary to fill that position". (USDS, 860F.00/376).

the developments and admitted privately that his election was not going to be an easy achievement[7]. They understood that without President Masaryk's active support Beneš would just be unable to master that backing which was necessary to ensure his election[8]. They dreaded the possibility of

---

In a letter of September 20, 1935 to O'Malley of the British Foreign Office, R.H. Hadow of the British Legation at Prague stated that he was informed by Jewish bankers that it was regarded virtually certain that President Masaryk would resign in October and that the election of Benes as his successor was also virtually assured for. (BFO, R5704/234/12, FO371/19492).

7 US State Department Undersecretary William Phillips noted in a memorandum of May 29, 1934 that the Czechoslovak Minister at Washington Veverka had said, refering to the third-term election of Masaryk as President that Masaryk had made a great mistake in not giving way to Beneš and allowing him to assume the Presidency since "Masaryk could very simply have brought this election about but now he would presumably die in office and Beneš' future was less certain". (USDS, 860F.001/43 - also 800.51 W89).

In telegram 8 of February 12, 1935, the US Minister at Prague, Wright, had informed the State Department that the Rumanian and Yugoslavian Ministers in Prague had made joint representations to the Czechoslovak Government that in view of the continued ill health of President Masaryk and his inability to function fully he should relinquish his office so that Beneš might be elected by the then sitting Parliament as his successor. They had taken this step to demonstrate the desire of the two Czechoslovak partners in the Little Entente that Beneš "be retained in high office on account of his services and importance to this Alliance" (USDS, 860F.001/52).

In Dispatches 90 of February 13, and 209 of June 26, 1935, Wright had confirmed that the Little Entente Ministers at Prague had made representations mentioned above in telegram 8, because "the Little Entente considers Beneš by far the most important statesman of the Alliance". Wright stated in the latter dispatch that the Rumanian Minister at Prague had agreed with him that "Dr Beneš'

Masaryk's sudden death which would have meant an end to Beneš' political career[9]; they felt that such a happening would have not only meant the destruction of democracy within the country but would have brought on the verge of destruction the new Republic itself.

Beneš who had realized the precariousness of his position and had felt the might of the unified attacks of his enemies, had nevertheless displayed his confidence that with President Masaryk's resolute support he would in the end overcome all the obstacles and be elected to the Presidency[10]. His election as the President of the Assembly

---

election to the Presidency may not be an easy matter". (USDS, 860F.001/55 and /59).

While in Prague, the Czechoslovak Minister in the US Veverka had told the US Minister Wright on September 4, 1935 that he was "deeply concerned" over the delay in the determination of President's retirement and the selection of Beneš as his successor. (Dispatch 268, September 4, 1935, 860F.00/396).

8 In Dispatch 75 of January 28, 1935, the US Minister at Prague Wright stressed up the point that all of his acquaintances had agreed that President Masaryk's personal influence was absolutely necessary to assure Beneš' election (USDS, 860F.00/375).

9 It was rumored in Prague in February, 1935, that Beneš had himself indicated that unless he were elected to Presidency in case of President Masaryk's death or resignation, he would rather retire from public life than to face the uncertainties of a later election. This rumor had also constituted one of the reasons for the Little Entente representations at Prague. (USDS, 860F.001/52).

of the League of Nations had greatly strengthened his status at home and gave his supporters the much needed argument for his election to the Presidency of the Republic. Masaryk became even more insistent than in the past that Beneš was his only acceptable successor, and did not hesitate to use all of his influence to ensure that after he would step down, his faithful disciple would enter the Hradčany Castle. At the time of rapidly worsening international situation, Masaryk was convinced that only his closest associate was able to take over the helm of his state to safeguard its very existence through the ensuing storms. He told a friend about his relevant feelings: "On the outside, I am calm; but here, in my heart, I am troubled.

Wright had also reported on July 22, 1935, that Beneš' plan to temporarily retire from office of Foreign Minister had been altered and he would remain in the Cabinet until President Masaryk would either die or relinquish the Presidency. (USDS, 360F.002/75).

10 After his conversation with Beneš of February 12, 1935, the US Minister Wright had written that Beneš had "practically substantiated the truth of the report that President Masaryk may soon resign and he himself might be elected by Parliament to succeed him". (USDS, 860F.001/55).

While talking to the British Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare in Geneva on September 12, 1935, Beneš had indicated that the various parties in the Czechoslovak Legislature seemed to be agreed that he should be President Masaryk's successor in the event of the latter's death or resignation. (BFO, R5886/234/12, FO371/19492).

And I shall not be happy unless Beneš becomes my successor![11]"

During the fall of 1935 when the battle for the solution of the problem of President Masaryk's successor had reached new intensity, the drama unfolded in a clear form - the fight for Presidency was to be not that of Beneš against one or more prominent political personalities, but that of Beneš against anyone else, regardless of his merits and status, as long as he would defeat Beneš. It was an irony that all the numerous and politically powerful personal enemies and political adversaries of Beneš, though united in their attacks and denunciations of his personality, actions and ideas, were nevertheless unable to bring forward a solid and worthy opponent on whom they would have been able to agree and to whom they would have given their resolute support[12]. Although the much publicized intervention of

---

11 Miljukov, P., "De Masaryk à Beneš", in Le Monde Slave, Mars, 1936, p. 390.

12 Among a number of the published works by the anti-Beneš authors about the election of President Beneš, the outstanding is: Kahánek, F., Zákulisí presidentské volby Dr Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1939, 123p. This book, which was published after Munich, gave many important details about the inability of the anti-Beneš camp to prevent his election; it was considered so important by the Germans that the SS Hauptsturmfuehrer Hagen had sent it on June 20, 1939 to Berlin to the "Das Schwarze Korps", magazine of the Schutzstaffeln der NSDAP and Organ of the Reichsfuehrung SS to have it translated into German. He had received its translation on December 29, 1939. (Bundesarchiv Reichskanzlei,

the Vatican especially in the last hours immediately preceding the election had a very considerable bearing on its outcome[13], the most important negative factor in the

---

Koblenz, R58/983, Sicherheitsdienst des RFSS, SD Hauptamt, Zusammenarbeit mit anderen Dienststellen "Schwarzer Korps".)

13 The question of Vatican's intervention, on behalf of Beneš, in the 1935 presidential election is a very intricate one. From the contemporary newspapers and political revues it is evident that both the pro-Beneš and anti-Beneš sides had attempted to underplay the significance which the Vatican activity in reality might have had. Thus the editor of Naše Doba had written that "it is not correct to overrate the influence of the Vatican". (Naše Doba, Rozhledy Politické, Vnitřní, Vol. 43, 1936, p. 234). In summary, it was alleged that the Nunciature in Prague by using its influence, mainly through the activities of the Papal Lord Chamberlain, Dr. J.J. Rueckl, had swung votes of all the Catholic political parties in Czechoslovakia, who were traditionally anti-Beneš because of his socialist views and Russian policy, in his favour. The most difficult task of Dr Rueckl was to persuade the Hlinka's Catholic Populist Party in Slovakia which held the key position in the presidential election - Kahánek, (op.cit) described how a day before the elections, on Tuesday, December 17, 1935, Hlinka, immediately upon arrival in Prague was met by Dr Rueckl and taken to Beneš. - Křen, J., ("Klerikální hnutí a fašismus 1933 - 45" in Laurová, J., ed., Náboženství, církve, klerikalism a naše dějiny, Praha, 1962, pp. 191-192). quotes from Dr Rueckl's letters to the two Slovak bishops Blaha and Vojtaššák that ..."from the standpoint of preserving the interests of the Catholic Church, the Voršilská street (the residency of the Nunciature in Prague - note by the author) regards as more than desirable that the next presidential election ...were guaranteed for Beneš. The Apostolic Nunciature would be very pleased if Your Excellence were also to plead for the same with Prelate Hlinka..." Křen then explains that Dr Rueckl wrote in the same way to Dr Tiso, dealt several times with Prelate Hlinka and kept informing Beneš' office what he had done in order to gain Hlinka and his party as supporters of Beneš. On one occasion he had said in this regard: "We let loose on him the best weapons of the Church pressure through the Vatican, bishops, etc." Subsequent the presidential

1935 Presidential election was the inability of Beneš' opponents to form against him a united front led by a well-known and distinguished candidate for Presidency who would have been able to override even T.G. Masaryk's wish in regard to his successor.

Beneš who spent during this period most of his time at Geneva, gave in Prague on November 5, 1935, one of the most important speeches of his political career which

---

election, one of the most prominent functionaries of the Hlinka's Catholic Populist Party of Slovakia, Sidor, had boasted that his party's votes had decided the election of Beneš to the Presidency. (Ibid., pp. 191-192).

This author whose attention to the problem of the Vatican's support of Beneš in the 1935 Presidential election was raised by Prof. Dr Václav Beneš of the University of Indiana at Bloomington, Indiana, during his interviews held at the University of New York on November 14 and 15, 1970 and at the University of Indiana on March 1-2, 1971, had spent considerable time and efforts to bring to light some documentation from the Vatican sources. After having been frustrated in his attempts at the Vatican Archives by the rigid rule of the 150-year waiting period for making their sources open to scholars, the author had conducted in Rome on September 7 and 9, 1971, two very important interviews with pronounced experts on this subject: with Msgr. Dr Polc from the Library of the Pontifical University Lateranense and with Msgr Dr Bezdíček of the Santa Maria Maggiore Basilica. While they had agreed with the importance of the very effective Vatican's intervention on behalf of Beneš so that all the Catholic parties in Czechoslovakia had casted for Beneš their votes, they had expressed serious doubts that there would have been written, at that time, any dispatches or memoranda by the Vatican officials on the subject. They felt that violent attacks conducted in Nazi Germany on the Church had been the main reason for the Vatican's eagerness to see Beneš in the Hradčany Castle but instructions to, and from the Nunciature in Prague would have

was to be his last one given as Foreign Minister[14]. In it he had outlined his philosophy which guided Czechoslovak foreign policy[15] and had expressed his optimism in the final victory of democracy and his firm and passionate belief "in the successful development of the great mission of this State in the affairs of Central Europe and Europe generally"[16].

The problem of President Masaryk's successor had also ipso facto brought to life another problem - that of

---

most likely been in an oral form. The author found documentary substantiation of their contention regarding the Nazi-Germany conflict with the Vatican of that time in Bundesarchiv Reichskanzlei, Koblenz, (R 431/154, Fol 1, pp.95-97).

14 Beneš, E., The Struggle for Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War. In Dispatch 321 dated November 7, 1935, US Minister Wright dealt with this speech in a great detail and emphasized the fact that "Dr Beneš' speech is worthy of more than hasty perusal in view of the conditions in Europe, Czechoslovakia's unwavering support of the principles of the League of Nations and the part played by Dr Beneš as President of the Assembly during the discussion of the Italian-Abyssinian dispute". (USDS, 760F.00/41, also 860F. 032/22.).

15 He had done so deliberately in an especially detailed manner in order to silence his critics who kept on accusing him that his foreign policy had become meaningless and had endangered the very existence of the state, and also to be able to contend that while he had a rational philosophy behind his foreign policy, his opponents had none.

16 Ibid., p. 60.

Foreign Minister Beneš' successor[17]. This latter problem would have existed even if Beneš were not elected to the Presidency since he would have then left public life. Beneš who had wanted as his successor in Foreign Ministry Dr Krofta, had concentrated all of his efforts towards the first issue - his election to Presidency, and had decided that he would be in a better position to deal with the second issue - his successor to Foreign Affairs, at the time when the first one would have been determined[18].

---

17 R.H. Hadow of the British Legation at Prague had reported on September 20, 1935 that "There is trouble over Beneš' successor as Foreign Minister - Beneš wanting Krofta and the Agrarians Hodža ... Beneš' hold over the foreign policy of Czechoslovakia will in any case be weakened, since Masaryk made an absolute and accepted stipulation that Beneš should be Minister for Foreign Affairs as long as he was President; whereas Beneš cannot extract the same condition for Krofta, even if he succeeds in having him appointed as his immediate successor in Foreign Affairs..." Three Foreign Office officials had made interesting observations on the above report:

1. N.J.A. Cheetham wrote on September 20, 1935: "One cannot easily believe that Dr Beneš has not taken care to safeguard his control of Foreign Affairs when he becomes President."

2. R.A. Gallop suggested on September 21, 1935 that M. Beneš, as seen by Hadow, will be in a weaker position to push his pro-Soviet policy as President than as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

3. E.H. Carr remarked on September 27, 1935: "Nobody, it seems to me, can predict with certainty, what will be the outcome of Beneš' elevation to the Presidency. It depends inter alia (a) on the personality of the new M.F.A. and his readiness to take orders from the President; (b) on Dr Beneš' willingness to confine himself to a constitutional role; (c) on his ability to override the Constitution and dictate a policy to the government if he wants to. In short, anything can happen. Dr Beneš may become a dictator, or have his wings shorn like M. Millerand". (BFO, R5704/234/12, FO371/19492).

On November 21, 1935 President Masaryk had finally announced in a confidential manner to Prime Minister Hodža his irreversible decision to resign from the Presidency for which he had no more sufficient strength due to his age and illness. In his deed, he had stated:

> ...The office of President is arduous and responsible, and hence demands undiminished powers. I see that it is beyond my strength, and I therefore withdraw from it...
> It is my desire to inform you that I recommend Dr Beneš as my successor. I have worked with him abroad and at home, and I know him. I have full confidence that all will be well, and if God thinks fit I shall be allowed to live a little longer and see how you fare...[19]

During the entire period between President Masaryk's announcement and Dr Beneš' election to Presidency, there had

---

18 R.H. Hadow of the British Legation at Prague had dealt in his letter of November 26, 1935 to O'Malley of Foreign Office with all the possible combinations as to the new Foreign Minister and stated that "President Masaryk resignation... be made public towards the end of this week and then the Chamber of Deputies will be asked to vote Dr Beneš' election on the very next day. But one of the most trusted supporters of Beneš indicated to me yesterday that Beneš was now playing a trump card by refusing to have his election voted until the question of the Minister for Foreign Affairs had been settled - as he hopes to his advantage - by the nomination of Krofta..." (PRO, R7166/234/12, FO371/19492).

19 Quoted by Selver, P., Masaryk, London, 1940, p. 308; this deed was read at the official ceremony on December 14, 1935, by the Chancellor of the Office of the President Dr Šámal.

been feverish activity behind the scenes with Prime Minister Hodža's attempts to arrive at a unanimous agreement between the parties of the coalition with regard to President Masaryk' successor[20]. On December 11th, when the negotiations within the Ministerial Council had reached a deadlock, Hodža informed Masaryk of his desire to resign. The latter refused, however, to accept his resignation and having expressed in the Prime Minister his confidence, requested him to renew his efforts towards reaching an agreement:

> ...Rumors became increasingly current that the resignation of President Masaryk might be expected at any moment (early December 1935 - author's note) and although the local press was subjected to the strictest censorship - absolutely

---

20 For details about this period see: Kahánek, F., op.cit., Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 147-148, Gajanová, A., op.cit., p. 345; Naše Doba, Vol 34, 1936, pp. 231-234; Přítomnost, Vol 12, No 51, December 24, 1935, pp. 801-804; also daily newspapers of the period especially Venkov, Prager Presse, Pražské Noviny, Národní Listy, Národní Střed, Národní Politika and České Slovo. From these sources it is evident that the campaigns of political struggles preceeding the 1935 presidential election were not among the most outstanding displays of Czechoslovak democracy in the period between the two world wars. While the unique form of controversy surrounding Beneš' political personality played a very important part, the most prominent reason for these fights was provided by the international political situation and the fear that if Czechoslovakia were to continue to follow Beneš' policy, especially concerning Soviet Russia, it would be destroyed by the totalitarian neighbours, led by Nazi Germany.

> no news upon the subject being published - foreign newspapers published articles in varying degrees of accuracy, and the whole affair threatened to become a tragi-comedy. I use this term advisedly, for while the opinions which were freely expressed were at time ludicrous, the tragedy of it all lay in the fact that President Masaryk - physically aloof from it all in his country-place near Prague - was compelled to witness in the twilight of his life a most undignified scramble for political power among individuals who for personal reasons and political aspirations were threatening to destroy the edifice of democracy to which he had devoted the last twenty years of his life...[21]

Prime Minister Hodža was not successful in reaching the unanimous agreement between the coalition parties that Beneš be President Masaryk's successor, and a portion of his own Agrarian party, the National Democratic party and the Republican party had chosen to put forward their own presidential candidate on Professor Němec, whose main platform was the accusation that Beneš was subservient to Soviet Russia. Their hopes that other political parties would follow their suit were shattered by the December 17th afternoon decision of Msgr. Hlinka's party that they would vote for Beneš and by the solid stand of all Czechoslovak Catholic parties. Prof. Němec's chances by the early morning

---

21 Page 3 of the lengthy Dispatch 356 from the US Minister at Prague, Wright, dated December 20, 1935, giving a detailed and objective account of the process of Beneš' election to Presidency. - (USDS, 860F.00/405).

of the election day were virtually nil. Dr. Beneš was elected in the first round by 340 votes to 24 with 76 abstentions which came mainly from the German opponents of activism in the Czechoslovak politics[22]. This majority of votes for Beneš was also caused by the fact that the Communists, ignorant of the back-stage political machinations of other parites, had cast all of their votes for Beneš because of their fear that Professor Němec would have otherwise been able to win[23]. President Masaryk's public declaration that he hoped and wished that his faithful lieutenant be elected to succeed him was the most important single positive factor among those which contributed towards Beneš' election[24].

---

22 Even President Masaryk had never obtained such a majority: he was elected in 1920 by 284 votes, in 1927 by 274 votes and in 1934 by 327 votes. The official record of Dr Beneš' election is contained in the Shorthand report of the meeting of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic (Joint meeting of the Chamber of Deputies and of the Senate) in Prague on Wednesday, December 18, 1935, in the Vladislav Hall of the Prague Castle, National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, 1935, IV Electoral period, Second Session, pp. 1-6.

23 Naše Doba, Vol 43, 1936, p. 232.

24 This point was stressed by British Minister Sir J. Addison in his report to Sir Anthony Eden of December 23, 1935. (BFO, R7760/234/12, FO371/19493).

Among its immediate neighbours, reaction in the official press towards Beneš' election to the Presidency varied from the most hostile attacks waged in Poland[25] to hopes that Beneš would be, as President, in position to improve relations with his neighbours and to achieve harmony among Czechoslovakia's nationalities, as seen in the German, Austrian and Hungarian press[26]. Comments in the

---

25 Sir H.W. Kennard, British Ambassador in Poland reported to Sir Anthony Eden from Warsaw on December 24, 1935 that "the comment in the pro-Government press on the election of Dr Beneš as President of Czechoslovakia has been ungracious in the extreme... The 'Czas' produces a list of the damage and suffering inflicted upon Poland since 1919 by the policy of her southern neighbour for which, it says, Dr Beneš has always been primarily responsible and concludes with an unconvincing assurance that it does not wish to mar the solemnity of the occasion but merely brings up these questions to remind the President of the need for turning over a new leaf. The 'Ilustrowany Kurjer Codzienny' writes in a similar view but is even more offensive in its comments..." (BFO, R 31/31/12, FO 371/20373).

26 In Dispatch 2557 of December 26, 1935, US Ambassador in Germany Dodd reported that the election of Beneš had elicited considerable editorial comment in Germany which was all in harmony with the key-note given out by the semi-official 'Deutsche Diplomatisch-Politische Korrespondenz': in its issue of December 18, 1935 it had stated that Beneš, as Foreign Minister, strove to increase Czechoslovakia's power, disregarding the fact that "the forces - internal and external- which lay supine at the end of the war gradually recovered.. Instead of seeking a natural adjustment, he produced... avoidable tension... As President he is now above party strife. It is to be hoped that President Beneš will succeed in accordance with the ideas and principles of his teacher and predecessor which constitute an heritage and obligation for him - in realizing in fact, and not only in rhetorics, the pacific living together of the peoples united in the Czechoslovak state, on the basis of equal rights and equal

domestic press had revealed that the anti-Beneš press had made in most instances a hasty retreat and had joined those who had considered Beneš' victory not only a victory for Czechoslovakia but for whole Europe[27]. In their

---

respect." Ambassador Dodd concluded that the hopes here expressed carried little conviction of early realization, in view of the recent attacks on Beneš in German press. (USDS, 760F.62/30).

For a complete review of foreign press commentaries on the occasion of Beneš' election to presidency, see Osvald, V., op.cit., (Note 4 of this Chapter).

27 A typical editorial had appeared in the "Přítomnost", No 1 of January 8, 1936: "One Hungarian magazine wrote after the Presidential election that Europe had elected Dr. Beneš. It is strange that it was a Hungarian who arrived at the truth about Czechoslovakia. Beneš' personality meant abroad the total of all those values which are being represented by our state, it was a symbolic figure of a good European, whose value grows with the appearance of more bad Europeans. We are now representing the symbol of European culture in the neighbourhood of Hitler's Germany. It is not a disadvantageous role. It is not more true that nobody in Europe would shudder if we were to collapse. And it is also not true that nobody would lift his hand. We must never give up those ideas which helped us to occupy this honourable and advantageous position. These ideas are: democracy, conciliation among nations, freedom and peacefulness. If we did not possess these ideas, if we did not follow them, what would we mean for Europe? These ideas give the internal content to our state and even a considerable number of our Germans is more faithful to them than to the race myth. To effect these ideas is really the only means towards making from our Germans not only inhabitants but also patriots of this state. The firmer will be our position, the greater value we will have for Europe, the more shall we represent the symbol of its culture. During 1935 we have made several important steps in this direction, the election of Dr Beneš being the most important one. We shall therefore well remember this year..." The Prager Presse of December 19, 1935 (the semi-official paper of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry) stated that by

admiration and love towards Masaryk - their President-Liberator, the vast majority of the Czechoslovak people believed that by following his wish of electing Beneš as his successor, they had not only expressed to him their gratitude but had placed the best man available in the Hradčany Castle[28]. They had felt, as did a Cabinet Minister

---

Dr Beneš' election to the Presidency, "democracy and New Europe, Europe of the Future, had won".

An interesting observation was made by then an employee of the Foreign Ministry who had seen on December 18, 1935, Dr Beneš leaving the Foreign Office on the way to the Prague Castle to take the oath of his new Office: "It was a sunny day, but the President was trembling with cold in his winter coat and looked very uneasy. I felt, at that moment, sincerely sorry for him". (Kubka, F., op.cit., p. 147).

28 Supporters of Beneš were naturally jubilant about his election but kept on emphasizing the fact that his enemies had tried, although vainly, to bring about his defeat. Thus in his letter from Prague of December 31, 1935, Professor Dr J.B. Kozák, a National-Socialist member of Parliament for the Pardubice district wrote to Thomas Čapek of New York City, who was one of the most prominent Americans of Czech ethnic group and a leading personality in the Czech-American National Alliance of the United States of America:

> ...There was undertaken a real electoral plot against Dr Beneš where everything was being unified - even under the title of democracy - from the agrarian magnates who terrorized their more loyal colleagues, over the fascist-like National Union up to the members of the Henlein Party. But we had won the election in a glorious fashion and because of the new, energetic and young President we have well secured our Republic for another seven years. Dr Beneš' enemies were simply afraid of his energy. However, there were at stake even the line of our foreign policy, our relations with the League of Nations (because

that

> President Beneš... is bringing with him in his position as the head of our state the same qualities which he had already had as a revolutionary abroad. Twenty years of work did not change him in any way. He is still the same untiring and aim-conscious worker as he was in his youth, a statesman, having wide political, economic and especially cultural interests, a diplomat of a grand style and outlook, conscious of his responsibility towards the nation and future generations...[28a]

Immediately after his election to the Presidency, Beneš, in his first meeting with the Prague Corps Diplomatique, made a clear statement that he would continue in carrying out policies which he and President Masaryk had been following since the earliest days of the Republic

---

defeated Beneš would not have been able to continue as Foreign Minister) and, in general, the purity of our democracy... - (Library of Congress, Manuscripts Division, Washington, DC - Thomas Čapek Collection, MS 59-44, Ac No 10, 225; 10, 235, II - 28-C, 1, 4-6; Series 4b).

The Annals of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry had stated: "...If there were emotions caused by the resignation of President Masaryk from his office modified by something, then it was not only the joy that T.G. Masaryk is still among us, but the reality that our nation had fulfilled his wish that Dr Beneš be his successor in the Presidency..." - (Zahraniční Politika, 1935, p. 581).

28a Kapras, J., President Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1936, p. 27.

> ...In internal politics order, peace and respect for law, justice to all classes and nationalities, continuous efforts towards political, social and economic progress, safeguarding of political and religious freedoms; in foreign politics the continuation in efforts towards peace through international co-operation with all the friends and neighbours, support of the League of Nations and preparation of collective security, that all has been and remains our program...[29]

By his resoluteness not to deviate from this program to which he was now determined to contribute all of his almost unlimited energies, Beneš, occupying the highest position of his state which he had defined as "the key to the whole post-war structure of Central Europe"[30], seemed to justify the expectations of champions of a democratic and peaceful Europe which were explained by a contemporary French writer:

> ...We should not close our eyes to the fact that the future of Europe depends today more upon the brain, the tact and activity of Beneš than upon any other factor...[31]

---

29 Ibid., p. 3.

30 Beneš, E., The Struggle For Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, p. 58.

31 Crabitès P., op.cit., p. 289. - Another French writer contended that "by the election of Dr Beneš to the Presidency, Czechoslovak democracy had strengthened the peace in Europe at a time when this is particularly menaced..." (Deminois, F., L'élection présidentielle en Tchécoslovaquie", in Le Monde Slave, XIIIe Année, Janvier, 1936, pp. 78-104).

B. Institution of the Czechoslovak Presidency

> If I should say in what has climaxed my life, well, it was not the fact that I have become the President ...but the fact that even as Head of the State, I did not strike out anything from that in what I had believed and what I had loved as a poor student, as a teacher of young people, as an inconvenient critic, as a politician-reformer; that having now the power, I do not find for myself any other moral law or other relationship with neighbours, the nation and the world than those which had governed me before...[32]

The institution of the Presidency of Czechoslovakia into which Edvard Beneš entered in December, 1935, and which was destined to last in its then existing form only as long as the First Republic, had originated on the Day of the Proclamation of the Republic. Having had no earlier traditional foundation, it grew and took its shape under the guiding hand of the first President, T.G. Masaryk[33].

---

32 T.G. Masaryk speaking to, and quoted by, Čapek, K., op.cit., p. 182.

33 Masaryk explained that after having become President, he had to learn much, and every day something new - "it is not something easy to be the first president in a new state which has not its own tradition of governing and representation. I saw mistakes which were being made, and those which I was doing myself... I had to keep on thinking hard, what is and what should be the president of a democratic state..." -Since the coalition parties which had drafted the Interim Constitution of November, 1918 and were subsequently working on the preparation of the 1920 Constitution visualized the function of the president as a more or less representative one, vested with a minimum of power,

He was the main architect of the definition of powers vested in the President as they were defined in the 1920 Constitution[34]. Subsequently he was also instrumental in shaping up the convention of the Constitution, the customs and usage which have modified and supplemented the institution

---

even less than given by the French Constitution, President Masaryk had to wage a determined and lengthy but in the end a successful battle, to increase the presidential powers to an extent which would have been in harmony with the existing political requirements of the new state. - (Čapek, K., op.cit., pp. 175-183).

For further details about the battle concerning presidential powers see: Mencl, V. and Menclová, J., "Náčrt podstaty a vrcholné sféry předmnichovské československé mocensko-politické struktury", in the Československý Časopis Historický (listed hereafter as ČSČH) Vol 16, 1968, pp. 341-362.

34 The best work which gives a detailed description of the institution of the Presidency of the Czechoslovak Republic in the period between the two World Wars and illuminates also a very significant sector of the Czechoslovak state law has been published a year before the election of Dr Beneš: Sobota, E., et al., Československý president republiky, Praha, 1934, 453p.

In summary, it can be said that the powers and influence of the president, as contained in the provisions of the 1920 Constitution, were impressive. Executive power was vested in the President and the Cabinet; the former was elected for a term of seven years by the National Assembly composed of 300 members of the Chamber of Deputies and 150 members of the Senate, and with the exception of the first President no one was able to be elected for more than two successive terms. The President represented the Republic in international relations, was Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, was authorized to appoint and dismiss members of the Cabinet as well as to dissolve the Parliament, to appoint university professors, higher judges, civil servants and to commission armed forces officers of higher ranks. The Cabinet was responsible for the exercise of the presidential functions and for his official pronouncements.

of presidency[35]. The two main reasons for the increase of the importance of presidency were, first, Masaryk's enormous popularity which enabled him to gain from the coalition parties the extension of presidential powers, and then the extraordinarily difficult political crisis, both at home and

---

Every presidential act was to be countersigned by the member of the Cabinet who was responsible for its execution. If the President was unable to execute the duties of his office; the Cabinet was to exercise his functions and was able to entrust specific functions to the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister and members of the Cabinet were appointed by the President usually from among the leaders of the political parties. The Cabinet was responsible to the Chamber of Deputies. If the Chamber, upon a motion signed by not less than one hundred deputies, passed a vote of no confidence or refused to pass a vote of confidence proposed by the Cabinet, the Cabinet was bound to tender its resignation to the President. The Cabinet submitted to the President proposals for the appointment of high officials, and the President appointed a Governor for Ruthenia upon the recommendation of the Cabinet. - An excellent description, in detail, of these powers, was given in a book written and published in England by Dr Beneš' Personal Secretary during the entire period of World War II: Táborský, E., Czechoslovak Democracy at Work, London, 1945, pp. 17-33.

35 The most important of these was Masaryk's continued supremacy in the field of foreign policy. (Masaryk in this case meant, of course, Masaryk and Beneš). He was absolutely determined that only Dr Beneš could be in the Foreign Ministry portfolio and had announced on two occasions that if Beneš were not to continue in this portfolio, he would himself step down from the Presidency. - For details see: Mencl, V., and Menclová, J., op.cit., pp. 343-350; Přítomnost, Vol 12, No 50, December 18, 1935, pp. 786-787; Kerner, R.J., ed., Czechoslovakia - Twenty Years of Independence, Berkeley, 1940, pp. 125-169; Ďušek, V. and Soulber, N., eds., Czechoslovakia, New York, 1957, pp. 40-100.

abroad, which had placed Dr Beneš after his election to the Presidency, in the centre of all fundamental decisions affecting the very existence of the Republic.

> The power of the President was limited by the Cabinet. In practice, however, the President assumed a greater role than that stipulated by the Constitution, due to the impact of the two Presidents, Thomas G. Masaryk and Edvard Beneš, who held office during the twenty years before Munich. Both men, especially Masaryk, were highly respected for their contributions to the establishment of the state. Their counsel was sought by party leaders of all political orientation... The presidents provided the only counterbalance to the parties, but they held this position on the strength of their personal influence, rather than by constitutional provision. Masaryk and Beneš raised the prestige and power of the presidential office far above the anticipations of the framers of the 1920 Constitution...[36]

Immediately after his election to the Presidency, Dr Beneš set out to consolidate the powers and influences of his new office by re-entering fields of political activities in which his predecessor was active during the early years of the Republic but which he was forced to vaccate during his last years in office due to ill health and old age. By immediately employing his vast knowledge and contacts gained abroad, and mainly his personality trait of dealing with most, if not all, problems alone, Beneš strove to even

---

36 Beck, C., "The Government" in Czechoslovakia, Busek, V. and Spulber, N., eds., op.cit., pp. 80-81.

further increase presidential involvement in the entire scope of Czechoslovak political activities, both at home and abroad. He firmly believed that he alone was best equipped to ensure that the state, to the birth of which he had contributed so greatly, would safely pass through the growing dangers which surrounded it from every direction. After his only real friend and teacher, T.G. Masaryk endowed him with such an overwhelming trust by being mainly responsible for his election to the Presidency, Dr Beneš became virtually obsessed with his self-imposed, and to him sacred, mission of preserving the integrity of the Republic. He had worked out a program of devoting himself at once to the very difficult task of bringing about a solution of the three main problems then confronting Czechoslovakia, the third of which had clearly meant an extension of the presidential powers:

1. The improvement and increase of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces and the construction of border fortifications;
2. The strengthening of, and preservation from, the Alliances, Pacts and Agreements entered into with other states by Czechoslovakia, everything that was still possible to salvage at the time of growing European derangement;

3. The strengthening of the domestic front which included the unification and strengthening of the Coalition of governmental parties, and the solution of the minorities problem and of the Slovak question in a spirit which would strengthen unity of the state and stop its internal dissolution[37].

Dr Beneš' determination to begin to work with his usual zeal and energy as soon as he had entered the Hradčany Castle did not pass unnoticed, and not only the domestic press but also foreign observers and diplomats had soon reported the marked change in the pace of activities in the presidential offices[38].

---

37 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968, p. 7 and n. 1. p. 519.

38 Thus the US Minister at Prague, Wright had reported in Dispatch 366 as soon as January 7, 1936 that "...The installation of President Beneš has been marked almost immediately by a noticeable increase of activity at the Hradčany Castle - where the President has now taken up his residence ... opinion from all sources concurs that the presidential office has been revivified, and anyone conversant with Beneš' personality and temperament cannot conceive of his passive fulfilment of his presidential duties..." (USDS, 860F.00/406).

In Dispatch 22, R.H. Hadow of the British Legation in Prague, had reported to Foreign Secretary A. Eden on January 31, 1936 that Dr Beneš "...is devoting his restless energy to obtaining a complete mastery over the political machinery of Czechoslovakia"... and that "...he intends to be

To their great consternation, Dr Beneš' personal enemies and political adversaries who, after having been unable to prevent his election, had entertained hopes that as the President, Dr Beneš would, at least, be effectively side-tracked from any significant participation in the Czechoslovak political activities and would become only a representative figure-head of the state; they were forced to witness that, on the contrary to their expectations, he had become one of the most significant political figures in the state; due to the quickly worsening international situation, they were powerless to watch that he was rapidly becoming the most significant and influential politician in Czechoslovakia[39]. The only apparent set-back for Beneš which had occurred after his election to the Presidency - the loss, to Prime Minister Hodža, of the Foreign Ministry portfolio, because Hodža wanted to be the Foreign Minister in order to facilitate the realization of his old dream of a Danubian Federation but who was in all his attempts towards that

---

master of the internal situation in this country even as, for years, he was sole director of its external policy..." (BFO, R675/32/12, FO371/20373).

39 This fact was also well recognized by the foreign diplomats and their Foreign Offices abroad. Thus e.g., on May 9, 1936 Hadow wrote to O'Malley of British Foreign Office that Dr Beneš "...is today perhaps more than ever before the director of Czechoslovakia..." (BFO, R2789/32/12, FO371/20374).

accomplishment unsuccessful - was quickly rectified by Beneš who recovered the Foreign Ministry within a couple of months by placing his own man, Dr Krofta, in its head.

Beneš' entry into the Hradčany Castle had marked the beginning of the rapid growth of the scope of presidential activities and powers which the opposing forces were able neither to stop nor to check, and which was actually welcomed and seen by a considerable sector of the population as the growing power of the Republic itself[40]. There were also those who either foresaw the decline of Beneš' powers, or their increase, at great dangers, by disregarding the Constitution[41]. In response to those who

---

40Thus the "Naše Doba" (Revue for sciences, art and social life)which was a solid pro-Masaryk and pro-Beneš influential periodical, in an article "Beneš' Tempo" (Vol 43, 1936, pp. 605-606)had described most favourably Benes' activities which, "according to the new President encompassed not only political, military, external, diplomatic, financial and economic affairs, but also matters involving culture, sciences, arts and education". The author had stated that "Beneš' optimism... which had until now been a powerful basis of the evolution of our foreign policy of the post-war period, flows now in the form of a mighty current a new dynamism into the wide river-bed of all our public, national life..."

Another political weekly, the "Přítomnost" of June 24, 1936 (Vol 13, No 25, p. 338)went as far as to say that "the strength of the President makes all of us strong..."

41 Commenting on Hadow's Dispatch 22 of January 31, 1936, Carr of the British Foreign Office wrote on February 11, 1936: "...The personal popularity of Beneš in Czechoslovakia has never stood high. He has retained his position partly owing to the support of President Masaryk and partly owing

had expressed their confidence in him, his ideas and actions, the new President stated clearly his determination to work on and fulfil his plan which meant nothing less than the declaration of his intention to gain the decisive role in all the most vital political aspects affecting his country, and thus to vastly increase the powers of the institution of the Presidency of the Czechoslovak Republic:

> You express your confidence in my work and your confidence in my future work. This is binding for me. Political confidence is a wonderful possession which is very difficult to gain and which, as thousands of examples show, is very easily lost. I have a firm plan for my work, for the work of all of us together, of all the political parties and classes, I have a firm will to fulfil it in the spirit of liberation[42].

---

to the international prestige which he acquired at Geneva. Now that the first of these has disappeared and the second is a wasting asset (since he has no means of renewing it), it is reasonable to expect a decline in Dr Beneš' position. But he is undoubtedly an ingenious and resourceful person and it may be anticipated that he will use every exertion to keep his position at the head of affairs, even at the expense of the Constitution. In short, Czechoslovakia at the present time appears to be heading for a good many possible crises, most of them disagreeable and dangerous ones." (BFO, R675/32/12, FO371/20373).

42 Excerpt from Beneš' speech in Třebíč, given in June, 1936 during his first Moravian tour as the President conducted mainly through the predominantly German-speaking districts, and quoted by the "Přítomnost", Vol 13, No 25, June 24, 1936, p. 388.

Prime Minister Hodža was in theory the only Czechoslovak political leader who alone, and on valid constitutional grounds, was sufficiently powerful to be able to challenge Dr Beneš' drive towards the increase of presidential powers. In practice, however, that would have meant an all-out fight between him and Beneš which would have split the country into opposing camps not only along the Right-wing - Left-wing lines but even more so along the Czech-Slovak ethnic basis; such division would have been disastrous for the new Republic at the time of grave danger when the unity of all its inhabitants, regardless of their nationalities or political parties, was so desperately needed. Dr Hodža was a passionate patriot who, having already given outstanding services to the Republic as its Minister of Education, of Agriculture and finally as its Prime Minister, and who, as a Slovak, embodied the Czechoslovak unity, was not the type of man who would endanger the very existence of his state[43]. By

---

43 See Feierabend, L.F., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu, New York, 1964, pp. 53-54; Describing Dr Hodža, Feierabend writes: "...I was convinced that Hodža had certain characteristics of a genius. His concepts were grandiose and world-modern, he looked on the problems from bird's-eye view, judged them calmly and wisely, found even for the most difficult questions suitable solution and knew how to effect them tactically even under a difficult situation..."

See also Kren, J., "Hodža - Slovenská otázka v zahraničním odboji" in the Československy Časopis Historický, Vol 16, 1968, pp. 193-214.

having supported Beneš' election to the Presidency even at the most critical times when a section of his own Agrarian Party had openly revolted against his stand and selected their own presidential candidate, Prime Minister Hodža had demonstrated his statesmanship; by subsequently avoiding an open all-out fight with Beneš by sacrificing his own position and personal feelings in the interests of the Republic, Dr Hodža had proven his patriotism and "certain characteristics of a genius"[44]. Although he disagreed strongly with Beneš' policy towards Soviet Russia and the latter's leftist stand and ideas, Dr Hodža had neither tried to endanger Beneš' position nor to discredit him personally by attacking his trait of getting involved in most, if not all, of the most significant political problems, and working on them alone[45]. While he was thus

---

44 Dr Feierabend's description of Dr Hodža - (see note above).

45 Since his election to the Presidency, Beneš' relationship with Prime Minister Hodža had been a subject of interest to foreign observers in general and to the British Foreign Office in particular: Thus Hadow of the British Legation in Prague wrote on January 31, 1936 that "Hodža is a rival and not a friend of Dr Beneš in politics. Dr Beneš, in the eyes of Hodža's more conservative and agrarian followers, pursues "Left-Wing" and pro-Russian policy to a dangerous degree..." - Commenting on this report, Carr of the Foreign Office observed on February 11, 1936: "...A further point of interest is the personal position of Dr Beneš and his relations with M. Hodža. There are many reasons for doubting whether these relations are

able to preserve the unity of his state, he had, at the same time, caused that the only effective check on President

---

likely to remain cordial for very long. M. Hodža represents the Right Agrarians who do not like Dr Beneš' pro-Soviet policy. Moreover, a Prime Minister in a state which still professes to run on constitutional lines may not long be content to take orders from a President..." (BFO, R675/32/12, FO371/20373).

A novel idea concerning President Beneš - Prime Minister Hodža's relations had appeared in the newly installed British Minister at Prague Newton's private and confidential letter to O'Malley of the Foreign Office of March 30, 1937 that "...among well-informed people in Prague it is believed that Dr Hodža is in the power of Dr Beneš. In his personal financial affairs, Dr Hodža is reported to be or to have been extravagant and careless, and had to be helped out, or helped himself out, by means which were too unorthodox to stand publicity. Dr Beneš is understood to hold the evidence of the transactions and with it the power of veto over Dr Hodža's political ambitions. At present it probably suits Dr Beneš to let Hodža - who, as a Slovak and an Agrarian, avowedly favours closer co-operation with Germany than is palatable to Czech chauvinists or Left-Wing Socialists - handle the twin problems of the Sudeten-Germans and Danube Economic Bloc in a conciliatory fashion and one likely to appeal to Western democracies. If Hodža goes too far in this direction to suit Dr Beneš and his followers in the coalition he may suddenly find his policy disavowed and be made to retrace his steps as happened when Hodža unwisely took on the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs and was made to return it, after a short time, to Dr Beneš' keeping. Like an astute politician he is, Dr Beneš is not committing himself too publicly, but seems to be trimming his sails to prevailing winds both in and outside this country - particularly the wind of British public opinion. His henchman Dr Hodža is meanwhile being allowed to occupy the front of the stage because, with the above hold over him, he would hardly dare play the President false, and as leader of the anti-Communist parties in the Coalition he can approach Germany without loss of face either to himself or to Dr Beneš". Nichols of the Foreign Office had added the following comment, to the above Newton's letter, dated April 4, 1937: "Very useful information which we should bear in mind".

Beneš' activities ceased to effectively operate, and the Hradčany Castle had become the nerve-centre of the Czechoslovakia's political theatre[46].

(BFO, R2243/154/12, FO371/21125).

While this allegation did not appear in the German, American or French diplomatic dispatches from Prague, the two writers mentioned in note 43 above, Dr Feierabend and Kren after having emphasized the enormous and meritorious political work of the new Prime Minister for his country, and his outstanding political abilities coupled with his vast knowledge, made also passing remarks about the other alleged side of Dr Hodža's personality. The former mentioned "Dr Hodža's tendency to be domineering and to sometimes employ less laudable political methods" (p. 53), and the latter wrote that "...Dr Hodža's political methods, especially in personal and financial matters, were not always clean..." (p. 197).

In order to establish the truth about the allegations that President Beneš had de facto blackmailed Prime Minister Hodža, this author had conducted an extensive but equally frustrating and fruitless search for any relevant documentation, and after having interviewed a number of prominent former followers, both of Dr Beneš and of Dr Hodža, he arrived at the only conclusion possible that such allegations had no substance in truth but had been fabricated at that time in the form of rumors for the purpose of damaging the position of Czechoslovak democracy in the eyes of the West in general, and of England in particular.

46 This statement must not be interpreted to mean that Dr Beneš was subsequently free to use all of the state powers at his own discretion, and that he and his policies, especially his Russian policy, became immune from the attacks of his personal enemies and political adversaries; it only reflects the fact that at the time of increasing threats and grave dangers to the very existence of their state, the majority of its population together with its Prime Minister had realized that to preserve its integrity and independence, they had to be united behind a leader who seemed to them as being best equipped and most capable for such task - Dr Beneš then seemed to be this leader.

CHAPTER III

Presidency of Dr Beneš
During the Era of the First Republic

A. Dr Beneš' Political System

1. Theoretical and Conceptual Aspects

(a) Philosophical Preparations

> My scientific and philosophical study during these years (pre-World War I years - note by author) had confronted me with the necessity of adjusting the struggle within me to a definite philosophical attitude and system. This was what I had been striving after throughout my ten years of study and preparation...[1]

Young Beneš, who was so profoundly influenced by T.G. Masaryk in his preparatory years and who, following his teacher's example went abroad to further his studies, wrote about his activities after having arrived to Paris in 1905: "I had worked sixteen to eighteen hours daily and had gulped down everything what I had been able to get hold of in order to penetrate, in the quickest way possible, the contemporary currents of ideas and to gain, at the same time, a sufficient general education and the necessary basis

---

1 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 20.

for a special study of philosophy"[2]. Positivism which he had initially accepted as the governing theory, was unable to keep him satisfied and he kept on being attracted to Masaryk's realism not only for its most understandable aspects such as its fight against romantic historicism and idle political radicalism but mainly for its aspects which dealt with the last things of man and with doubts about the then current philosophical dogmatism. Beneš had admitted that Masaryk "continued to disturb and harass me by his destructive analysis of everything in positivism which I had regarded as philosophically sound"[3].

Masaryk had brought Beneš to noetics and Kant: "Kant had shown me the method of philosophical studies, the way and gate to all the problems first of philosophy and then of sociology"[4]. Beneš' conception of philosophy could best be defined as "the criticism of reality"[5]. He was unavoidably

---

2 Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, Praha, 1935, p. 15.

3 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 21.

4 Ibid, p. 23.

5 This definition is used by Patočka, J., "Filosofické předpoklady praktické činnosti" in Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš, Filosof a Státník, Praha, 1937, pp. 7-40. For a very objective criticism of Hartl's book in general, and Patočka's Chapter in particular, see Česky Časopis Historický, Vol. 43, 1937, pp. 641-643.

driven to this conception by his two most important personality traits: to work always alone, possessing confidence that he, and only he - with the exception of his teacher Masaryk - would arrive at correct solutions to problems in which he became involved, and his rebelliousness towards the established order of German domination coupled with his passionate Czech nationalism which fused into an impatient eagerness to be academically fully prepared to be in the centre of any revolution when this would come, and thus to be able to effectively contribute towards its success. Viewed from this plane, and taking into account Beneš' simple, straight-line manner of theoretical consideration, his inclination towards enlightenment and his philosophical models and teachers, confirm that Beneš' philosophy could never be considered as such in the Aristotelian conception of the universe. Beneš was an activist, for whom praxis and activity were a natural element in which mental life was taking for him its course. He had described his entire period of studies as a preparation, regardless whether it meant the political or the philosophical preparation; but even during this preparatory period, he was continuously being attracted towards practical problems[6]. Beneš'

---

6 Among the most important relevant Beneš' works of his preparatory period which are listed in detail in Bibliography are the following, given in chronological order; all

temperament did not allow him to spend the time which would have been needed towards the waging of ideological struggles encompassing the realm of philosophy and led him instead to a conceptual firmness, to a firm and secured results of these struggles so that the fighting for ideas alone were to him alien; Beneš was leaning towards synthesis and if he had not become involved in other fields, he would have perhaps become a systematizer of realism. There were no Beneš' sceptical formulae: from his first literary work he appeared with obvious certainty and self-confidence, employing skilfully scientific terms and combining ideas with an eager curiosity governed by working optimism. All in his works seemed to be certain, clearly classified and free not only of skepticism but also of subjective reflection. This indicated the presence of a certain dogmatic trait coherent with Beneš' personality: dogma, objective datum, objective judgement and objective truth were the only items of his interest while the method and criticism were merely the means towards

---

of these works were written in Czech:
The Austrian Problem and the Czech Question;
The Question of Nationalities;
Our Political Education and the Necessity of a College of Social Sciences;
The Evolution of Modern Socialism - 4 Vols.;
The Nature of Political Partisanship;
The Problem of Alcohol Production and Abstinence.

attaining the objectivity. This "dogmatism" in Beneš did not mean the absence of criticism: it was the reverse side of the front side which was his dominant demand of the strictest criticism of reality.

Knowledge, "in what is hidden the true reality" he had seen as "an eternal philosophical problem"[7], and he

---

7 In his introductory lecture on the theme of "The Idea of the Czechoslovak State", as professor of sociology at the Charles University of Prague on January 24, 1921, Foreign Minister Beneš dealt at some length with this philosophical problem. In the section concerning the Slavs and Western Europe he stated that realism in thinking and in politics was the condition of a better future of the Czechoslovaks and of all the Slavs, and explained what he meant by this statement:..."In matters of practical politics and especially in matters of state administration and organization, it is necessary to have keen sense for practical needs, for the concrete as distinct from the abstract, for the practice as distinct from the theory, for an immediate decision, for a quick understanding of the complexity of a problem... it means quickly to see and know what is the true social and political reality. Political struggle is above all an immense struggle for the recognition of the reality. He who keeps on practically working in the field of social and political phenomena and is able, at the same time, to think theoretically and philosophically, has incomparably more opportunity on daily basis to live every minute through this philosophical struggle and apply it even in the least situations, than can do the philosophers who theorize in their studies ... I repeat: for the thinking politician it is a struggle for the understanding of that eternal philosophical problem in what is hidden the true reality, how to define it, what is the true fact and what is simply human imagination of this or that individual, what is an exaggeration of non-critical people, politicians or masses, and how to react in regard to such utterances, and in regard to a truly verified fact. It is evident that a good practical politician should have an extremely refined sense for this philosophical (and above all noetic)problem and must have a philosophical education in order to be able to conduct in regard to social

understood the meaning of this problem to be mainly the distinction between the true existence and a mere appearance, between objectivism and subjectivism.

Having absorbed Kant who was for him "the philosopher par excellence"[8], his studies of modern French, English and German philosophies had spiritually freed Beneš and had enabled him to consciously react against the predominant tendency of his period both in theory and in practice. He had come to the conclusion that modern technology, industrialization, mechanization of production and labour in general, were a proof of exaggerated intellectualistic modern culture and that the fight for a correct "Weltanschauung" struck against them as against an exaggeration which the correct philosophical synthesis had to be subjected to the strictest criticism. By this synthesis, for which he had been fighting during the pre-World War I years, he meant the acquisition of the truth in its totality, the understanding of the whole man and the utilization of all of his abilities and possibilities.

---

and political phenomena that scientific method of discovering facts which learns every student of philosophy already at the beginnings of practical study of philosophy and poetic... " - Beneš, E., Problémy nové Evropy a Zahraniční politika československá, pp. 241-242; See also revue the "Národní kultura" of April 1, 1923.

8 Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, p. 10.

The man was to him not only a worker, an expedient or an object but a spiritual being, a subject and an end of his own accord. Neither Bergson and Bergsonism nor James and his radical empiricist, relativistic pragmatism were able to satisfy Benes, who had accepted them only as antidotes against intellectualism and positivism and kept on searching for the truth and certainty.

> ...Having overcome lengthy inner struggles, I had resolved, having been fully conscious of all the consequences and conclusions, upon a certain kind of a-priority... Noetic rationalism which I had chosen was nearest to my natural inclinations and mental characteristics. I searched almost desperately for a support of some absoluteness and I defended myself almost instinctively everywhere against falling a prey to a hopeless moral and philosophical relativism...[9]

It was again Kant who had here the greatest influence on Benes. Kant was not to him only the philosopher of a single problem - of the criticism of experience; that was only the base from which Benes went on to further problems, to the general synthesis in "metaphysics, ethics, psychology and sociology"; Kant was, at the same time, "the gate to all the problems first of philosophy and then of sociology"[10]. Benes' base was theoretical criticism and his next step was

---

9 Ibid., p. 11.

10 Ibid., p. 10.

criticism applicable to the questions of human practice and of the relationship between the theory and the practice. Since Beneš mentioned Kant besides Hume, Descartes and Masaryk as having led him to adopt a positive attitude towards religion, by accepting the belief in immanent teleology and in Providence as destiny[11], and Kant's advance to the problem of religion went through the ethics, it was here that he had shown Beneš the way. Kant's ethics meant the spiritual right of another type of criticism of reality which was no more concerned with the categories of the truth and of the source, of the reality and of the illusion and where the reality ranked above the subject, but with the categories of the ideal and of the reality where the ideal - subject ranked above the reality - the object. Beneš stated that one of the tasks of a philosopher, especially of the philosopher of history and of the moralist, was the analysis and the study of the direction and goals of materialistic and moral endeavours, practical ideals, to which should be leading the social transformation[12]. The absoluteness, non-relativeness of the ideal was for Beneš beyond any doubt. In this again was Kant's, Masaryk's and almost Plato's

---

11 Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, p. 21.

12 Beneš, E., "Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk" in the Bibliothèque International de Philosophie, Vol 11, No 2, Février 1936, p. 24.

facsimile of faith in good by itself which was so typical for Benes, but which was always accompanied with the acknowledgement that all the concrete goals and ideals could merely be relatively worthy, which meant worthy only in regard to the over-all Divine plan of the universe. God was in the end of the idea, which led back from the ideal requirement to the reality, the idea which allowed to understand the existence sub specie of the goals and intentions, teleologically, and which thus warranted the men that they could, and had to, arrange even their own activities according to the reality and its analytically established structures and tendencies. Benes' ethical considerations were twofold: on the one side he laid stress on moral demands for the reality as ideas, norms and goals which should give it its meaning and values, and on the other side he almost positivistically advised to gain understanding where the evolution was heading, by means of the analysis of the fact, of the social reality and its currents and struggles.

Benes' declaration of faith in immanent teleology which directed the universe, the world and the history in such a way that they had a meaning, seemed to imply that the material forces in the world did not alone make decisions and he had stated that he did not, and could not, believe in the philosophy of force and that he would always be against

it[13]. He understood that if the moral efforts, efforts for universal justice were to be secured, it was necessary to accept Providence, even if in a somewhat secularized and weakened form. Here again Kant and Masaryk enabled Beneš to arrive at his own conclusions. He introduced, while discussing the relationship between the ideal and brutal force, an idea that the philosophy of brutal force could be actively, intentionally overcome:

> ...And even if it should be so (that the history would only be a stage of power conflicts), it is necessary to undertake all, to accomplish all that it would not be so. Because the reality of this world is composed not only from the objective, true facts but also from the subjective conceptions of the world and from the intended plans, wishes and ideas...[14]

Beneš had thus acknowledged the significance of free will in history, which stood in opposition to the belief in a blind evolutionary fatality, and had stressed the individual moral decision and faith. In the same way as the supposition of the moral criticism of reality was a firm moral criterion which was for Beneš human morality, the supposition of the criticism of the socio-historical reality, in so far as its

---

13 Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, p. 462.

14 Ibid., pp. 464-465.

meaning was concerned was the idea of Destiny-Providence[15].

Beneš' synthesis of critical realism was a threefold criticism of the reality: criticism as a means for arriving at the reality, moral, ethical criticism and teleological criticism. All the three aspects of this criticism were together closely interwoven because it always was the one and same reality which was involved in these three aspects and this required the uniform attitude of a critical realist. Even the moral reality had to be objectively stated, even the objective criticism was a part of moral attitude[16], and both, the objective and the moral criticism became subsequently entwined by the unity of the ethical-religious, universalist or immanent teleological point of view.

For Beneš criticism was not an aim in itself: having a positive, constructive spirit, he adjusted knowledge into the reality, as its part, as something which was designed to operate within the reality. In this he had consistently been following Masaryk who, besides having led Beneš to the deeper

---

15 Ibid., p. 12.

16 This is why Beneš stated: "...to be a philosopher and a moralist means to have a firm, consistent and iron character, to defend his convictions, to be honest..." (Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk, p. 15).

philosophical studies, gave him, above all, the sense for reality in the eminently practical way. Benes himself gave a description of Masaryk's philosophical standpoint:

> ...One of the characteristic traits of Masaryk's mind consists in the fact that he never separates an idea, a theory, a doctrine from the life, that he does not remain in the abstract, but transfers them immediately in the sphere of reality, assigns them for the application in the practical life, entrusts them without delay to the care of life and to the hands of a concrete man... For Masaryk the theory, philosophy was always something eminently vital and practical...[17]

This conception of realism was indeed a real one which did not remain in the sphere of a mere discussion but entered the sphere of realization; it was here where the philosophy ceased to be a mere comprehension and became an activity the purpose of which was "to serve to the improvement and progress of the whole life"[18]. In order to become realism, criticism had to be, both for Masaryk and Benes, fully active, and this activity practiced on a large scale was politics.

It would be impossible to overrate Masaryk's influence in the entire field of Benes' philosophical preparations and development. Certainly Benes' noetic, "critical realism", his

---

17 Ibid., p. 21-22.

18 Ibid., p. 23.

"moderate rationalisms", human ethics, doctrine of Providence as well as this expression itself, are the fruits of Masaryk's thinking. The best definition of Beneš' philosophical development appears to be the statement that "Kant was for Beneš a transit gate from positivism to Masaryk"[19]. There does not appear to be any conflict between Masaryk and Beneš in the whole sphere of ideas. The difference between them is not in doctrines: it lies in the method by which they arrived to their theses, in their characters and their positions.

Masaryk's philosophical ideas were the result of the continuously renewed orientation, of the problems dealt with again and again, but always on the new material and while this orientation had a settled direction, there was a continuous growth of his uniform concept which grew organically from an embryo into the totality, on which Masaryk worked his whole life and never considered to become a mere specialist in a theoretical or a practical field. The task of this orientation, of which criticism is only its movement, had as its task to carry out the synthesis of the modern epoch in a new vital form which, in contradistinction from the foregoing great historical epochs which were either too exclusively materialistic or too exclusively deistic, was designed to

---

19 Patočka, J., op.cit., pp. 19-20.

realize the totality of humanity, its harmony not being dogmatic but free, indeed humane. This was Masaryk's humanity and its practical, living form is the ideal democracy, a synthesis of Christian and enlightened rationalistic doctrines, to which all the established democratic institutions were merely historically necessary passages. In the whole of this concentrated conception his own nation occupied a very significant place;[20] a particular depth gave Masaryk's ideas his great efforts with which he treated the ultimate problems of man, looking at them sub specie aeternitatis.

This great philosophical impetus which to Masaryk was concerned with the world in its entirety, took its stand towards all the basic problems, worked for a firm and individual standpoint and was not afraid to deal with timeless questions, retreated to Beneš to the more discrete interest which did not make such extensive universalist claims but specialized itself with a far greater decisiveness. This fact was already clearly evident in both Masaryk's and Beneš' first writings: in the "Suicide", to the former the theme of his work was merely a pretext of becoming almost totally preoccupied with the far-reaching philosophizing about world history, while the latter merely analyzed in the

---

20 See the next Section of this Chapter - "Interpretation of the Czech History".

"Political Partisanship" one characteristic phenomenon of the contemporary political life without any deviation from his theme. In fact Beneš, who had considered himself from the very beginnings to be far more an expert sociologist than Masaryk, had not written any work dealing with abstract or generally philosophical problems which would have no bearing upon the society and the practice[21]. While emphasizing the importance of the theory for the practice, in regard to the humane synthesis Beneš specialized in the sector where the concept penetrated into the practice; great theoretical perspective was an assumption but not a field of his activity as this had a very significant importance for Beneš' relationship towards humanism and realism, especially after he had entered the political career which kept on absorbing him with an increased measure. Where Masaryk was a creator and originator, Beneš was not an independent worker: "this is the reason for his frequent expressed acknowledgement of Masaryk's conceptions, which, of course, means nothing less than their non-critical acceptance"[22]. Beneš therefore always devoted his efforts towards the means

21 This point was stressed by Papoušek, J., Dr Edvard Beneš - Sein Leben, Prague, 1937, p. 14.

22 Patočka, J., op.cit., p.22.

and not towards the final goal, and that was a characteristic of his personality; the goal was already well-established and did not require any further elaboration but the means which presented an almost endless variety of combinations required to be specifically worked out.

Beneš' thought was worked out in a much finer fashion and to a greater detail in the sociological and political categories than in the deep-thought but somewhat vague and by philosophical problems overloaded Masaryk's historical - philosophical antitheses of subjectivism - objectivism, theocracy-democracy, etc. Beneš' humanism was far more a moral concept for the future than a key to the past as was the case with Masaryk, and he took towards it a different standpoint than his teacher. For Beneš there was no contemplative part of messianism as for his teacher but its non-contemplative, practical part which he demonstrated by giving himself wholly into the service of his mission and being always prepared to undergo for this cause any personal sacrifices. It was therefore his politics, in which Beneš was eminently a true disciple of Masaryk as well as of Kant, and in which the entire critical realism received its full meaning of the true criticism of the reality[23].

23 For a more detailed study of Dr Beneš' philosophical preparations and development see the following works:

In the last year of his Foreign Ministry, Dr Beneš gave a series of speeches throughout Czechoslovakia designed to strengthen his internal political position. In one of them, "Beneš sums up Masaryk's humane program, formulating it surprisingly in such a manner that Kant, Masaryk and

---

(i) Beneš, E., "Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk" in the Bibliotheque International de Philosophie, Vol. 11, No 2, Février 1936, 24p.

(ii) Beneš, E., My War Memoirs, London, 1928, 512p.

(iii) Beneš, E., Problémy nové Evropy a Zahraniční politika československá, Praha, 1924, 308p.

(iv) Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, Praha, 1935, 537p.

(v) Eisenman, L., Un Grand Européen - E. Beneš, Paris, 1934, 132p.

(vi) Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš - Filosof a státník, Praha, 1937, 355p.

(vii) Hník, F.M., Edvard Beneš - Filosof demokracie, Praha, 1945, 205p.

(viii) Jakovenko, B., "Edvard Beneš als Denker" in the Internationale Bibliothek für Philosophie, Vol. 1, No 2, Februar 1935, 51p.

(ix) Krofta, K., "Zásady a metody ministra Beneše" in the Zahraniční Politika, Vol 1934. pp. 277-292.

(x) Mágr, A.S. ed., Gedanke und Tat - Aus den Schriften und Reden von Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1937, 3 Vols. 611p.

(xi) Papoušek, J., Dr Edvard Beneš - Sein Leben, Praha, 1937, 304p.

(xii) Procházka, R., "Filosofie Benešovy politiky v soudobé Evropě" in the Zahraniční Politika, Vol 1934, pp. 260-269.

(xiii) Silberstein, L., "Kämpfende Vernunft" in the Internationale Bibliothek für Philosophie, Vol 111, No 1, 1937, 49p.

(xiv) Sokolov, B., Edvard Beneš i puti realitičeskogo demokratizma, Paris, 1926, 75p.

Beneš can sign this summary":[24]

> ...Masaryk believes in the Providence and believes in the moral laws given to the world and to the man. He therefore believes that there are certain principles of the truth generally always valid, that the man is the expression of these principles of the World Order and of the Providence, that his mission is to fulfil this World Order and to act in accordance with these laws of the Providence.[25]

24 Patočka, J., op.cit., p. 23.

25 Dispatch 169 from the US Minister at Prague, Wright, dated May 9, 1935, informing of Dr Beneš' address to the "Scholar Society Šafařík" given on May 4, 1935 at Bratislava, on the theme "Masaryk's Comprehension of the National Idea and the Problem of Czechoslovak Unity", (USDS, 860F.00/387).

(b) Interpretation of the Czech History

> Edvard Beneš is a political thinker of a democratic country. His democratic theory is therefore in a close connection with its thousand-year humanitarian tradition... Democracy is for Beneš a conception of the world, an integral part of his faith in the man, a key with which he wants to open for himself and for others the door of eternity...[26]

(i) Introduction

Soon after having met Masaryk for the first time, young Beneš, then a seventeen-year old student, had decided that he would follow Masaryk's example and dedicate himself fully to the cause of the liberation of his people from the German domination. To be able to do so effectively, he had undertaken extensive studies in the relevant fields; the most fundamental of these studies which became the very basis of his political behaviour during his entire political career, and here again Masaryk displayed on Beneš a decisive influence, was his study of, and his arriving at, the understanding of the interpretation of the history of his nation.[27] He

---

26 Hník, F.M., Edvard Beneš - Filosof demokracie, Praha, 1945, pp. 18-19.

27 Beneš did not make in this field any original theoretical contribution, and it would, therefore, be incorrect to speak about his "interpretation" of the Czech history. Having accepted in theory partially Palacký's, and almost totally Masaryk's interpretation, his original contribution was of the practical nature.

understood that his nation's liberation could only be successfully achieved if the proceedings leading towards it were conducted in harmony with his nation's traditions and with its history.[28]

Having thoroughly studied Czech history and the works of the two great philosophers of the Czech history - Palacký and his teacher Masaryk, Beneš had arrived at conclusions which were in general in harmony with those of Palacký[29] and which followed parallelly the development of

---

28 This was a very favourite topic in Beneš' speeches and writings. Whenever he dealt with the subject of Czechoslovak democracy he would always stress up the point that because of its history and traditions, no other regime than democracy were for Czechoslovakia feasible. (See Beneš' speeches at Jihlava on February 9, 1935 -(USDS, 860F.00/377), at Plzeň, Brno and Zlín given in early March, 1935 - (USDS, 860F.00/379), Beneš, E., Právna veda a kríza demokracie, Reč presidenta Dr Edvarda Beneše 21.IV. 1937 pri vyhlásení za doktora práv na Komenského universitě v Bratislavě (Masaryk - Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. No 1041), Beneš, E., O budoucnosti hlavního města Prahy, Reč z 27.I. 1936 (Masaryk - Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. No. 1091), Dr Beneš' private talk with the German Minister at Prague, Eisenlohr on October 16, 1936 (POL IV, 3783; Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, DC, Serial No 1941 H, Roll 1077, Negative Frame Numbers 434773-434786), and on by far too many other instances to be listed here).

29 The main reason why Beneš' conclusions were in general in harmony with those of Palacký was the fact that Masaryk himself had accepted them in their fundamental aspects, and these found their way from Masaryk to Beneš. subsequently

Masaryk's interpretation.[30] A brief summary of the fundamentals of Palacký's and Masaryk's interpretations is essential since it provides one of the keys to the understanding of the pivotal guidance of Beneš' political behaviour.

(ii) Palacký's Interpretation

Palacký's[31] interpretation of history in general, and of Czech history in particular was wholly idealistic and dramatic. Its content was a continuous struggle of various antagonistic ideas and elements, and Palacký, having been himself an enthusiastic fighter for the ideals of his nation, was convinced that this struggle was quite natural and profitable because through it grew also the man's spirit stronger and in a similar way as there was no victory without a fight, there was no progress without efforts and sacrifices.

Czech history encompassed a twofold great struggle: first the racial or the national struggle between Slavism and Czechism on the one side and Germanism on the other side, and

---

30 As will subsequently be seen, Masaryk's interpretation of the revival of the Czech nation underwent changes. See Werstadt, J., "O filosofii českých dějin" in Kutnar, F., ed., První sjezd Československých historiků 1937, Přednášky a debaty, Praha, 1938, pp. 43-62.

Beneš himself dealt with this matter on so many occasions, especially in his speeches during the period of the First Republic that it is not feasible to list them all; among his best statement on the Idea of his state was made in his speech to the Czechoslovak students made on January 15, 1938. (Fialka, J., ed., President republiky Dr Edvard Beneš československému studenstvu roku 1938, Praha, 1938, 24p.

31 Palacký, František (1798-1876) was a distinguished

secondly the religious or the generally spiritual struggle between the Roman ecclesiastical universalism and the Reformation, between Catholicism and Protestantism. To Palacký, Slavism-Czechism and Germanism represented the two elements of basically different spirit, the two worlds of entirely different political and social orders and the struggle of these two races and cultures revealed itself in Czech history from times immemorial. The Slavs and the Germans had and practised from the beginnings of their historical existence different conceptions of the fundaments of the human society, of the law and of the property. For the former the basis of all of their institutions was a voluntary agreement, conditioned by their senses of social solidarity, for the latter this basis was power, they were warriors and conquerors, paying homage to the right of the stronger; the former, on the other hand, had a peaceful nature and lived in a democratic society, did not know any political differences of the estates or inequality before the law. While the general expression of the original slavic conditions was general liberty, that of the germanic conditions was the rule of the nobility and slavery of the others.[32]

Czech national leader and the first philosopher of the Czech history. He wrote his 5 Volumes of the History of Bohemia between 1836 and 1867 both in the Czech and German languages.

32 In this aspect Palacký was clearly influenced by romanticism of Rousseau in general, and of Herder in particular. However, he was also influenced by his daily observations and

In order to be able to survive and to preserve their freedom against the continuous German threat, the Czechs had to overcome their traditional dislike of submitting themselves voluntarily to an authority, had to limit their own conception of society and to implement, to a certain degree, the Germanic principle of authority, and right of the stronger, and to form their state. This action which was a step backward was for them progress in regard to state power and greatness. So began in Bohemia the mutual intermingling and struggles of Slavic and Roman-Germanic legal concepts and social orders. Reaction against the Germanic novelty of feudalism which had been introduced into, and supported in, Bohemia by the last rulers of the Přemysl dynasty, climaxed in Husitism, to which belonged an extremely important task not only in spiritually-religious, but also in national-political and social evolution of the country. The defeats of Lipany and of White Mountain had destroyed for several centuries this attempt to bring back the internal evolution of the Czech society on its traditionally democratic road. Palacký felt that the new attempt towards this accomplishment began only in his own times when the principles of true Christianity coupled

---

experiences as Czech political leader, in the nationalistic struggles which were waged throughout the Habsburg Empire around the mid-19th century, of injustices and expansionism of the Germans who practised on all other nations, including the Czech nation, their theory that might created right.

with the modern philosophy were pushing the Germanic conception of the society into background and were directing the social development of mankind towards liberty and democracy which now became a pride and aspiration for the civilized nations of Western Europe and which had been a thousand years ago in the general possession of the Slavs.

The second great struggle of Czech history in regard to religion Palacký had based on his explanation that all human thinking and volition was determined either by the maxim of authority or by the maxim of free intellect. Religious faith was also based either on the authority or on the intellect. Representative of the first maxim was Catholicism, of the second one Protestantism. When the Roman Catholic Church went too far in binding the spirit and faith by its dogmas and its authoritarianism (power position) there appeared in the Reformation the maxim of free intellect, bound only by the Scriptures; then a permanent break in the Church took place.[33] Palacký saw in this reality an act of the Providence; dualism in the Church corresponded also to dualism in the nature of human spirit. Salvation was not solely in the practice of one of the two maxims, but in their

---

33 This was yet another reason why young Beneš, having accepted these Palacký's premises, had displayed such a hostility towards the Roman Catholic Church - the other one, Vatican's close connections with the Habsburg Court, was already stated.

unification and harmony, in their mutual penetration. Although this ideal goal would remain for mankind unattainable, it was necessary at least to try to come to it as closely as possible.

The Czech Reformation of John Hus and of the Hussites was such an act of the Providence, which was to regenerate and reform the Christian Church and by which the Czech nation became a world-creative factor. With Hus began a new era in the Christian history when religion and faith had ceased to be based merely on the hierarchical authority but also on the free intellect in accordance with the Holy Scriptures. The Hussite wars were the first international struggle not only for spiritual values, for the faith and the truth and for the ideas, but also represented the first victorious fight of freedom against the mediaeval all-encompassing authority and spiritual centralization. These were the reasons why the 15th century placed the Czechs into the prominence of the European history; since no enemy from without was able to defeat the Hussites, treachery had to be employed by the enemies, and discord sown among the Czechs themselves resulted in the tragic fratricidal battle of Lipany of 1434. Almost two centuries later, in the battle of White Mountain of 1620, the Czechs were also defeated only because of their disunity among themselves.[34]

---

34 Having accepted these Palacký's premises which

Palacký clearly expressed the uniform idea and the common meaning of the national and religious struggle in the Czech history which for him represented "the almost incessant struggle of political, religious and national antitheses, struggle for freedom against absolutism in the state and in the Church, penetration and driving back the prevailing German influences on the Slavic territory".[35] Because of the exposed geographical position of the Czechs as the

---

were later confirmed by his subsequent political experience, Beneš was consistently being haunted by the fear that such a disunity among the Czechs would occur at a time of international crisis which would prove fatal to the Republic itself and to its democratic institutions. Yet he had to play a tragic part when two for his country so devastating crises took place: in 1938 when the Czechs had displayed an exemplary unity, unparalleled in many preceding centuries of their history, in their passionate love for their freedom and their new Republic and in their determination to defend themselves against German aggression by all means at their disposal, Beneš' interpretation of the Czechoslovak situation had forced him to be unable to employ militarily this unity and to be at great pains to dissuade his countrymen from using weapons for their own defence - the consequence was the death of the Republic. In 1948 when the same unity among the Czechs was so urgently needed, it did not exist any more because a treacherous minority of traitors acting on Kremlin's orders was told by Stalin to take over Czechoslovakia, to destroy its democratic institutions and to ruthlessly conquer its democratic majority. Beneš having then been very seriously ill, had interpreted the Czechoslovak situation as having been a hopeless one, and having been unable to prevail on the Czechoslovak communists that they were Czechoslovaks first, foresaw another fratricidal battle of Lipany to be waged in Czechoslovakia in 1948, with fully-armed Communist minority having an all-out military support of the Soviet Union while the unarmed democratic majority, receiving no outside support, would gradually be wiped out. He felt, therefore, that he had no alternative but to give in to brutal force- the consequence has been the death of Czechoslovak democracy and independence.

35 Quoted by Werstadt, J., op.cit., pp. 47-48.

westernmost Slavic land surrounded by the German ocean, and of its fate to bear the heaviest brunt of all German attacks, Palacký did not see any change of this trend in the future: "In the same manner as our Czech fatherland had been the original focus and the nearest stage of the disastrous religious wars of the earlier centuries, it was also predestined that it would also play a prominent part in the forthcoming nationalistic struggles."[35a]

(iii) Masaryk's Contribution

Masaryk had accepted in substance Palacký's interpretation of the Czech history which he considered to be "our best recommendation in the world forum".[36] He therefore saw in the Hussite and Moravian (United Brethren) Reformation as the culminant epoch of the Czech history.

Masaryk's original contribution was in his efforts to explain the Czech national revival by uniting it with the Czech Reformation of the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his original explanation, presented at the end of the nineteenth century, Masaryk stated that the Czech national revival of his time was the continuation of the Czech Reformation of Hus and Komenský which was forcibly broken by the Catholic

---

35a Ibid., p. 48.

36 Masaryk, T.G., Světová revoluce, Praha, 1925.

Counter-Reformation.[37] He based his argument on his thesis that the ideas of the contemporary Czech national revival - which to him merely meant a new Reformation - were identical with those of Czech Reformation of the past centuries. As the basic, all-encompassing idea of both of them he saw the humane ideal which had its historic and factual origin in the Czech Reformation. He made it clear that the Czech humanity was not based on the French Revolution, on liberalism, it was not a modern, secular, rationalistic, enlightened, revolutionary and liberal humanity but the Hussite, Moravian, religious, Reformational humanity. He even went so far that he accused liberalism from abroad of "entering into our program of national revival and corrupting the ideas of this revival."[38]

Masaryk's revival theory had become almost immediately a subject of very severe criticism by the leading Czech historians. They accused him of greatly exaggerating the influence of the romantic and religious tendencies, and expressed their conviction that the national revival, in so far as its humanity was concerned, was brought about not by the Reformation ideas but by those of liberalism, the origin of which was in

---

37 This matter was dealt with by Masaryk in his two main works written at that time: Jan Hus and Česká otázka, Praha, 1895.

38 Masaryk, T.G., Jan Hus, p. 19.

the Philosophy of the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century. This criticism, coupled with the development of his sphere of interests and life activities had caused that Masaryk's revival theory underwent several important changes in which he kept on gradually abolishing the Reformation aspects and stressed more those of liberalism.[39] In his final explanation written after World War I, he summarized his amended revival theory which had been accepted by Beneš in its entirity:

> In the opposition against absolutism of the Counter-Reformational Austria we took a favourable stand in the eighteenth century towards the ideals of the Age of Enlightenment and of the French Revolution; the progressive ideas of the West became the governing ideas of our national revival. This was made easier by the fact that the spiritual leader of the Revolution, Rousseau, who grew up in Swiss republicanism and calvinism, came out from the Reformational ideas... The Age of Enlightenment, humanism and the leading ideas of the eighteenth century in general are continuing in the direction of the Reformation and, therefore, also of our Czech Reformation.[40]

He also provided, at the same time, his interpretation of the political development of the Western European countries, among which he also had placed the newly formed Czechoslovak

---

39 At the end of the nineteenth century, when Masaryk wrote "Jan Hus", he stood out mainly as a religious, moral reformer, later, although he had remained a reformer, he was becoming more and more a politician who paid an increasing attention, even as a philosopher of the Czech and European history, to the development and effectuation of the modern political and social ideals.

40 Masaryk, T.G., Světová revoluce, p. 83.

Republic which became the leit-motiv of Benes' political behaviour:

> In the Middle Ages, mankind was extensively organized by the Catholic theocracy; through the Reformation and the Revolution comes into being democracy, an attempt to organize this mankind intensively. I place democracy against theocracy; we are finding ourselves in a transitional period, in a transition from theocracy to democracy on the basis of humanity.[41]

This humanity which was the ideal of the Great Revolution[42] meant now for Masaryk morally the sympathy and respect of every man towards another man, the recognition of human individuality and the principle that a man had not to be used as an object by another man, politically and socially it meant the equality of all the citizens in the state and bringing together and unification of nations and states and thus of the whole mankind. Having acknowledged that democracy had its origins in modern individualism and that liberty was the goal and essence of democracy, he stressed the point that the Czechoslovaks had renewed their state in the name of democratic liberty and would preserve its freedom only by implementing always more perfect liberty. World War I was for Masaryk the climax of the liberationist movements of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which brought freedom

---

41 Ibid., p. 117.

42 By this Great Revolution Masaryk meant all the liberationist activities of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which reached their climax in the "World Revolution" -- World War I.

to individuals and to nations, it was for him the "World Revolution". Masaryk's theory of the national revival became the theory of the national liberation which was the climax of the nationally political aspirations of the revived nation. This theory was not only an explanation of the past but it also was a directive and program of the present and of the future. He was convinced that democracy was not yet anywhere consistently realized, that all the democratic states were so far only an experiment in democracy and that only truly new states, states of the future, would be based, both internally and externally, on liberty, equality and brotherhood.

Democracy was for Masaryk, and subsequently for Benes, a completely new conception of the world and of the life which implied a new man whose moral and inner rebirth would be a complex, lengthy and difficult process and postulate. While this new man were to retain the Christian life's ethos and ideal - Masaryk had remained the follower of the Reformation in that he was preaching the return to the pure Jesus' teaching - his life means and forms were to be new - Masaryk accepted the ethical heritage of Christianity, and having rejected its theology and theocracy, he combined it not only with the modern science and philosophy, based on the autonomous intellect and conscience of an individual, but also with the modern forms of political and social life, with democracy and its program of social reforms. Humanity was

thus for Masaryk only a new expression for the old love for a neighbour; he stated that "our task is to effect Jesus' pure and immaculate religion of humanity" and he saw the testaments of "Father of the Nation" - Palacký[43], and of the Czechoslovak history in "pure Christianity, therefore in the teachings of Jesus and his commandments of love" and declared democracy as the "political form of humanity... Jesus, not Caesar, that is the meaning of our history and democracy."[44]

Palacký and Masaryk were in agreement not only in their ethical but also in their political faith: liberty and democracy, nationality and humanity were for both of them the governing ideas which they perceived and appreciated not only in the nation's past but also in its present. Both of them perceived the main evolutionary forces and tendencies of their own times, and in this connection, the evolution, position and task of the Czech nation. When the Palacký's prophesy became a reality in World War I, Masaryk, became

---

43 Palacký was called by the Czechs the "Father of the Nation"; they had thus expressed their gratitude for his all-encompassing efforts towards their unification and strengthening for the forthcoming great conflict between the Germandom and the anti-German European coalition which he correctly had foretold in his testament to his nation written four decades before it took place in the form of World War I, and which, according to him, would also have a devastating effect on Berlin and Vienna.

44 Masaryk, T.G., Světová revoluce, p. 170.

then the leader of his nation fighting on the anti-German European and World battle-front for the renewal of its freedom and of its state; by doing so, he turned himself from being a philosopher of the history into a creator of the history. Having comprehended the evolution and the logic of the history, he pushed on this evolution by working and fighting in its direction, and by realizing and fulfilling its logic. For Masaryk, the Czech history was not only a series of past occurrences but the live legacy and obligation for the present and the future; the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republic was for Masaryk the fulfillment of that obligation which had immediately created, ipso facto, the obligation to ensure its existence against any external threats, and to continue, internally, in the evolution and the fulfillment of the logic of the Czech history on its road towards progress, higher forms of social life and human and national ideals.[45]

---

45 It was this Masaryk's interpretation of the Czech history which had formed the basis of Beneš' political ideals and activities during his entire political career; viewed from this plane, his, to many observers and writers, seemingly inexplicable or contradictory political decisions, receive an entirely rational content - this does not, of course, mean that they were always correct ones or that they constituted solutions which were, in the long run, in the best interest of his state. The author of this thesis neither wants to give an impression that Palacký's and Masaryk's interpretation of the history in general, and of the Czech history in particular, was objectively correct and would be able to withstand any criticism nor that it was accepted without any opposition among the Czech historians - among its most severe critics and opponents was one of the most prominent Czech historians Pekař who however had no influence on Beneš.

(iv) Dr Beneš' Elaboration

> All my life, in all my actions and decisions, I have drawn strength from the traditions of my nation... The democratic and humane ideal has been expressed and defended so uncompromisingly by Czechoslovak statesmen and thinkers of all eras that we are fully justified in terming it the essential element in the Czechoslovak tradition. From the victory of Christianity in our country in the 10th century... the goal of our national effort has remained fundamentally the same ... to make liberty and democracy more secure in our native land and in the rest of the world...[46]

Masaryk's influence on Beneš was of such a magnitude that it could be discerned almost in every aspect of the latter's activities; yet it was his interpretation (and through him Palacký's) of the Czech history where Masaryk had displayed his most profound influence on his student. Beneš, having been impatient to work effectively for the liberation of his nation, studied thoroughly its history but was not prepared to spend the necessary time, as Palacký and Masaryk were forced to do before him, for philosophizing over, and independently interpreting of, the Czech history. He was convinced, after having closely scrutinized his teacher's ideas, that they were conceived and presented in such a solid scientific manner that there was no justification for entertaining doubts as to their

---

46 Beneš, E., "Introduction" in Munzer Z. and Munzer J., We Were and We Shall Be, New York, 1941, pp. 9-11.

correctness. Having accepted these ideas, he and his collaborators put them under Masaryk's leadership into practice during World War I:

> Our entire revolutionary action was carried out under President Masaryk's name and authority. What we had accomplished, we were only able to do so under his full ideological and practical leadership.. That is also one of the great political instructions of our revolution... His ideals, proclaimed in a series of his works in regard to Czech affairs, we had practically, in their strict sense, realized in our revolutionary fight. His authority led us to the victory. There was, among ourselves, a unity of ideas and political thinking. Having been united, we had fully recognized his authority as that of a man of world-format, and his experiences as well as his spiritual and moral strength, supported by his successes...[47]

Beneš' elaboration of Masaryk-Palacký interpretation of the Czech history assumed its primary role in his activities both abroad and at home;[48] it had also become one of the favoured subjects of his works and speeches.[49] Because of his unique position during World War I, he was then mainly concerned with the justification of the Czech revolutionary activities in the light of his nation's history and of the

---

47 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 25-26.

48 See Role of Political Concepts in Political Reality in this Chapter.

49 Among his most important works dealing with this subject, and published during the First Republic were : Světová válka a naše revoluce (1927); Problémy Nové Evropy a zahraniční politika československá (1924); Boj o mír a bezpečnost státu (1934); La France et la Nouvelle Europe (1932); Problèmes de la Tchécoslovaquie (1936); Vers un regroupement des forces en Europe? (1934).

meaning of the War. He observed that the political evolution of Europe since the fifteenth century had a uniform line. Humanism, Renaissance and Reformation had given the basis to the modern political individualism; Cartesianism, liberalism, and encyclopaedianism had prepared this evolution which brought about the English, the American and the French revolutions, and the resulting destruction of the mediaeval feudal aristocratic concepts and creation of the first foundations of modern constitutionalism. These states and the whole of Western Europe came through the fire of their political revolutions and underwent also, in this fight for the realization of ideals of modern democracy, their spiritual revolution. Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Balkan states and Turkey, regardless of their various political changes, had never experienced such political and spiritual revolutions, and represented the absolutist aristocratic mediaeval structures, combined in Austria-Hungary with the oppression of non-German and non-Hungarian nationalities and the Pan-German ideology of Germany.

In this sense, World War I divided the world into the two camps: the Allied and the Central-Powers' camps. Beneš noted that Russia which he had considered a Chapter of its own, joined the Allied camp because of its political interests, but it had really belonged, because of its backward, mediaeval political, economic and social structure, to the camp of the Central Powers.

The Czech nation belonged, before and during World War I, through its historic evolution, its whole psychology, its philosophical concepts and its spiritual and social structure to the Allied camp. It was the sole nation in Central Europe which "fully" lived through the spiritual revolution[50] which Western Europe underwent in its political and social revolutions. It was not, therefore, only its immediate political interest that led the Czech nation into the Western Europe's camp but it was, according to Benes, its whole cultural evolution which stipulated its political struggle and its actual political interest during the War. This struggle, in which the immediate Czech political interest and the Czech spiritual and cultural evolution were quite identical, was in reality being waged in the Czech Provinces until the war. The Czech Renaissance efforts and evolution in the 18th and 19th centuries had the same ideological and philosophical character of the Czech Reformation, and had also created a new social structure of the Czech nation which originated through the political, economic and social fight of the Czech society of the nineteenth century against the Austro-Hungarian milieu. This fight of the little Czech man - farmer, burgess and worker -

---

50 Dr Benes had put stress on the word "fully" in contradistinction to the German Reformation.

for the national, cultural and economic self-assertion was generally successful and on the beginning of the War the Czech nation stood spiritually, culturally and, to a great extent, economically isolated in the Austro-Hungarian milieu. Its position during the War was, to Beneš, the only logical one: all of its past political and economic struggles were always directed against the same adversaries who stood against it in World War I. In this War fought the two camps who had the two quite antithetic philosophical concepts of politics, the structure of human society and its culture in general. The philosophical concept represented by the Central Powers was defeated in this War and this occurrance befell even the Power which, although representing the concepts of the Central Powers, was fighting on the side of the Allies - Czarist Russia.

After the conclusion of the War, Foreign Minister Beneš of the newly-formed Czechoslovak Republic explained his Masaryk-oriented interpretation of the Czech history as applied to his contemporary and future policies:

> ... There was no conflict between our spiritural evolution and our real political interest in the world war. And there is no such conflict even today. I understand in this sense even our philosophy of history. This is not a proclamation of any thoughtless, external cultural and political Westerndom. I hope that the revolution in Russia will cause such great changes politically, socially and culturally that these simple facts will not prevent in the future close co-operation and racial and political closeness even with it. I am not, and I

> never was in favour of any simple, mechanical Westerndom against Easterndom in politics; I was and I am in favour of Europeandom and Worldom on which must be built also on the world-height standing powerful Czechdom...[51]

Yet the above interpretation of the Czech history required further elaboration to comprise the newly emerged phenomena associated with the establishment of the Czechoslovak state: the most crucial of these were the Slovak, and to a lesser extent, the Subcarpathian Russian, questions and the problem of nationalities within Czechoslovakia -- the problem of all minorities in general and, because of its unique position, of the German minority in particular. During his Foreign Ministry, although having also been for a brief period Prime Minister of the country[52], Beneš was preoccupied with his realm of the Czechoslovak foreign policy, and it was only after his election to the Presidency that he got involved totally in the internal politics while retaining, at the same time, his rule over the foreign policy.[53] By that time, however, the critical international situation, caused by the imperialist policies of Nazi Germany, penetrated so deeply the internal affairs of Czechoslovakia that there was no more any clear delimitation,

---

51 Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, p. 328.

52 September 26, 1921 to October 7, 1922.

53 Even before his election to the Presidency, Beneš had been, in the internal affairs of his country, a spokesman for the so-called policy of the Hrad -- that meant Masaryk's

in all the vital problems affecting the existence of the state, between the external and the internal policies, and it befell Beneš to preside over both of them.

---

conviction that a democratic regime was the only one suitable, and indeed, possible for the new state, that the Czechoslovak democratic institutions needed a peaceful period of fifty years to be able to reach their maturity and be thus comparable to those of the West, that there was only one Czechoslovak nation, that the question of the Czechoslovak minorities would successfully be settled, in an orderly and evolutionary manner, and since this was a purely internal Czechoslovak matter, without any external interference, that Sub-Carpathian Russia had a special mission within the frame of the Czechoslovak Republic, and would receive its self-government as soon as it would be prepared to assume successfully this responsibility and that the Czechoslovaks culturally, historically and geographically belonged to the West. In a similar fashion as Masaryk's, Beneš' political conviction represented left-of-the-centre views.

2. Role of Political Concepts in Political Reality

(a) Problems of the Czechoslovak Internal Politics

(i) Necessity For the Democratic Regime

> ...I am convinced that a democratic regime is the only one suitable for the Czechoslovak Republic...[54]

> ...Our state is one of those in Europe which will certainly be the most democratic ones. It was created by our small man. It is his state. It was created from the pain and suffering of this small democratic Czechoslovak man...[55]

> ...We have remained, and we will remain, a democracy...[56]

Dr Beneš' acceptance and elaboration of Palacký's-Masaryk's interpretation of the Czech history, his philosophical preparations undertaken with Masaryk's help and guidance, his observations and experiences both at home and abroad, and, above all, Masaryk's overwhelming influence made from him a spokesman for democracy.[57] Yet

---

54 Dr Beneš' address at Jihlava on February 9, 1935 on the subject "The Crisis in Democracy and the Struggle Against Dictatorial Regimes" in the Dispatch No. 92 from the United States Minister at Prague, Wright, dated February 12, 1935 (USDS, 860F.00/377).

55 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 32.

56 Beneš, E., An excerpt from the address made at Liberec on August 19, 1936 on the subject "Das Deutsche Problem in der Tschechoslovakei", in Probleme der Tschechoslovakischen Republik, Kundgebungen des Praesidenten der Republik Dr Edvard Beneš in Nordboehmen, Praha, 1937, p. 28.

57 This author has employed the word "spokesman" rather than "believer" used by Beck, C.F., in "Can Communism and Democracy Coexist? Beneš' Answer "in The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol XI,

for Beneš democracy was not an aim in itself, a goal which had to be reached per se, for its own merits. His ultimate goal was twofold, and had never changed: first the liberation of his nation and the establishment of its state, and then the preservation, at all costs, of its existence. Since he was convinced that this goal could only be achieved by adhering strictly to democracy, he was consistently doing all in his power to strengthen democracy internally and internationally. The correctness of this novel approach towards the explanation of Dr Beneš' political behaviour has amply been confirmed by incidents where the principles of democracy collided, and were incompatible, with, what in Beneš' interpretation, were the interests of the Czechoslovak state: in such cases Beneš was always prepared to accommodate the latter, and to sacrifice the former while providing, at the same time, some reasonably-sounding justifications for such action.[58]

No 3, October 1952; he stated there, on p.190 that "Beneš was first and foremost a believer in democracy". This author is not convinced about the accuracy of this statement in a way presented above; to present accurately the reality, it would have to be amended. Such an amendment would be possible in the two following ways:

1. "Dr Beneš was first and foremost a believer in the independent Czechoslovak state."
2. Dr Beneš was first and foremost a believer in democracy because he was convinced that only by adhering to democracy and by advancing its causes throughout the world, could his nation first be freed and its new state established, and then its existence safeguarded.

58 Dr Beneš thus quite willingly entered into a Treaty with the totally anti-democratic communist Soviet Union and sponsored its admission into the League of Nations because he was convinced that these actions had been of benefit to Czechoslovakia's security. He was

Dr Beneš' democracy was therefore purposeful: during his Presidency the preservation of the Czechoslovak state in its entirety was always the primary, the first and indeed the sole object of his political ideas and actions - democracy, democratic procedures and institutions were for him means, although very plausible ones and worthy of universal acceptance, towards this primary object.[58a]

---

also prepared to enter into an agreement with Nazi Germany if that state were prepared to go along with his stipulations concerning such an agreement. Being a realist and considering the interests of the state above all, he took on occasions actions which were clearly anti-democratic in their character, such as the suppression of criticism of Nazi Germany made by those democratic Germans who found their refuge in Czechoslovakia. (See e.g. dispatch of the German Chargé d'Affaires at Bucharest, Tschunke dated June 9, 1936 about his and the German Minister at Bucharest Fabricius' conversation with Dr Beneš held on June 7, 1936 - German Foreign Ministry, Pol IV, Czechoslovakia, Serial No 1941 H, Pol IV 603/1022, Captured German Documents, the National Archives, Washington, Roll No 1077, frames 434712-434714; Also the German Minister at Prague, Eisenlohr's report of April 15, 1937 on his talk with Dr Beneš held on April 14, 1937 - GFM, Pol IV, 2045/37, German Legation Prague, A.III.I. allg., Capt. German Doc., N.A., Washington, Roll 1077, fr. 434850-61.)

There was a striking parallel in Beneš' primary personality trait of working out political problems alone, of consulting no one except Masaryk, of arriving at his own decisions and taking for them sole responsibility. Since he was convinced that to follow this clearly non-democratic procedure was in the best interests of his state, he had here also sacrificed the principles of democracy for what, in his own estimation, were the interests of the Czechoslovak state.

58a The position of importance of the socialist creed and principles was for Beneš still one level lower than that of democracy, and his socialism was never allowed to challenge or even interfere either with the security of the Czechoslovak state or with its democratic regime and institutions; on the contrary it was employed only for the purpose of strengthening Czechoslovakia and, if possible, to achieve this at the same time, its democracy.

This point was raised in particular by this author in his interviews with:

1. The Czechoslovak Deputy Prime Minister of the period before the Communist Coup d'état of February, 1948, Dr Zenkl, held in

This fundamental truth about democracy of Beneš, having not been fully grasped by scholars, his biographers, admirers, enemies and apologists, resulted necessarily in their misunderstanding of his policies and decisions, giving them different meaning than they in reality had and accusing him unjustly of non-consistency later.[59] This novel interpretation of Beneš' concept of democracy

---

Washington on November 5, 1970;

2. The Czechoslovak Minister of Food during the same period, Mr. Majer, held at the New York University, New York City on November 14, 1970.

The former, who had been a high-ranking member of the Czechoslovak National Socialist party (no connections with the party of the same name in Germany) and Lord Mayor of Prague before Munich, spent during World War II a number of years in German concentration camps for his anti-Nazi activities and became, after the War, Deputy Prime Minister and leader of his Party which obtained, after the Communist Party, in the 1946 election, the greatest number of votes, had confirmed this author's view that Beneš employed, during his Presidency before Munich, only those socialist ideas, and only at such times when they were able to bring about a further consolidation of the power of his state. In Dr Zenkl's words, Beneš was first a nationalist, then a democrat (he had agreed with this author's thesis on this subject) and only then a socialist, and he observed with the greatest care this order of importance in all his policies.

The latter who had been a right-wing high-ranking member of the Social Democratic Party, spent the World War II years in England, returned via Moscow as Minister of Reconstruction and Commerce in the London Government, became Minister of Food in the Košice Government retaining this post until February 1948; he stated that he felt that prior to Munich, Beneš' socialism "existed predominantly in the minds of his right-wing critics and personal enemies".

(For an interesting account of Dr Beneš' socialist development see: Macek, J., "Socialista bez dogmat" in Werstadt J., ed., op.cit., pp. 174-179.)

59 It will suffice, for the purpose of this study, to name just a few representatives of each of the five above-mentioned groups who had failed to understand Dr Beneš' true concept of democracy and who were arbitrarily selected by the author:

1. Scholars:
   (a) Beck, C.F. op.cit., - because of his already mentioned interpretation of Dr Beneš as having been "first and foremost

would appear to be open to criticism on the grounds that he had arrived at his faith in democracy through his studies of philosophy,

---

a believer in democracy", and of his general presentation of Beneš' concept of democracy.

(b) Evans, K.P., The Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia, MA Thesis (Unpublished), Department of Political Science, University of Chicago, 1935, 160p. Surprisingly, this student could have arrived at the true concept of Beneš' democracy if the thesis were written a few years later; in its actual form it did not sufficiently explore this subject.

(c) Hayes, B.B. The Fall of Czechoslovakia 1938-1939, PhD Thesis (Unpublished), Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Texas at Austin, 1958, 305p. This thesis lacks the understanding of Beneš' efforts in 1938 to preserve, at all costs, the Czechoslovak Republic in its entirety.

(d) Weintraub, B., Czechoslovakia and the Runciman Mission, MA Thesis (Unpublished), Department of History, University of Chicago, 1951, 152p. Same as above.

2. Biographers:
   (a) Hitchcock, E.B., I Built a Temple For Peace, op.cit.;
   (b) Lias, G., Beneš of Czechoslovakia, op.cit.;
   (c) Mackenzie, C., Dr Beneš, op.cit.

The three above biographies were written by non-Czechs, and no bias could therefore be attached to them; yet none of them explored this fundamental field to a sufficient depth to be able to arrive at convincing conclusions.

3. Admirers:
   (a) Crabités, P., Beneš, Statesman of Central Europe, op.cit., He demonstrated his complete failure of grasping Dr Beneš' primary, and in reality the only goal, of preservation of the Czechoslovak State at all costs, by seeing in Dr Benes "the personification of Peace" (Preface, p.vii); while this had appeared to be true in 1935 when peace was in the best interests of Czechoslovakia, Dr Beneš was three years later in favour of an all-out war against Nazi Germany since this development would have served best the interests of his state.
   (b) Lennhoff, E., In Defence of Dr Beneš and Czech Democracy, op.cit., He saw Beneš as a realist but the one who had allowed his decisions to be guided by "strongly humane

politics and sociology well before the Czechoslovak state came into being. This objection can, and indeed must, be refuted by pointing

---

principles" (pp. 18-19). This was true, however, only so long as these principles did not interfere with the interests of the Czechoslovak state; in a case of the conflict between them, the latter would always prevail.

4. Enemies:
Interpreted on an objective basis, this group includes Beneš' personal enemies and political adversaries within his country and representatives of: (a) the hostile neighbouring states - Nazi Germany, Poland and Hungary; (b) countries hostile because of their type of government - Italy; (c) countries ostensibly friendly, yet actually taking hostile attitude because of (i) incompatibility of its dictatorial-imperialist regime and Czechoslovakia's form of government - Soviet Russia; (ii) fear of being involved in a war against Germany, caused by Czechoslovakia's unwillingness to give in to imperialism of Nazi Germany, and thus to destroy their hopes that Germany would lead, with their blessings, a crusade against Soviet Russia and would successfully destroy the threat of Communism which they feared more than that of Nazism - Great Britain, France, Yugoslavia and to a certain extent Rumania. Documented cases of misunderstandings of Dr Beneš' concept of democracy among his personal enemies and political adversaries had already been given in the previous Chapters; categories (a), (b) and (c) will be dealt with later in this Chapter in "Foreign Relations".

5. Apologists:
This group which should include, above all, Dr Beneš' close friends, cannot do so since, as a historian correctly stated "with the exception of T.G. Masaryk, Beneš never had any really intimate associates" (Zinner, P.E., op.cit., p.101); it consists mainly of those who believed that after T.G. Masaryk's retirement and death, Beneš alone was, in harmony with the First President's wishes and judgement, a true democrat who kept on ostensibly confirming their faith by his frequent announcements on the subject, coupled with his consistently optimistic prognoses of political situation affecting democracy in general and Czechoslovak democracy in particular. To them the existence of Czechoslovakia and of democracy was synonymous. The others in this group were mainly those who were associated with Beneš by working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in the Hrad or accompanying, as journalists and commentators, Beneš on his numerous trips abroad or staying with him at Geneva.

out that young Beneš undertook all these studies, having completely been influenced by Masaryk, for the sole purpose of being able to

---

It is surprising that none of the representatives of this group, even of those who were comparatively nearest to him, such as Dr Krofta - he was called Dr Beneš' "henchman, mouthpiece and tool" (Hadow's letter of November 26, 1935 to O'Malley of Foreign Office - R 7166/234/12, FO 371/19492) or "henchman" (Bentinck's dispatch No 224 to Foreign Secretary A Eden of November 7, 1936 - R 6716/70/12, FO 371/20376) - had been able to define objectively Dr Beneš' concept of democracy, what democracy in reality meant for him and for his program of preservation of the Czechoslovak Republic.

(a) Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš - Filosof a státník, op.cit., The seven contributors to this volume on Beneš dealt each with a particular field of the second President's activities and ideas, and the editor then presented, in a concise form, what he had considered to be Beneš' most important concepts and ideas; yet none of them came even near to the conclusion that for President Beneš democracy was a means for the preservation of the Czechoslovak state in its entirety.

(b) Hník, F.M., Edvard Beneš - Filosof demokracie, op.cit. The author had portrayed Beneš entirely in an idealizing form and conclusions reached are a glorification rather than an objective study of Beneš' concept of democracy.

(c) Krofta, K., "Zásady a metody ministra Beneše" in the Zahraniční Politika, Vol. 1934, pp. 277-292. Dr Krofta who was closest of all the officials of the Foreign Ministry to the then Foreign Minister Beneš, although having been in this work predominantly interested in, and dealing with, Beneš' foreign policy, interpreted as the most significant, almost fundamental character of all of his ideas and activities their "scientism, scientific basis and scientific method." (p.277). This interpretation does not provide, however, a sufficient and satisfactory explanation to those concepts of Beneš which were effected by other than scientific considerations - his concept of the relations with Soviet Russia was the classical example which had defied completely all "scientism".

(d) Eisenman, L., Un Grand Européen - Edouard Beneš, Paris, 1934, 152p. This book falls entirely in the same category as (b) above.

(e) Papoušek, J., Dr Edvard Beneš - Sein Leben, Praha, 1937, 304p.

In Chapter VI "Beneš's Weltanschauung und seine Konzeption der Tschechoslovakischen Aussenpolitik" the author said that "Den Grundmassstab seiner

accomplish as much as possible, through his knowledge, for the liberation of the Czechs from the German domination. Having believed in the Palacký's prophecy about the forthcoming great conflict between the Germandom and the anti-German European coalition, he correctly foresaw Masaryk as the leader of the Czech liberation movement during that conflict and was therefore determined to gain Masaryk's utmost confidence in order to be then able to occupy one of the most prominent and leading positions. He had done so by having implicitly followed Masaryk's instructions and advice and by having either outrightly accepted Masaryk's philosophical and political concepts and conclusions or by following in his studies that direction that was inevitably bound to bring him to Masaryk.60

Arbeit bildet die Weltanschauung des modernen Demokratismus". (p.197).

(f) Sokolov, B., Edvard Beneš i puti realiticeskogo demokratizma, Paris, 1926, 75p. He stated that democracy in theory was according to Beneš "the whole philosophical outlook on life, the philosophical and social system, the plan of life penetrating in all the sectors of life of those people who believe in the new democratic religion" (p.39). He made no attempt, however, to explain why, what were the reasons for this theoretical acceptance of democracy by Beneš - in this aspect all the above authors had also failed.

60 Dr Beneš kept on confirming this fact by his frequent references, in his works and speeches, to the complete harmony which existed between him and T.G. Masaryk, even during the most critical years of World War I when they were at times thousands of miles apart and their correspondence was infrequent and unreliable. (See e.g. Beneš, E., Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk, op.cit., p. 21, where the author proudly referred to Masaryk's observations (Masaryk, T.G., The Making of the State, op.cit., pp. 45-46) that during World War I, although having worked separately, they had always worked in harmony and had never any disagreements or differences of opinion even in matters affecting details). Dr Beneš had consistently taken similar stand during his entire, almost three-year period of his Presidency of the First Republic; (see e.g. Beneš, E., Právna veda a kríza demokracie, op.cit., Volume No 1041, Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of

During the entire era of the First Republic its Foreign Minister and President Beneš had been, after Masaryk, the most vehement, undeviating

---

California, Berkeley) other authors such as Eisenman, Hartl, Hník, Jakovenko, Krofta, Mágr, Silberstein, Sokolov and Werstadt did not fail to observe that Benes had been a faithful disciple of Masaryk, a practitioner of Masaryk's ideas and concepts and also attempted to define the differences between Masaryk and Beneš, not only the similarities. (See Peroutka, F., "Masaryk and Beneš" in the Přítomnost, 1936, Vol. 13, p. 597 - discussing their differences, he introduced this point by stating that in the fundamental political concepts they were in a complete agreement; then taking, in what he had considered a very good example, he analyzed the above-mentioned Beneš' speech (Právna veda a krize demokracie) and explained that "Dr Beneš had talked in his usual manner as a sociologist and practitioner while Masaryk always talked as a philosopher and moralist. It is from here that there also are different sources of authority by both of them: it seems that from Masaryk's words speaks to us the nation's conscience they appear to be the words of a prophet... At Beneš there sounds more the healthy and practical sense of our people, it is as if it spoke the national instinct of self-preservation. Beneš is therefore also an effective leader although he is not an effective speaker. In the two men there are represented both the ideological and practical sides but in a dissimilar measure...")

An author who was at that time an official of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry made an observation of Beneš of 1935-1936 which could be much nearer to the truth than he had himself contemplated to do or even realized since it was only made in a passing and casual manner: "...President Beneš felt himself to be Masaryk's successor even to his self-sacrifice. Maybe he did not even know it, but he imitated his teacher in all the details. He even used his words and idioms. He attempted to imitate his gesticulation... He attempted to lead democratic discussions but was never so irresolute and concise as his model. He spoke much more but always in a compact and point-blank manner... He did not get angry but it was possible to see that he was suppressing his anger... (Kubka, F., Mezi válkami, op.cit., p. 149). This description of President Beneš provides an apt explanation of his complete dependency on his teacher during that period in the realm of ideas and concepts and which, by then, penetrated psychologically the realm of his behaviour and expressed itself in manifestations described above by Kubka. This phenomenon was the result of Beneš' anxiety and inner fears about his own and, above all, his state's future after Masaryk's departure from the political scene. Beneš could not then but to keep on subconsciously imitating the man to whom he had owed all his political development and career and who, until his retirement had consistently provided him with a powerful and successful defence against all the numerous personal enemies and political adversaries, and thus endowed him with a feeling of personal security as well as of the assurance of the continuous existence of the Czechoslovak state. Beneš had been extremely careful not to display in the public these fears and anxieties and had

and prolific spokesman for Czechoslovak democracy and he kept on emphasizing that a democratic regime was the only one suitable for the Czechoslovak Republic. "His expressions in favcur of democracy were legion",[61] and became more frequent and passionate after Hitler's victory in Germany. Nazi threat to the existence of Czechoslovakia and thus to his most fundamental policy of preserving at all costs his state in its entirety were to Beneš immediately clear.[62] Ever since the end of World War I and the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty, Germany began to fight for the revision of the Versailles Peace Treaty and for the destruction of the new European status quo which had been the result of the German defeat; while Stresemann's final aims and ideals were in Beneš' account "not much different" from those of Hitler's Germany, the latter having considered the pace and methods of the former for the realization of these aims too slow and ineffective, began immediately to employ much more radical methods.[63]

---

consistently employed as a camouflage, his frequent optimistic evaluation of the existing political situation in general and of Czechoslovakia's position in particular as well as his overly optimistic predictions of the future developments both on the international and on the Czechoslovak political scenes.

61 Beck, C.F., op.cit., p. 189.

62 For an excellent appraisal of the significance, for Czechoslovakia and Europe, of Hitler's victory in Germany, see Beneš' address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and of the Senate given in Prague on October 31, 1933 (Beneš, E., La Révolution Allemande et la Nouvelle Phase de la Politique Européenne, Prague, 1933, 62p.) It was also at this time that Beneš, who had always been greatly worried about the possibility of a German-Russian Alliance, developed almost a pathological fear of such eventuality, and it was this fear, and not any socialist leaning of which he was accused by his critics and enemies that prompted him to pursue his pro-Russian course, climaxing in the 1935 Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty.

63 See Beneš, E., Memoirs, op.cit., pp. 4-5.

Having undertaken as his main, if not sole task, the preservation of the Czechoslovak Republic within the boundaries established after World War I,[64] Beneš became very anxious to do all in his power on the Czechoslovak internal scene to ensure that in any future conflict with Nazi Germany Czechoslovakia would receive military support of the Western Democracies. Towards this end he directed his attention mainly on England, for it was that country which by then played the leading role in Western Europe; furthermore, France's military support was already ensured by the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty.[65] He was determined, first of all, to maintain the democratic regime in his country[66] and to continuously publicize this fact in the West by means of his public speeches and private talks to the Western politicians, diplomats, prominent personalities and correspondents.[67] He spared neither time nor efforts to convince the

---

64 Ibid., see Chapter I, Sec. 2 - The Events Which Led to Munich - Our Efforts to Save Ourselves.

65 The Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of 1924 and its Supplement of 1925 (made in connection with the Locarno Treaties) has been a subject of numerous studies; one of these achieved an outstanding degree of objectivity: Lisický, K., Československá cesta do Mnichova, Vol. 1, Proč Francie nechtěla válčit v r. 1938, London, 1954, 29p.

66 As early as on December 24, 1934, the US Chargé d'Affaires J.W. Benton reported from Prague that "a strong Central Government of the Fascist variety is demanded by many people in Czechoslovakia", and that Dr Beneš had to defend the democratic regime in Czechoslovakia (USDS, RG 59, 860F.00/373); due to the continuously growing intensity and power of nazism and fascism abroad Beneš had to combat during his Presidency the correspondingly more numerous and intense demands of similar nature within his country.

67 Beneš conducted this type of his own personal propaganda (this word is not being used here in a derogatory sense given to it later by Dr. Goebbels) of the Czechoslovak cause, carefully documented in the French, American and especially in the British diplomatic papers, with the same fervour as he had propagated Czech nationalism in French newspapers three decades earlier during his first stay in France. While he had been at that time a poor, unknown student propagating an almost unknown nation, he was now

democratic West, mainly England but also France and the United States, that Czechoslovakia would always remain a democratic state faithful in

---

President of a country which had, because of his undeviating pro-French policies, the well-earned reputation of being the closest and most faithful French Ally and which in Beneš' determined opinion was "a natural and necessary center of European equilibrium", and if it were "given up, all of Central Europe was lost". (Beneš, E., O Budoucnosti hlavního města Prahy, Speech of January 27, 1936 made at the official visit of the City Hall of Prague, Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1091). President Beneš' propaganda received mixed reaction abroad: while comments made either by the French and the American diplomats stationed at Prague and their Foreign Departments' officials had generally been sympathetic and demonstrated understanding of the enormity and complexity of the problems which Czechoslovakia and Dr Beneš had to face and deal with, the British, to whom was this propaganda mainly directed, displayed reaction ranging from an outright and consistent hostility and pessimism as to the viability of the Czechoslovak state to a tone of comparative moderation and understanding. Among the representatives of the former attitude, (representatives of the latter stand will be dealt with later in this Chapter) caused mainly by personality complexes and admiration of nazism coupled with hatred of Russian communism, were during the presidency of Beneš the British Minister at Prague, Sir J. Addison and R.H. Hadow of the same Legation. (See e.g. Addison's dispatches from Prague such as No 124 of June 22, 1936 (R 3672/32/12, FO 371/20374) or letters and reports to Sir Anthony Eden of July 21, 1936 (R 4430/32/12, FO 371/20374), of August 3, 1936 (R 4743/32/12, FO 371/20374) - this report was so adverse to Czechoslovakia in general, and Dr Beneš in particular that N.J.A. Cheetham of the Foreign Office was forced to provide an explanatory note that "Sir J. Addison has consistently maintained that Czechoslovakia as an independent state was sooner or later doomed to extinction. In this dispatch he writes in a more than usually gloomy strain, and he seems to consider that the country has no chance of survival..." Addison's pathological hatred climaxed in his dispatch No 175 to Eden of August 25, 1936 described aptly in Cheetham's note written thereon on September 3, 1936: "This monumental dispatch amounts to a ruthless condemnation in Sir J. Addison's best style of all that Czechoslovakia stands for...", brought about a sharp reprimand of Addison by the Foreign Secretary Eden who correctly appreciating the difficulty of the situation Czechoslovakia and Beneš were being faced with, and the ignorance thereof clearly demonstrated by Addison, effected a swift removal of Addison from Prague. (R 5216/32/12, FO 371/20375). Hadow's hostility towards the Czechs and Beneš was the result of his inability to comprehend that the Sudetendeutsche problem was only a pretext for Nazi Germany which was bent on the destruction of Czechoslovakia and by using Henlein as its pawn; he also was the first British diplomat who established direct contacts with Henlein and the SDP, after having been told by Beneš

its obligations towards the international community of nations in general and towards all its democratic friends in particular, and that it was determined to carry out fully all the necessary measures to ensure justice to all of its citizens within its frontiers.[68] Having understood

---

that he had no objections thereto. (R 706/32/12, FO 371/20373). In a similar fashion as Addison, Hadow's consistently anti-Czech reports (See e.g. R 6032/1799/12, FO 371/20378, in which he criticized harshly the Czechoslovak foreign policy and its internal situation and put all the blame on the pro-Soviet policy of Beneš) brought about a note from Foreign Office's L.C. dated October 22, 1936: "I am afraid I am not convinced by Mr. Hadow who is notoriously inclined to see everything through anti-Czech spectacles and like Addison swallows anything from the opponents of Dr Beneš..." (R 6275/1799/12, FO 371/20378). Hadow was furthermore severely reprimanded by his Foreign Office in O.G. Sargent's letter to him of February 4, 1937 for his pro-German stand taken by him in his telegram of January 30, 1937 in which he asked that all newspapers stop publishing favourable reports from Czechoslovakia because of "his fear of German reaction to them" - R 730/188/12, FO 371/21127). Hadow's criticism of Beneš continued from Prague for another year until his departure in the fall of 1937; during that time he had consistently claimed and in this assertion he was quite correct, that Beneš was "... the absolute master of his country..." (See e.g. his dispatch No 243 of August 24, 1937 R 5854/188/12, FO 371/21130).

68 The numerous American, French and especially British diplomatic dispatches from Prague, and the ensuing comments by their respective Foreign Offices bear witness of these continuous efforts by Beneš during his Presidency. (See e.g. confidential dispatch No 471 from the American Minister at Prague, Wright of June 20, 1936 about his conversation with Benes (USDS 860F.001/73), dispatch No 235 from the newly appointed British Minister at Prague, Bentinck to Sir A. Eden of Nov. 12, 1936 about his lengthy conversation with Beneš of November 10, 1936 (R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375); Report of the interview granted on February 13, 1936 by Beneš to the British Air Attaché at Prague, Squadron Leader Beaumont (R 999/999/12, FO 371/20376); Memorandum of conversation between Beneš and the British Military Attache at Prague, Colonel Daly held on October 28, 1936, dated November 9, 1936 (R 6719/157/12, FO 371/20376); Bentinck's confidential letter to O'Malley of December 2, 1936 on Captain Wedgwood Benn's talk with Beneš (R 7381/1799/12, FO 371/20378); Bentinck's dispatch No 13 to Sir A. Eden of January 20, 1937 about his final talk, prior to his departure from Prague, with Beneš (R 685/188/12, FO 371/21127) and dispatch No 18 on the same subject of January 25, 1937 (R 689/188/12, FO 371/21127); Hadow's telegram No 12 of February 12, 1937 on his talk with Beneš (R 1131/188/12, FO 371/21127); Dispatch No 113 of April 28, 1937 from the newly

the dislike and fear of the Soviet Union in the West, he always minimized the effect of the Russo-Czechoslovak Pact, stressed the danger of a possibility of a Russo-German agreement, and stated that Communism presented no danger to Czechoslovakia.[69] Another concept which Beneš wanted to be understood and accepted by the West was that under no circumstances would he or his country, being in this aspect completely united, yield to an aggression but would defend itself to the last man.[70]

---

appointed British Minister at Prague, Newton on his talk with Beneš of April 27, 1937 (R 2994/188/12, FO 371/21128); Telegram No 99 of October 30, 1937 (R 7308/188/12, FO 371/21131) telegram No 52 of November 9, 1937 - (R 7463/188/12, FO 371/21131) and dispatches No 330 of November 9, 1937 (R 7540/188/12, FO 371/21131) and No 334 of November 10, 1937 -(R 7865/188/12, FO 371/21132), all from Newton giving details of his talks with Beneš of October 28 and November 8, 1937; Telegrams No 58 (R 8515/188/12, FO 371/21132), No 115 (N 8587/154/12, FO 371/21126) of December 18 and 20, 1937 respectively from Newton on his talks with the French Foreign Minister Delbos during his visit of Prague and Beneš; Newton's telegram No 31 of March 21, 1938 (C 2041/1941/18, FO 371/21713) on his lengthy audience with Beneš of March 18, 1938; Newton's dispatch No 75 of March 22, 1938 transmitting a record of Beneš' conversation with Leo Kennedy of March 14, 1938 and then subsequent the May crisis of 1938, almost once-a-week talks and conversations with the British and other Western diplomats.

69 In his conversation with the newly appointed British Minister at Prague, Bentinck of November 10, 1936 Beneš stated that "due to agrarian laws which had broken up to a certain extent large estates, there existed no danger from Communism in Czechoslovakia". He said he was steering a middle course between Fascism and Communism. Having explained that the Czechoslovak-Russian Pact would be operative only if France became involved, he spoke at some length of the grave danger, not only to Czechoslovakia but to the whole of Europe, if Soviet Russia, having been isolated by the rest of Europe, concluded an agreement with Nazi Germany. Bentinck noted that Beneš talked about the very same subject a few weeks earlier with Lord Noel-Buxton. (R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375, Bentinck dispatch No 235 of November 12, 1936 to Sir Anthony Eden.

See also dispatch No 93 from the US Minister at Prague, Carr, dated March 2, 1938 - (USDS 762.63/541 - 760F.6111/30) and confidential letter from Sir R. Campbell, Belgrade to Sir R. Vansittart of the British Foreign Office of April 26, 1937 - (R 3066/2594/12, FO 371/21134).

70 See e.g. Addison's letter from Prague to O'Malley of the British Foreign Office, dated May 25, 1936 (R 3126/1162/12, FO 371/20377); the two dispatches from the US Minister at Prague, Carr, No 471 dated June 20, 1936 and No 93 dated March 2, 1938 - (860F.001/73 and 760F.62/161 respectively).

Dealing directly with the subject of the democratic regime in Czechoslovakia, Beneš' explanation to the West was that he was "steering a middle course between Fascism and Communism" and needed, therefore, both the rightist Agrarians and the leftist Socialists in the Coalition Government. He insisted that both parties had to share the responsibility for all the measures passed by Parliament and threatened them with a Cabinet of functionaries if a party tried to oust the other from the Coalition, and this threat, in Beneš' own words, had always prevented any such attempt from having been carried out.[71] Beneš had undoubtedly a great deal of difficulties with the keeping of all the Governmental parties in line because of their vast ideological differences, the open hostility of the majority of the traditionally conservative Czechs to his policy towards Soviet Russia, the inherited Czech tendency to indulge, in the times of peace, in discords and fights among themselves, and this tendency was during the presidency of Beneš in the period before Munich greatly exacerbated by Beneš himself by his own propaganda of over-optimistic appraisals of the international situation which created among Czechs the inability to comprehend the gravity of German danger. He was also mainly responsible for their staunch belief in immediate French, Russian and English military help if Germany dared to attack, and in the excellence of their army capable of holding any German onslaught until such held would arrive.[72]

---

71 Bentinck's dispatch No. 235 to Sir Anthony Eden of November 12, 1936 (R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375).

72 Some of these difficulties were brought up on occasions by British diplomats and Foreign Office. Thus, e.g. in his dispatch No 265

In the Czechoslovak internal politics, President Beneš had been facing a dilemma: on the one hand, he feared that by continuously

---

of December 19, 1936, Bentinck informed Sir A. Eden that he believed that Beneš and Krofta were honestly trying to improve the Sudeten-German problem and to find a solution, just as Jan Masaryk was trying in London, and then added: "Unfortunately, however, the President does not appear to be able always to enforce his will upon his subordinates and both Krofta and Masaryk risk being ousted from office any day as victims of intrigue". (R 7445/32/12, FO 371/20375). In his dispatch No 224 of November 7, 1936 to Eden, Bentinck wrote inter alia that the Agrarian Party had launched in the Committee on Foreign Relations a very strong attack on Beneš' Russian policy and concluded: "By attacking his henchman, Krofta, the Agrarian party thus led a direct attack upon Dr Beneš' recent foreign policy; in the minds of the rank and file of middle-class village and country supporters of the Coalition persists an uneasy fear of Moscow which had undoubtedly been instrumental in giving Dr Beneš the first rebuff to his foreign and domestic policy that observers in Prague can call to memory". (R 6716/70/12, FO 371/20376). An interesting analysis of Beneš' - Dr Hodža's positions in the spring of 1938 was presented by the US Minister at Prague, Wilbur J. Carr in his dispatch No 108 of March 29, 1938: "...it may be stated that, from a local political point of view, Dr Hodža is more solidly entrenched with the nation as a whole, as the leader of the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party, and, consequently, more popular than is President Beneš. Therefore, his pronouncements made for internal consumption, carry more weight than those of the President. It is assumed that this situation is recognized by the latter - in fact, there have been rumors circulating which involve a possible resignation of the Chief Executive". (USDS, RG 59, 860F.00/473). The above analysis found no counterpart in reports from other diplomatic sources in Prague. The British who accepted Hadow's appraisal of Beneš - Dr Hodža relations made shortly after the former's election to the Presidency that "... Hodža has been side-tracked by the far more intelligent Beneš..." (Hadow's letter from Prague of May 9, 1936 to O'Malley of the Foreign Office, R 2789/32/12, FO 371/20374), were further confirmed in their belief in the correctness of their appraisal of Beneš' predominance on the Czechoslovak political scene when they were informed by their Minister at Prague, Newton, in a letter dated March 30, 1937 that "among well informed people in Prague it is believed that Dr Hodža is in the power of Dr Beneš..." and that "he was nothing more than his henchman who was in the meantime" allowed to occupy the front of the stage "because it suited Dr Beneš' political strategy". (R 2243/154/12, FO 371/21125), had always considered Dr Beneš as being "...more than ever before the director of Czechoslovakia..." (Letter from Hadow, Prague, May 9, 1936 - R 2879/32/12, FO 371/20374) as having appeared to be "in absolute control of the political machinery of the majority of the present Coalition..." (Hadow, dispatch No 197 of September 25, 1936 - R 5817/32/12, FO 371/20375), as the only one

employing his tactics of over-optimism he was creating among his countrymen the unwarranted feeling of security and peace and thus encouraging, in accordance with their political cultural trend, as interpreted by Palacký, and in which he and Masaryk firmly believed, the growth of their tendency of engaging, during the periods of peace and security, in discords and struggles amongst themselves; on the other hand he feared even more of the consequences, among the minorities in general, and the German minority in particular, if he were in his speeches and statements always realistically to reveal all the dangers facing Czechoslovakia as well as the new state's inner weaknesses - their demands and boldness of approach, due to the neighbouring Nazi Germany's instigation and help would soon become intolerable to the Czechs and incompatible with the sustenance of the Czechoslovak state: in this inevitable development the state authorities would be forced to use drastic measures to restore the order and the resulting hostile reaction in the West would create exactly the opposite effect which Dr Beneš wanted to create by his propaganda. This latter course would have meant a disaster for Czechoslovakia since without the help of its democratic friends in the West it had no hope of survival, in

---

who should be listened to since "...what Krofta and Hodža say does not matter very much..." (O.E. Sargent's comments of February 9, 1937 on Bentinck's dispatch to Eden of January 25, 1937 - R 689/188/12, FO 371/21127), as being "by far the greatest and most courageous directing brain in Czechoslovakia" (Hadow in his dispatch No 23 of February 2, 1937 - R 839/188/12, FO 371/21127) and as being "...the absolute master of his country today..." (Hadow, dispatch No 243 of August 24, 1937 - R 5854/188/12, FO 371/21130) whose position after having been chosen as President Masaryk's successor "with little opposition" "... has since then tended to grow still stronger..." (Newton's report of January 13, 1938 on leading personalities in Czechoslovakia in which he also described Foreign Minister Krofta as "Dr Beneš' henchman" - R 580/580/12, FO 371/22339).

its existing form, in the rapidly growing explosiveness in the whole field of international relations. Although continuing making statements to the contrary, Dr Beneš was convinced, since the German withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference, and the League of Nations in 1933, that a new European, and possibly world conflict was inevitable.[73] He was therefore determined neither to create nor to allow to develop in Czechoslovakia any situation which would either show it in a bad light in the West[74] or which would force it to abolish most, if not all, of its democratic institutions and thus place it on the level of all other dictatorial powers. If this development were allowed to take place, Beneš rightly feared that an attack by dictatorial Nazi Germany on dictatorial Czechoslovakia would stir up little incentive to come to its help in the West - it would furthermore bestow upon France an opportunity to disclaim its committments under the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty on the pretext that such Treaty was concluded with, and applicable only to democratic Czechoslovakia. For all these

---

73 Beneš, E., Memoirs, op.cit., p. 5. (See also the next Note - No 74).

74 In his letter from Prague of December 19, 1936 to O'Malley of the British Foreign Office, Hadow said that "according to a very reliable information by an anti-Hitler emigre, Dr Beneš informed ten days ago Dr Reichensperger, a prelate who acts as Secretary-General of the 'Katholisches Volksverein' that so long as he was President of Czechoslovakia he would never recognize or come to terms with the Henlein Party. Ever since the failure of the Disarmament Conference he had acted on the assumption that war was inevitable. He was doing all he could to put Germany into the wrong and force her to be clearly the aggressor in order that Czechoslovakia might benefit when war came by the sympathy and if possible, the assistance of other countries. For this purpose it was necessary to appear to make concessions and to be ready to treat with Germany..." (R 7727/32/12, FO 371/20375). While Hadow's hostility towards Czechoslovakia and Beneš is well known and documented and there exist no minutes of this conversation

reasons as well as for his own personality trait of being under all the circumstances an optimist.[75] Beneš decided to continue following the former course of his proverbial optimism until the very end of the First Republic - Munich, and with a considerably greater deal of success at home than abroad.[76]

---

between Dr Beneš and Dr Reichensperger, the general theme attributed to the former would appear to be quite authentic with the possible exception of omission of France's Treaty obligations to Czechoslovakia.

75 "...Man, as long as he is alive, must never give up his optimistic idealism; he must never - even if he sees the real situation in dark colours - cease to hope for better times, and he must, most of all, never to cease to work for them, never to cease to struggle for them, and never be discouraged by any ill success along the way. This has always been the motto of my lifework..." Beneš, Democracy Today and Tomorrow, New York, 1939, p. viii.

76 Beneš' optimism became a matter of serious criticism among the foreign diplomats in general, and British diplomats and British Foreign Office Staff in particular. During his Presidency, rarely did his continuously optimistic forecasts and statements produce the effects which he intended to achieve in London; on the contrary, his persistent optimism undermined further in London his credibility. Documentary evidence found on this subject in the British Foreign Office documents is so extensive that only the most representative items, arranged in the chronological order, can be presented at this juncture:
1. Even before his election to the Presidency, Beneš' views received some harsh words in the British Foreign Office: When the then British Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare wrote on September 13, 1935 that Beneš gave him at Geneva a day earlier "an optimistic account of the position of Czechoslovakia", both N.J.A. Cheetham and R.A. Gallop of the F.O. commented that "Dr Beneš' remarks about his country are, of course, misleading", and E.H. Carr went even further: "I am afraid Dr Beneš' views cannot be taken very seriously. He is getting more and more in the habit - and perhaps he has caught it from M. Titulescu - of talking for effects and with little regards for facts". (R 5886/234/12, FO 371/19492).
2. In his letter to O'Malley of the B.F.O. of December 2, 1936, British Minister Bentinck presented a report on Capt. Wedgwood Benn's visit, on behalf of the British Council, to Prague and his talk with Beneš. He prefaced it by his own evaluation of Dr Beneš' optimism: "The President spoke with his usual (I am inclined to fear exaggerated) optimism..." (R 7381/1799/12, FO 371/20378).

Dr Beneš discerned that there was an element in the Czechoslovak internal politics which would prevent the development and occurrence of quarrels amongst the Czechs and which would keep them united by threatening their feeling of that peace and security of which he would continue to be the apostle - the Sudeten-German Party of Henlein.[77] He realized that

---

3. British Minister Bentinck sent from Prague on December 7, 1936 a report about Major Stronge's and Squadron Leader Beaumont's (British Military and Air Attache at Prague) interview with Beneš, in which the latter, after opening his remarks that "he was a confirmed optimist", gave an exceedingly optimistic account of the Czechoslovak position. On December 22, 1936 Sir R. Vansittart of the F.O. made the following remark: "Dr Beneš' optimism usage quite untrue. It does not impress most people in Central Europe and he belies it by his repeated and feverish hunts for more security and operative allies". (R 7442/1162/12, FO 371/20377).

4. On one occasion, Sargent of the F.O. went deeper into his evaluation of Beneš' optimism and presented his views on April 29, 1937 in connection with the British Minister at Belgrade, Sir R. Campbell's report of April 26, 1937, concerning Dr Beneš' remarks to Prince Paul during his visit to Belgrade; this evaluation was agreed to and initialled by all the concerned officials at F.O.: "It is, as we know, part of Dr Beneš' technique to practise an imperturbable optimism in all circumstances. Perhaps this method has its advantages and in any case he knows his own business best, but from our point of view it has the inconvenience of making it impossible to accept any of Dr Beneš' statements on the general situation and his views therefore on the Sudeten-German problem, on Communism and on the situation in Germany are, to my mind, entirely valueless..." (R 3066/2594/12, FO 371/21134).

5. Comments by F.O. on Dr Beneš' statements, such as the one made by Bramwell on October 5, 1937 in regard to dispatch No 273 from Newton, dated September 23, 1937 that "Dr Beneš was optimistic as usual about the world situation..." (R 6526/5959/12, FO 371/21135), or the one made by Nichol on December 29, 1937 in regard to the Telegram No 115 from the British Minister at Prague, Newton, dated December 20, 1937 concerning the latter's talk with Dr Beneš, would inevitably include the observation that "...M. Beneš spoke with his usual optimism". (N 8587/154/12, FO 371/21126).

6. On April 1, 1938, Walker of the F.O. commented on the telegram No 30 sent from Newton from Prague on March 19, 1938 and concerning Dr Beneš' talk with Sir R.B. Lockhart of March 17, 1938 after a F.O. official (signature illegible) noted that "This is optimistic as we have learnt

Nazi Germany bent on expansionist policy against the states of East and Southeast Europe had to overrun the Czechoslovak fortress in the heart of Europe which, because of its highly strategical position and its geographical characteristics had inspired Bismarck to make his famous declaration after his victory over Austria in 1866[78] - a declaration which became even more valid seven decades later when Czechoslovakia comprised not only Bohemia of Bismarck's times but also Moravia, part of Silesia, Slovakia and Ruthenia and formed thus an effective barrier to Hitler's advance. Dr Beneš foresaw that to conquer Czechoslovakia without, or with the least risk of, antagonizing the

---

to expect from M. Beneš", : "President Beneš states the things that he wishes as if they were facts, which in the circumstances is not surprising". (N 1622/26/38, FO 371/22286.)

77 Prince Paul of Yugoslavia informed the British Minister at Belgrade, Sir R. Campbell on April 26, 1937 that during his recent visit at Belgrade, Beneš told him that "...He was not worried by the Sudeten-German problem which he needed in order to keep Czechs united..." (Marginal note by Sargent of the B.F.O. on the side of this sentence: "Good Lord!") (R 3066/2594/12, FO 371/21134).

78 Dr Beneš had been frequently using this Bismarck's declaration on Bohemia during his Foreign Ministry and the entire period of his Presidency in a similar way as he did in his address to the members of the Senate and the House of Commons of Canada in the Railway Committee Room, House of Commons, Ottawa on June 3, 1943: "...'Whoever is master of Bohemia, is master of Europe. Europe must, therefore, never allow any nation except the Czechs to rule it, since that nation does not lust for domination. The boundaries of Bohemia are the safeguard of European security and he who moves them will plunge Europe into misery.' In my estimation there can be no better comment on the position of my country even today..." Dominion of Canada, Official Report of Debates, House of Commons, Fourth Session, Nineteenth Parliament, Vol. IV, 1943, p. 3330. (This Bismarck's declaration was, of course, valid in 1948, in 1968 and is valid even today - note by the author).

Western democracies and risking the war with them for which he was not yet sufficiently prepared, Hitler would be on the one hand accusing Prague of having become a base of Bolshevism which was so intensely hated and feared by so many in France, England and the United States, and on the other hand he would be utilizing as a pretext the Wilsonian principle of self-determination for the Sudeten Germans coupled with the charges of their ever-increasing persecution by the Czechs, and would be using Henlein as his pawn by planning, financing and directing all his moves from Berlin and, most of all, by effectively preventing him and his followers from entering into any agreement with the Czechoslovak Government which would solve the so-called Sudeten-German problem and thus deprive Nazi Germany of its most effective pretence, fabricated for the consumption in the West, for its continuous verbal attacks and threats against, and meddling into the internal affairs of, the Czechoslovak state. Henlein, being forced by Berlin to keep on ever increasing his demands to Prague even ad absurdum, would perform, in Beneš' estimate, an extremely important service for the Czechoslovak state: by personifying danger to their independence and their newly-won state which they so passionately loved, he would keep on uniting the Czechs.[79] To neutralize

---

79 While Dr Beneš cannot be accused of wilfully creating and maintaining the danger of Henlein's movement so that he would be able to manage in a very difficult task of keeping the Czechs united since that part of Palacký's interpretation of their political culture which explained that they were prone to engage in quarrels and struggles among themselves in the periods of peace and security, appeared during the pre-Munich days to be on the way of its fulfillment (See Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1958, pp. 7-25), it would be illogical to presume that an astute political strategist and tactician of Beneš' discernment

and discredit in the West the continuous Berlin's claims of injustice being suffered by the Sudeten Germans and charges of brutality and

---

would have failed to immediately perceive this other, for Czechoslovakia beneficial side, of Henlein's danger. He confirmed later his extremely difficult task of keeping the coalition system in Czechoslovakia going during his Presidency before Munich - "...I myself had been forced during the year 1937 and 1938 to personally use all my influence on both of the sides of our governmental coalition..." (Ibid., p. 22). He also stated that the goal to which he had paid, during this period, his continuous attention was "to preserve, at all the costs, regardless of the circumstances, the unity of the nation till the end of the whole struggle". (Ibid., p. 24).
When meeting and granting interviews to foreign diplomats, prominent personalities or journalists, Dr Beneš had usually provided them, in passing, with a brief general outline of the governmental system in Czechoslovakia. Only on rare occasions would he devote the whole meeting to this subject. He did so, e.g., in his meeting of November 11, 1937 with the British Minister at Prague, Newton, as reported by the latter in his dispatch No 336 of the same date (R - 7837/154/12, FO 371/21126). Beneš was reported to say that before his election as President, he refused to make any promises. He had felt that a government of national unity was essential for Czechoslovakia in the existing conditions, and after his election he had made it clear to the parties of the Left and of the Right that he would not accept any government in which they were not both represented. In Czechoslovakia there was no basis for a Popular Front Government, and in an administration prevalently representative of the Right, he was determined to ascertain that the Socialist Party would not escape its share of responsibility for the government of the country. If the various parties proved obstinate in composing their differences sufficiently to form a Cabinet, he could always fall back on a government of officials, such as had twice been in office. This would, however, only be a makeshift and if resort to it were necessary, it would be replaced by a normal government as soon as the political parties would agree upon a Cabinet. Eventually, of course, the coalition form of government might be allowed to disappear, if the international situation became easier. Meanwhile, the opposition parties might be described as those which did not, in practice, observe the principles of democracy on which the State was founded. In the Cabinet there was a kind of inner Cabinet, consisting of representatives of the five chief parties: the Agrarian, the National Socialist, the Social Democratic, the Traders' and the People's Parties. All the important measures were discussed in the first place in this inner Cabinet where a vote was never taken but unanimity had to be reached. The danger of a coalition was that a concession demanded by one party was liable to become the subject of a bargain with the other parties at the expense of the State.

persecution against the Czechoslovak authorities as well as to win and maintain for Czechoslovakia the all-important good will of the Western democracies, he attempted to convince them that all democracies have to be united when facing the threats of dictatorial regimes and, since peace was indivisible, if one of them, such as Czechoslovakia, was attacked, it was in the interest of all other democracies if they were to survive, to take an active part in the ensuing war. Having been convinced about the inevitability of the forthcoming European, and possibly, world conflict between the democratic-status quo countries and the dictatorial-revisionist countries, Beneš' concept of the necessity of the maintenance of the democratic regime in his country by means of keeping it united was well founded and presented the only reasonable course he was able to follow and entertain, at the same time, some hope that he would in the end be successful, against seemingly overwhelming odds, in preserving his state in its entirety. There was only one more step he was able to take in this direction, and he had been taking it on every occasion: to propagate to the West his country's determination to always remain democratic and faithful to its democratic friends, to be continuously ready

---

An independent Minister of Finance who would be in any inter-parties controversies able to count on President's support, was according to Beneš desirable. The present Prime Minister, Dr Hodža was a Slovak, and if he were to cease to be Prime Minister, he would be replaced by Beneš by another Slovak since it was expedient that this arrangement would continue.

to grant any reasonable concessions, compatible with the interests of the state, to its minorities in general, and the German minority in particular, to adhere to its alliances and treaties and to believe in collective security.[80]

---

80 On occasions Beneš' statements on his and his country's firm stand in this regard were not afforded good reception. Thus Sargent of the British Foreign Office, made on February 22, 1937 the following sarcastic remark about Beneš in his comments to Hadow's telegram No 12 from Prague dated February 12, 1937 dealing with his conversation with Beneš: "...it is complete humbug for him to say that he is sticking to his alliances because he is a good European and believes in collective security. He is sticking to them because he has nothing else to stick to..." (R 1131/188/12, FO 371/21127).

(ii) The Slovak Question

> I will always and as a matter of principle stand against that political phantasy - I am unable to name it otherwise - which talking about a Slovak administration, Slovak authorities and Slovak economic management and enterprise, proclaims a bias slogan "Slovakia to the Slovaks"... I reject this mainly in the interest of the Slovaks and Slovakia itself... The Slovaks must not want to rule only over Slovakia, they must want to co-rule over the whole Republic...[81]

> What pre-war Hungary gave to the Slovaks can be summed up in one word - nothing...
> What the Czechoslovak Republic has given the Slovaks can be expressed in two words - almost everything...[82]

During his entire political career Dr Beneš had never recognized any validity of the so-called "Slovak question" or "Slovak problem".[83] Insofar as he was concerned this problem existed neither in theory nor in practice. He carried on his great teacher's undeviating course of "Czechoslovakism" which Masaryk promulgated as being one of the most fundamental requirements of the viability of the new Republic, and about the correctness of which Beneš never doubted. In his speeches

---

81 Beneš, E., Reč k Slovákom - O našej národnej prítomnosti a buducnosti, Bratislava, 1934, p. 57.

82 Beneš, E., "Czechoslovakia and Hungary" - An address made at Nové Zámky on December 8, 1933, in The Central European Observer, Vol XI, No 26, pp. 459-461, Prague, December 18, 1933.

83 Beneš emphasized consistently his strong conviction on this matter.. Thus, e.g. the British Minister at Prague Newton wrote in his Dispatch No 336 of November 11, 1937 concerning his conversation with President Beneš: "...Dr Beneš said that no Slovak question really existed. The agitation was merely Msgr. Hlinka and would cease with his death..." - (R 7337/154/12, FO 371/21126).

made during his frequent trips to Slovakia he pleaded "for loyal and sincere co-operation between the Czechs and Slovaks", adding that "he has always been and always will be opposed to Slovak separatism or autonomy".[84]

The reasons why Masaryk and Beneš were convinced about the imperative necessity of one Czechoslovak nation for the viability of the new Czechoslovak state were both theoretical and practical. In theory their conceptual aspects of the spirit of their new state were based on Palacký's interpretation of the Czech history and covered the whole field of the state's institutions - from the form of government to the characteristics of the citizens' political culture. As his predecessor, Beneš was just unable to even consider possibility of the existence of a separate interpretation of the Slovak history which would be at variance with the one of the Czechs.[85] Furthermore, his personality trait would not have allowed him to question his teacher's theoretical correctness on a fundamental issue such as the Czech-Slovak relationship involving the very essence of his primary task of the maintenance of the integral Czechoslovak state. Any deviation from

---

84 Dispatch No 169 from the United States Minister at Prague, Wright, dated May 9, 1935 concerning Beneš' address to the "Scholar Society Šafařík" given a week earlier at Bratislava - (USDS, RG 59, 860F.00/387).

85 If we were to imagine, just for the sake of an argument that there would be such a separate interpretation of the Slovak history which would e.g. bring forward the concept that because of their thousand year-long separation from the Czechs and their different historical development, a democratic form of government was not suitable to their requirements but a monarchical form of government with strongly underlined

this conceptual course of Czechoslovakism immediately meant to him the endangering of the very existence of the state at the time of the increasingly threatening political developments which were taking place across the border in neighbouring Nazi Germany. While a Czecho-Slovak federation would have been theoretically possible, it had been looked upon by Masaryk and Beneš as an attempt, by the enemies, to divide and conquer the Czechoslovak state.[86] Furthermore, if the concept of federation were to be applied within the new state, it would have been, both theoretically and practically, impossible to limit it to the Czechs and Slovaks: the other minorities, of which the Germans actually had numbered slightly more than the Slovaks -(The 1930 census listed, 3,231,688 Germans and 3,182,292 Slovaks)- would have to also be involved, and such an involvement would have to result in a form of German and Hungarian territorial autonomous units. Beneš rejected to agree with

---

theocratic elements corresponded to their political culture and temperament. Under such circumstances it would have been a theoretical nightmare to attempt to establish and maintain any form of a Czechoslovak state.

86 This theme was presented by Beneš in his address to the "Scholar Society Šafařík" made early in May, 1935 at Bratislava, and entitled "Masaryk's Comprehension of the National Idea and the Problem of Czechoslovak Unity". He also stated that "an autonomous Slovak Government would fail to bring the desired results since the non-Slovak elements there would soon win the upper hand". After having stated that the Czechoslovak Government had to do all in its power to help Slovakia in the field of economics and to draw its people closer to the Czechs, he pleaded for "loyal and sincere co-operation between the Czechs and the Slovaks", he warned that the Czechs and the Slovaks had to establish a strong national block, since "a disunited Czechoslovakia would soon be crushed by the Germans and the Hungarians". (For the source see the above Note No. 84).

the formation of such territorially autonomous units on the geographical and nationalist grounds: on the former he claimed that because of their size and incoherence, it would have been impossible to administer them in a rational and effective manner, on the latter that they would have constituted a continuous threat that on the first opportunity they would separate themselves from the Republic.[87]

In theory, the Czechs and the Slovaks were to Beneš basically the same people,[88] and he was convinced that by continuous intermingling between the two of them - the Czechs moving into Slovakia and the Slovaks, who needed more encouragement for doing so, into the Czech Provinces - it would only be a question of time when the gradually evolutionary unification trend of the two branches of the nation in all the fields would succeed: "...I am above all convinced that no power on the earth is any more able to prevent this unification today, and it is the obligation of the Czechs and Slovaks to discuss together in an openly and manly manner, in what direction, in what

---

87 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, op.cit., p. 11.

88 In his dispatch No 100 of April 19, 1937, the British Minister at Prague, Newton reported that he was told by Beneš that "there was no cause for autonomy in Slovakia. The Slovaks and the Czechs were fundamentally the same people speaking the same language and it was only because the Hungarian Government had prohibited the introduction of Czech literature that about 100 years ago the Slovaks developed a literary language containing certain slight changes from the common tongue..." (R 2791/895/12, FO371/21133).

sense, in what spirit and at what tempo they desire this process of unification to continue..."[89]

In his theoretical approach, Beneš employed sociology to demonstrate to the Slovaks that they were destined to perform a very important task in the Czechoslovak Republic: in accordance with the sociological law that the section of a nation which lived further from the urbanized and industrialized culture and was in a greater contact with nature and with more immediate living popular national culture, had always in the life of that nation the mission of a great regeneration. The Czechs were that part of the nation which having been nearer to the Western culture, and having been penetrated by the urban, industrial and technological civilization of the modern world, had to be regenerated by the flow of this new and fresh national force which only the Slovaks could provide for many decades to come to the whole national entity:

> The Slovaks have a great national task and a great Slavonic task; the Slovaks will befall in the future decades these obligations towards themselves, towards the Czechoslovak nation

---

89 Beneš, E., Reč k Slovákom, op.cit., pp. 59-60. As the main reason for the inevitability of this unification which Beneš desired so strongly, he identified the biological and sociological laws coupled with the factors of geography. The natural increase of the Slovaks was larger (he quoted that in the 1920-30 it was 11%) than that of the Czechs (7% during the same period) which would cause that in 30-40 years, out of the fifteen million Czechs and Slovaks, the latter would form one-third while in 1930 they constituted only one-fourth of the total. Beneš warned that if the Slovaks were, therefore, to adopt the "Slovakia to the Slovaks" slogan, in 20-30 years Slovakia would be so overpopulated that the Slovaks there "would be suffocating and vegetating". He emphasized his conviction that "he who wanted to enclose the Slovaks within the borders of Slovakia was committing a sin against his own future, against the future of the state and the great mission of his own nation..."

> and Europe, the Slovaks have no right to shirk from this task, and even if they would want to shirk from it, they would be unable to do so because the conditions, the evolution in this state and in all our surroundings will simply force them to engage themselves in this mission on their own, and the whole uniform nation's interests...[90]

The Czechs, on their part, had to, according to Beneš, provide the Slovaks, in this process of unification, with their organizational ability, their methodology in work, their Western European ability of rationally comprehending the whole life, their perseverance and stability in daily activities and their industry and aggressiveness in undertakings. He also argued that there were examples of unification which took place between the various branches of a nation, such as the Germans of Southern Bavaria and those of the Oldenburg region, which were incomparably more different and apart than were the Czechs and the Slovaks.[91]

For Beneš Slovakia also had for the Czechoslovak Republic a geopolitically strategic task of international character because it provided the only outlet for the Czech Provinces encircled by the German ocean, and together with Ruthenia it provided the Czechoslovak - Rumanian - Yugoslavian territorial juncture and continuity, as well as it brought Czechoslovakia nearer to Russia:

---

90 Ibid., p. 62.

91 See Hartl, A., ed., op.cit., pp. 331-334. Beneš also stated that "the basis of unity of a nation is today above all and especially determined by cultural association, psychological consciousness of the political and moral uniformity, unity of the state and by conscious will to form a strong common national consciousness". (p.334).

> Without Slovakia and Ruthenia it would have been impossible to institute the Little Entente and all of its concepts of the organization of Central Europe, in which our liberated states would be their own masters without an overwhelming influence and domination of a Great Power. Because of these great objectives, it is impossible to give up anything in Slovakia, because of these great objectives we reject any revision of frontiers... In the same way as the Czech lands stretch out their arms towards France and Western Europe, so through Slovakia and Ruthenia we are shaking hands with Rumania, Poland and Russia. This connection of Western and Eastern Europe is our great power, it is a guarantee of our security and independence, and a basis of our great future in Central and Eastern Europe...[92]

Both Masaryk and Beneš had to withstand, during the era of the first Republic, numerous attacks and accusations made predominantly by the Slovak separatists of Msgr. Hlinka's party that they wilfully disregarded the provisions of the Pittsburg Agreement.[93] The idea of one Czechoslovak nation comprising its two united Branches - the Czechs

---

92 Beneš, E., Discours aux Slovaques sur le présent et l'avenir de notre nation, Paris, Le Monde Slave, 1934, p. 64.

93 On June 30, 1918, T.G. Masaryk attended a large meeting at Pittsburg, Pennsylvania, between the Czechs and Slovaks of America. The convention, which was signed by Masaryk and representatives of the Slovak League and other societies in America, became later known as the Pittsburg Agreement and was destined to lead to many misunderstandings and unnecessary and damaging clashes between the two parties in subsequent years. This document expressed itself in favour of Czechoslovak unity, but, at the same time, in a considerable degree of autonomy for Slovakia within the future Czechoslovak Republic. As none of the signatories had any mandate to sign a document with such a vast implication, the final clause made the whole arrangement contingent upon its endorsement by constitutionally elected representatives of both the Czechs and the Slovaks at home after the war. An impartial observer - the well-known British historian - made some interesting and enlightening comments about this document: "...The charges of bad faith afterwards (after the signing of this document - note by author) levelled against the Czechs, and even against Masaryk himself, because they did not at once set up a separate Slovak Parliament, rested upon an obvious non sequitur: and

and the Slovaks which prevailed over ideas similar to that contained in the Pittsburg's document, was not a product of purely theoretical considerations on the part of the first Czechoslovak President and his immediate successor - it owed, even to a greater degree, its existence to practical considerations of the position of importance and influence of the new state in the European and in the world

---

the fact that a full facsimile of the original convention was so widely employed as a means of agitation among the Slovaks both of Europe and of America, was a clear proof of political immaturity and inability to interpret a more than usually explicit document. In the light of later events it is easy to see the sinister motives that prompted such men as Jehlička and Tuka. The Pittsburg agreement was only one of a series of programmes, some of which had contemplated the union of Slovakia with Russia...or with Poland, or even complete independence; what alone gave it its importance was the signature of Masaryk..." (Seton-Watson, R.W., A History of the Czechs and Slovaks, London, 1943, p. 306).

In his dispatch No 100 of April 19, 1937 the British Minister at Prague, Newton reported, inter alia, that "...The Pittsburg Agreement, which Dr Beneš said he incidentally had refused to sign, contained a sentence to the effect that its future application should be finally determined by Parliament. This had been done and Pittsburg Agreement was accordingly liquidated when the Czechoslovak Constitution was settled in Parliament with the participation of the Slovaks and of the leader of the present Separatist Party Msgr. Hlinka. At that time Msgr. Hlinka's Party was in the Government and it was only after they had gone into the opposition that they claimed that proper effect had not been given to the Pittsburg Agreement and that the constitutional settlement was inadequate..." (R 2791/895/12, FO 371/21133).

Beneš was reported to have gone as far as to have told to the Austrian Minister at Prague, Dr Marek on November 27, 1937 that he had considered that Masaryk's Pittsburg "Vertrag" was a mistake. (Von Papen's Dispatch from Vienna of December 1, 1937, where he was then an "Ausserordentliche and Bevollmaechtige Botschafter" of Germany, about his talk with the Austrian State Secretary Dr Schmidt in which the latter told him about Beneš' interview given to Dr Marek. (Tgb. Nr.A 7605, R 43 II/1496a, fol 1, S 57-59, 374290-374292, Bundesarchiv Reichskanzlei, Koblenz).

politics which was a subject of continuous attention especially of Beneš.[94] The Czechoslovak nation numbering over 10 million had its obvious advantages over the two separate nations of the Czechs and of the Slovaks not only in the internal politics of the new Republic where the German minority alone was more numerous than the Slovaks but also in international politics where power politics had always constituted one of the most important, if not the predominant, elements of relationship among the states. Beneš provided a clear definition and explanation of the idea of one Czechoslovak nation insofar as its importance on the international forum was concerned:

> The Czechoslovak unity is an idea which us, both Branches of the nation, elevates above the scale of provincialism. Czechs without Slovaks would be a narrowly Central-European nation. Slovaks without Czechs would sink into a tight frame of foreign environment, surrounded on all the sides by their adversaries. As the Czechoslovaks we are a nation of European rank, of European orientation and of European significance..."[95]

On the occasion of having been conferred, on April 21, 1937, with the degree of doctor of law, honoris causa, at the Comenius

---

94 Beneš had on numerous occasions been accused by his critics that in order to get for himself a place of prominence on the international political scene, he had consistently tried to ensure that his country would play a part traditionally enjoyed by a Great Power and which was way above the actual power potential of the Czechoslovak Republic. Other critics pointed out that "...Above all, Dr Beneš is a man who feels that he would have had no chance to rise adequately in the world if the Czechs had not come to the top..." (Addison's dispatch No 175 from Prague, dated August 25, 1936 to Sir Anthony Eden - R 5216/32/12, FO 371/20375).

95 An excerpt from Beneš' speech given at Topolčianky in September 1936, quoted in the Political Revue "Naše Doba", Vol 43, 1936, pp. 605-606, in the commentary "Rozhledy", dealing with the Czechoslovak internal political situation, in an article entitled "Beneš' Tempo".

University at Bratislava, Beneš gave a monumental speech outlining the ideological evolution of Europe since the end of World War I and its contemporary spiritual and material crisis. After having described the enormous progress made by Slovakia since the establishment of Czechoslovakia, he pleaded for "the fullest co-operation between the Czechs and the Slovaks and for their mutual studies of each other's cultures, individualistic trends and personalities". Having warned the young Slovaks against their withdrawing from the political realities and enclosing into themselves, he proclaimed to them: "Be Slovaks but do not forget to be Czechoslovaks, and be Europeans!"[96] In a similar fashion as his great teacher, Beneš had followed throughout his entire political career, both in theory and in practice, the concept of the unity of Czechs and Slovaks and was convinced not only of its correctness but also of its unavoidability and indestructibility.[97]

---

96 Beneš, E., Právna veda a kríza demokracie, The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1041.

97 In his dispatch to Sir Anthony Eden of August 24, 1937 from Prague, Hadow reported that Dr Beneš had delivered a number of speeches to the German and Czech-speaking audiences on his tour of Moravia and Silesia, and had stated, among many other things that "...The co-operation between Czechs and Slovaks had resulted in unity which neither propaganda nor other methods could now shake..." (R 5812/188/12, FO 371/21130).

(iii) The Ruthenia's Question.[98]

> ...I state and repeat that we shall never give up Ruthenia...[99]

Beneš' determination to ensure that Ruthenia would always remain a part of the Czechoslovak Republic was the leit-motif of his conceptual arrangement and comprehension in regard to the role of this easternmost province of his state. Regardless of its rugged territory and relative backwardness of its people and economy caused by centuries of isolation and oppression by Hungary, Ruthenia's geopolitical significance for Czechoslovakia was enormous: it provided the Republic with a common frontier with its only friendly neighbouring state - Rumania, and thus it enabled the three states of the Little Entente to form a territorially contiguous unit. The whole concept of Beneš' foreign policy would have collapsed with the loss of Ruthenia; he stated on numerous occasions that because of Ruthenia, the Czechoslovaks were able to form a united block and to actively and closely co-operate with the Rumanians and the Yugoslavs, and "...by means of this co-operation we (meaning the Czechoslovaks - note by author) are in turn a worthy power factor for France and the

---

98 There is no uniformity in the usage of an English term for the "Podkarpatská Rus" - Some authors prefer using the exact literal translation from the Czech "Subcarpathian Russia", others use consistently the shorter term "Ruthenia" and some employ indiscriminately both of these terms. This author will use the term "Ruthenia" with the exceptions of quotations where the other term had been utilized by the original author.

99 Beneš, E., Discours aux Slovaques, op.cit., p. 65.

whole of Western Europe in regard to the over-all Central European politics. We shall therefore never allow that our territorial connection with Rumania be interrupted..."[100]

Having not the essential elements required for its viability as a Sovereign state, Ruthenia, if separated from Czechoslovakia, would have immediately fell prey to either of the two, to Czechoslovakia hostile states, Hungary or Poland which ever since the end of World War I and the establishment of Czechoslovakia had impatiently waited for an opportunity to establish a common frontier which could only be achieved at the expense of Czechoslovakia. Since there was little likelihood that Ruthenia, outside of the framework of the Republic, would have become a part of friendly Rumania, Beneš was well aware that the loss of Ruthenia would not only deprive his state of its only immediate friendly neighbour and would completely enclose it by actual and potential enemies but would have also meant the instauration of a regime of oppression for the Ruthenian people who then had the unique honour to be the only non-Czechoslovak ethnic group in Czechoslovakia which had been given solemn pledge that they would be granted autonomy as soon as they were ready for taking on themselves this responsibility.[101] This latter aspect played a significant role in

---

100 Ibid., p. 69.

101 In his dispatch No 174 from Prague, dated May 12, 1934, the American Chargé d'Affaires ad interim Benton reported on Beneš' official visit to Sub-Carpathian Russia made a week earlier, where he "received a hearty welcome, and over forty delegations" and on his own subsequent conversation with Dr Beneš who stated that "there were two

Beneš' theory in regard to Ruthenia's and its people's future which he had expounded on occasions of his visits to Ruthenia, of receiving Ruthenian delegations and of giving his exposés before Parliament:

> Ruthenia and its people received through its liberation in 1918 a special new mission. For the first time in its history it forms an independent national, political and administrative unit, and because of this development, it is now experiencing a deep national revolution similar to that which we had experienced after 1848 and the Slovaks from the nineties. It is placed in the great European regeneration which was brought about by the World War and by the great after-war revolution, and it is carried by the same current which liberated and united the Czechoslovaks, the Poles, the Rumanians and the Yugoslavs. It is also called upon by these great events to carry out its own definite national, cultural, political and social revival and liberation...[102]

---

main objects of his trip:

1. To see the development with a view to orienting the government's policy;
2. To assure the people of Sub-Carpathian Russia that the Province belongs to them, that it must remain an inseparable part of the Czechoslovak Republic and that any attempt from without to wrest it away will be repulsed by force.

Benton concluded that "Dr Beneš stated in the most categorical manner that autonomy will be realized in the not far distant future. The delay in granting autonomy was caused by the lack of the Sub-Carpathian Russia's people of the necessary political and administrative experience and could become victims of communism such as shown by certain elements during the early elections," (USDS, RG 59, 860F.00/364).

In his dispatch No 100 from Prague, dated April 19, 1937, the British Minister Newton reported that he was told by Beneš that Sub-Carpathian Russia was about to receive its autonomy. This dispatch received then, at the British Foreign Office, a word of wisdom by Bramwell who in a marginal note besides Sub-Carpathian Russia wrote "his" explanation: "The Czech bit of the Teschen gebiet". (There is just no excuse in the display of such a profound ignorance by the so-called expert at the B.F. Office - note by author).

102 Beneš, E., Řeč o problému podkarpatoruském a jeho vztahu k Československé republice, Užhorod-Praha, 1934, pp. 46-47.

Dr Beneš believed that only in an intimate association with the Czechoslovak Republic was Ruthenia able to achieve its complete individuality; its annexation to Czechoslovakia meant to him that for many decades it was destined to play a role of extensively guaranteeing peace in Central Europe. Located geographically on the borders of the Eastern and Western Worlds, where there was a meeting place of Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Poland, Hungary, the influences of Ukrainan movements and Russia, Ruthenia formed, in Beneš' own words, a bridge between the Easterndom and the Westerndom and would have become a centre of European struggles and conflicts, if it would not have become, within Czechoslovakia, a place of stability and peace.

> ... in no other state would have Ruthenia the same possibilities of its development as among us, in no other constellation would it play such a significant international role, nowhere else would it be able to solve, from such a wide standpoint and horizon, its internal national, cultural and language problems in its own interest... In no other constellation would Ruthenia itself have either calm or peace...[103]

During the entire period of his Presidency before Munich, Beneš' theoretical approach towards Ruthenia underwent no changes of essence - the main problem was the timing of granting of the autonomy to the Ruthenian people.[104] He also put at that time more emphasis on

---

103 Ibid., p. 51.

104 Writing during World War II in England on the problems of the Slavdom, Beneš made the following observation in regard to Ruthenia:

"In regard to Ruthenia it is necessary to emphasize that the procedure adopted by the Czechoslovak Government during the twenty years of freedom, aimed above all at the cultural preparation of the

the importance of Ruthenia's role in the Slavic world. Yet he never wavered in his conviction that Ruthenia "has before itself beautiful future, it has before itself all the possibilities to successfully accomplish its mission and thus carry out great work not only for itself and for the Czechoslovak Republic but also for the development of Central Europe and for common interests of all the Slavic nations".[105]

---

backward Ruthenians for the independent political life, was a correct one. I believe, however, that the development towards the autonomy of Ruthenia could have been swifter. That would have been the correct Slavic and democratic policy of Prague in this question. I myself had emphatically used all my influence to get this done. I admit that I was unable to effect my point of view. Regardless of all its great merits which it truly and forever gained in regard to the development of this country, Prague had not done in this connection everything what it could have, and should have done. - (Beneš, E., Úvahy o Slovanství, London, 1945, p. 166).

105 Beneš, E., Reč o Podkarpatoruskoi probleme, Praha, Orbis, 1934, p. 45.

(iv) The Problem of National Minorities[106]

> ...Constitutional decrees of the Czechoslovak Republic were from the point of view of our national minorities very fair, even for a strict judge they were satisfactory. The Constitution was very democratic, one of the most democratic in Europe, electoral decrees, enforcing consistently and everywhere proportionate representation, were flawless, Parliamentary decrees and their effectuation had no basic flaw. The language law and the language practice were on the whole very liberal... Cultural and educational questions were being solved truly democratically... In no other state in Europe - as it was during World War II many times being objectively stated - had minorities been treated in the same fashion as in Czechoslovakia. In any case in comparison with that to what we were obliged by the Minority Agreement, signed at the Peace Conference, our Republic provided our minorities with more than it was internationally obliged...[107]

Of all the newly emerged states in Central and Eastern Europe after World War I which owed mainly their establishment to the implementation of the Wilsonian new international order based on the principle of national self-determination, Czechoslovakia contained within its borders, besides Hungarian and Polish minorities, the most powerful German minorities.[108] Its power did not derive only from the multitude of its

---

106 As obvious from the two previous Sections of this Chapter, Slovaks and Ruthenians held a special place in Beneš' theory of Czechoslovak internal politics and were not considered by him to form a part of the so-called national minorities question; the national minorities concerned above all, the German minority, and to a much lesser degree the Hungarian and the Polish minorities.

107 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, op.cit., pp. 7-8.

108 According to the census of February 15, 1921, Germans in Czechoslovakia numbered 3,123,634 persons (23.36% of the population); according to the census of December 1, 1930, out of the total of 14,729,536 inhabitants of the Czechoslovak Republic, Germans numbered 3,231,688, (22.32%), Hungarians 691,923 and Poles 81,737. (Luža, R., The Transfer of the Sudeten

members but also from the fact that the Czechoslovak Germans formed a highly developed, vigorous, competent, wealthy and self-righteous group, and were endowed with a strong sense of nationalistic feeling, embittered by the German defeat.[109] This reality, coupled with the understanding that the geographical adjacency to a traditionally and potentially hostile Great Power - Germany - which after recovery from its defeat in World War I would present the most serious threat to the existence of their new state,[110] made it both theoretically and practically imperative for Masaryk and Beneš to ensure that by receiving justice and by being equal in all the

---

Germans, op.cit., Introduction - Economic and Social Foundations of the German-Czech Problem; pp. 1-20; this part also contains a vast variety of other information and statistical data relevant to the Czechoslovak Germans). There were 513,000 Germans in Yugoslavia in 1921, 700,000 in Rumania in 1918 and 551,000 in Hungary in 1920 (Krofta, K., Les nouveaux états dans l'europe centrale, op.cit., pp. 112-113, 117).

109 For an excellent account of the historical development of the Czechoslovak Germans (the term of "Czechoslovak Germans" fell shortly after the establishment of the Republic into desuetude and was replaced by the term "Sudeten Germans", named after the northern border region of Bohemia and Moravia situated between the Labe and the Odra rivers) see Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 23-46.

110 Masaryk and Beneš were well aware of the fact that the German "Drang nach Osten" policy was not destroyed by the German defeat in World War I and was bound sooner or later to re-appear; Czechoslovakia, due to its geographical location was inevitably bound to be one of its first, if not its very first target. This German policy subsequently appeared in its most extreme and violent form in Nazism responsible for World War II and confirmed the correctness of Masaryk's and Beneš' policies and anxieties expressed already in 1918; it was clearly described more than two decades later, insofar as it affected the Czech Historic Provinces, by the then German State Secretary in control of police and the SS in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, Karl Hermann Frank in his address at the Eastern Institute at Krakow given on June 24, 1941:

> Bohemia and Moravia and the peoples settled in this area lie and have always lain in Germany's political and national Lebensraum. The area of these countries forbids them to have political independence,

aspects of their rights as citizens with the Czechoslovak, minorities in general, and the German minority in particular, would not form a dissatisfied fifth column attempting to undermine Czechoslovakia's strength from within and actively to be working towards its destruction. Thus Masaryk stated in a dispatch from the United States to Beneš in France as early as October 1918 that the Czechs should negotiate with the Germans over their acceptance of a Czechoslovakia which would become "a modern progressive and democratic state." [111] Masaryk's and Beneš' concept was

---

at least as a state, or a political form with an anti-German conception. The inability of the Czechs to organize themselves permanently is caused by the features of the area which they inhabit. Any German Reich must have the possibility of making political decisions regarding this area and its inhabitants; as far as the security of the German Lebensraum to the east and possibly the southeast is concerned this is simply a fundamental law.

These so-called "historic deductions" that Bohemia and Moravia are and have always been in the sphere of Germany's interests then served Frank as a basis of his violent attack on Presidents Masaryk and Beneš. According to him, they illuminate correctly the lunacy of Masaryk's and Beneš' policy which led to the establishment of the Czechoslovak Republik... At the cradle of the new state stood lie, treason and megalomania. A philosopher, craving for glory, deceived by lying during the World War the then statesman abroad, and an ambitious political adventurer put together a state by means of skillful treaties with the Allied governments...
(Frank, K.H., Čechy a Morava v Říši, Praha, 1942, pp. 20-27).

111 Beneš, V., The Vanguard of the "Drang nach Osten", Chicago, 1943, p. 57.

to implement a policy by means of which the Czechoslovak Germans would be won over to cooperation, and to provide for an effective machinery which could deal with, and dispose of, all sources of friction, misunderstandings and disagreement.

The German minority, however, had demonstrated its utmost determination from the earliest stages of the Czechoslovak Republic, either to prevent the establishment of any new independent state in which the Germans would be unable to maintain their traditionally privileged and dominating position or to have the districts in which they formed a majority, annexed to Germany and Austria; having been unable to accomplish either of these two tasks, it adopted a policy of a hostile and negative attitude towards its new state.[112] In his first Message to the National

---

112 The Czechoslovak Germans were, however, not satisfied with passively awaiting the outcome of the events in the fateful fall of 1918. The right of self-determination which until then they had consistently denied to all Slav nationalities became the basis of their policy. On October 21, 1918 the German members of Parliament of former Austria convened their national committee in Vienna. They demanded the right of self-determination for the Germans and worked out a scheme by which the districts in which the German-speaking population formed a majority would be annexed by Austria and Germany. (For a more detailed treatment of these developments see Opočenský, J., The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Rise of the Czechoslovak State, Praha, 1928, pp. 174-179. He made an interesting and fitting observation that "the German pretensions could not have been greater even in the case of a German victory" - p. 181) On October 22, 1918, three radical German deputies, two of them from Bohemia, came to the headquarters of the German Army in Berlin and negotiated for the occupation of the Bohemian frontier regions by the German Army. (Opočenský, J., op.cit., pp. 175-176). On October 29, 1918 the province of German Bohemia was declared, with its capital at Liberec. The next day the new province of Sudetenland was formed, and later, the districts of the Bohemian Forest and of southern Moravia joined Austria which demanded, in addition, other German districts. All these districts were geographically separate units some of which were not even territorially linked with the state to which they were

Assembly at Prague of December 22, 1918, President Masaryk explained his stand in regard to the Czechoslovak Germans which was identical to that taken by Beneš. Having noted that "our Germans had originally come into the country as emigrants and colonists" who, in contradistinction from all other emigrants and colonists to other states, did not become bona fide citizens of their new country but stubbornly preserved their own customs in a completely foreign and different milieu, he stated that their presence was from the beginnings a source of economic, social, politico-dynastic, religious and nationalistic conflicts the force of which kept on growing.[113] They became the most outspoken proponents of

---

supposed to be annexed. The eventual occupation of the German areas was carried out in November - December, 1918 by Czechoslovak troops almost without bloodshed since the Germans offered no organized armed resistance and restricted themselves to verbal protests. The juridical basis for the occupation was the Armistice agreement and the promises made by the French, English and Italian Governments to uphold the frontiers of the Historic Provinces.

113 This Masaryk's message was quoted, with comments and explanations, in Smutný, J., Němci v Československu a jich odsun z Republiky, London, 1956, pp. 10-14. Because it formed the basic concept of Dr Beneš' theoretical approach towards the German minority and underlined Palacký's role in the developments of 1848, a brief summary is essential towards understanding of Dr Beneš' policy towards the Sudeten Germans during his Presidency until the Munich Conference: The main reason why Masaryk specifically stated that the origin of the German minority in Czechoslovakia was from "emigrants and colonists" was to emphasize that the Germans in the Czech Provinces never formed a nationalizing force and permanently remained, in their relations with the Czech state and with the Czech nation, in their mentality and attitude German emigrants and colonists. As long as the Czech Kingdom formed a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in which the Germans were the ruling class, they felt at home since they had looked upon the Habsburg Empire as part of their German fatherland. But as soon as the Czech state succeeded in regaining its independence, it immediately became obvious that the majority of the Germans therein held on the mentality of those emigrants and colonists who never ceased to consider themselves to be members of the nation from which they had come and who never assimilated with the nation of the country into which they came and where they were living. In the Habsburg Empire Germans from the Czech Provinces belonged to the most radical supporters of pan-Germanism. The Revolutionary

self-determination only after Germany had lost the war and were making territorial demands against the Czech state of the equal magnitude as if

---

Parliament which convened in Frankfurt in 1848 was supposed to unite into one Great Germany all the lands between the Baltic and Adriatic Seas inhabited by Germans. The Czech and Austrian Germans were in favour of participation in this Parliament and of accepting the invitation extended from Frankfurt also to Prague because historically the Kingdom of Bohemia used to be one of the most important parts of the Holy Roman Empire and in 1848 the Czech Historic Provinces formed one of the main goals of these pan-German aspirations. Palacký, however, declined in the name of the Czech nation, this invitation and rejected the German contention that the Czech Historic Provinces belonged always to Germany. Having stated that relations between Germany and the Czech state were formed by the personalities of rulers and did not constitute relations between the two nations, Palacký supported the idea of Austrian monarchy in which he then saw the only barrier against the pan-German aspirations. The Austrian government did not grasp the meaning and extent of Palacký's concept - it did not want to give up the role which it had played until then in Germany and wanted, with the help of the South-German Catholic states, to gain leadership in the newly forming Great Germany and to effectively challenge the growing strength of Prussia. To reach this objective, the Austrian government could not have used the help of the Slavic nations - its interests led Austria along with the Germans and against the Slavs.

The attempts to preserve the Habsburg monarchy, on the condition of its internal reconstruction into a federation of autonomous historic units, were more or less common to all Czech politicians of the second half of the nineteenth century. Like Palacký, they did not consider the independent Czech state to be desirable in the epoch when Europe was being governed by large state entities which threatened the existence of small nations. Austria, in which the Slavic nations formed a majority, was being considered by them to be a lesser evil than pan-Germanism.

Palacký was forced, however, to amend his concept of the necessity of Austria for the Czech nation. The expansionist tendencies of Austrian pan-Germanism were bound to lead the national conflicts which grew in their intensity with the growth of national consciousness and economic power of the nations held by the Germans in submission. Pertinacious struggles, fought for every national concession in Vienna, Prague and Brno were creating an ever-increasing gulf between the Czech nation and the Austrian monarchy and implacable animosity between the Czechs and the Germans living in the Czech Historic Provinces. The invincible faith in its historical state rights led the Czech nation towards the struggle for its state independence. It was for these reasons that when World War I began, the Czech nation was already prepared for this fight. Germans saw in World War I an opportunity to arrest the growth of the strength of the Slavic nations; the latter saw in this war a struggle of the oppressed nations in the Austro-Hungarian

they had won the war. Masaryk then emphatically proclaimed that in the same fashion as the United States, Czechoslovakia would never accept any secession of her border districts in the Czech Historic Provinces. He assured then the Germans that they would be free to enjoy complete national rights and civil equality.

Beneš personally had his first political encounter with the German minority at the most important international forum in the immediate post World War I period where the drama of Europe, receiving its new shape, was taking place - at the Paris Peace Conference. Having been by far the most prolific, energetic and successful Czechoslovak representative, it was his task to counter the claims and proposals of the Czech Germans submitted thereto; he had himself submitted to the Conference eleven memoranda and proposals dealing with Czech internal affairs and territorial claims on the basis of the preservation of the historic frontiers.[114] The

---

Empire against the German domination. Both the Germans and the Slavs in Austria had therefore welcome that war which they considered an instrument for the realization of their aspirations which were, of course, mutually exclusive.

114 Beneš thus earned wrath of the German minority and became during the entire period of the First Republic their main target of many accusations, such as, e.g., that "he used at the Peace Conference numerous falsified maps and population statistics" (Kuhn, H., op.cit., pp. 96-97). In 1937, Hermann Raschhofer published in Berlin these memoranda (Die tschechoslowakischen Denkschriften für die Friedenskonferenz von Paris 1919/1920) where he pointed out that Beneš had used false data. Shortly afterwards Beneš made his reply in the Prager Presse in a series of articles which were reprinted as a book in the same year (Germany and Czechoslovakia, II. Czechoslovakia at the Peace Conference and the Present German- Czechoslovak Discussion). He defended himself against the campaign of reproach that he used falsified statistics and that he did not keep his promise contained in his note of May 20, 1919 to the Peace Conference concerning the regime in regard of national minorities in Czechoslovakia wherein he,

same atmosphere of freedom and social and national justice based on the Wilsonian principles of self-determination prevailing in the Allied countries during the latter stages of the War which was mainly responsible for the success of Masaryk's, Štefánik's and Beneš' efforts towards the establishment of the Czechoslovak state, did also permeate the Paris Peace Conference and within its environment both politicians and experts searched for the best solutions before arriving at concrete decisions.[115]

---

inter alia, had stated: "It is the intention of the Czechoslovak Government to create a state organization in which, as the basis of national rights, will be accepted the concepts used in the Constitution of the Swiss Republic, that is to make from the Czechoslovak Republic a sort of Switzerland, taking, of course, into consideration, the special condition existing in Bohemia". (Smutný, J., op.cit., p. 26). This whole question of Beneš' relevant actions has been dealt with, and fairly objectively explained in the following works: 1. Smutný, J., op.cit., pp. 16-29; 2. Lisický, K., op.cit., Vol. II, pp. 1-15; 3. Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 31-38; 4. Perman, D., op.cit., pp. 125-134; 5. Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, pp. 503-504; 6. Vochoč, V., "Dr Beneš a mírová konference pařížská" in Werstadt, J., ed., op.cit., p. 101; 7. Opočenský, J., op.cit., pp. 174-179; 8. Wandycz, P., France and Her Eastern Allies, 1919-1925, pp. 49-74; 9. Beneš, E., Germany and Czechoslovakia, Vol. II, pp. 24-26.

115 Beneš dealt with the subjects of the establishment of the Czechoslovak frontiers and the Czechoslovak Germans on numerous occasions; in his very first report before the Czechoslovak Parliament made after his return from Paris on September 30, 1919 he gave these two subjects a very detailed treatment (See Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 16-23). Here he had stated that he was quite prepared to exchange the promontories of Aš, Šluknov and Frýdlant for Kladsko and Upper Silesia but the Council of Four decided to preserve the historical boundaries for the simple reasons of expediency. He also stated that "our mixed Czech-German territory was not even once for us in danger. We had a guarantee from the French during the War already that they would be opposed any attempt to detach the mixed territory from the Czech lands..." Yet Dr Beneš also explained that at the Peace Conference "before a decision was arrived at on any territorial or minority question, there was a whole flood of discussion, criticism, and oral and written elucidations in commissions and in personal interviews..." (Germany and Czechoslovakia, Vol II, p. 26).

Having conducted thorough studies of submitted memoranda and proposals coupled with visit of territories in question and inspection of the situation on the spot, it was agreed that without retaining its historic frontier in its Czech part, Czechoslovakia would have not had the necessary viability.[116]

---

116 The Conference agreed that without retaining its historic frontiers, the new Czechoslovak Republic could not exist as an independent state. Furthermore, the separation of the predominantly German-speaking areas from Czechoslovakia and their incorporation into Austria was regarded as an impossible task; it was felt that in the end these regions would be incorporated into Germany and this was something that was to the victorious Allies unthinkable - it would have meant that the defeated state, Germany, would have gained new territories. (Germany and Czechoslovakia, Vol II, p. 69). The Czechoslovak Germans have, therefore, remained in the new Republic.

Another important point which Beneš did not fail to point out was that the Paris Peace Conference "drew frontiers for the young Republic which - at least as far as Germany, its largest neighbour, was concerned - were the thousand-year old frontiers between the old kingdom of Bohemia and Germany. The German peace delegation in Versailles, which presented a written protest against all the other frontiers imposed upon Germany by the victorious Allies, did not protest against the frontiers with Czechoslovakia and Austria, and saw in them no wrong, for they changed nothing in a state of affairs which had lasted from the beginnings of the history of these two countries in the Middle Ages..." (Beneš, E., Czechoslovakia's Struggle for Freedom, Halifax, N.S., Reprint from The Dalhousie Review, October 1941, p. 4). Beneš was not quite correct in stating that the frontiers of Czechoslovakia "were the thousand-year old frontiers between the old kingdom of Bohemia and Germany" since vast regions of Silesia, Lusatia and the entire territory of Kladsko which were for centuries parts of the Kingdom of Bohemia and which were invaded and occupied in comparatively recent times by German imperialism remained after World War I in Germany.

Looking on the possibility of creating, out of the eight geographically separated and isolated German-speaking regions, a state, the leading German Social Democrat, Josef Seliger, who became vice-governor of the Province of German Bohemia in 1918, was compelled to admit in a Viennese review in October 1918:

> The eight territorial fragments in which Germans are settled are separated from each other by broad belts of territories in which the Czech tongue is spoken, and they therefore cannot form a State or even a united administrative area, for such a thing must be, above all, an economic entity... The formation of such a state would be without parallel in the world, and, as a political state, it would be completely nonsensical. (Beneš, V., op.cit., p. 76).

The concept of the Czechoslovak Republic being a national state comprising the Czechoslovak nation and national minorities which was in effect during the entire era of the First Republic received its blessings at the Paris Peace Conference after Beneš, acting on behalf of the Czechoslovak delegation, put forward its proposals in regard to minorities which "were accepted with gratitude by the Commission on Minorities; they were considered to be extremely liberal having made it impossible to demand more".[117] With the exception of his brief tenure of the Prime Ministry when he presided, with President Masaryk, over the Czechoslovak internal as well as external affairs, Beneš' main involvement in the minorities problems of his country during his Foreign Ministry had taken place in Geneva in the League of Nations where the German minority sporadically lodged complaints against the Czechoslovak Government. In this regard Beneš had always taken immediate steps to ascertain that the concept of justice and rights for minorities be observed by his country in accordance with all of its relevant international obligations and undertakings.[118]

---

117 This concept was dealt with by Beneš in his first speech after his return, from the four years of exile, before the Revolutionary National Assembly in Prague. Having dealt to some length with the question of minorities, he emphasized the fact that great faith was placed into Czechoslovakia's treatment of its minorities and expressed his conviction that this faith would never be violated. (Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 22).

118 Beneš explained in his declaration at the Sixth Committee of the League of Nations in Geneva in 1934 that when a complaint of this nature was lodged with the League, "the policy of the Czechoslovak Government has proceeded on the following lines: (a) When a petition was well founded, we raised no question of privilege... The Government simply put matters in order... (b) When the petition was not justified... we gave a definite, clear reply" (Robinson, J., et al., Were the Minorities Treaties a Failure? New York, 1943, p. 183).

He was striving, however, at something far more important for the future of his country - at sincere friendship, mutual respect and acceptance between the Czechoslovaks and all the other national minorities in general and the German one in particular.[119] This was an imperative and sound concept to follow if his main, and in the end, the sole goal of preserving his new state in its entirety, were successfully maintained; it was in the

---

119 This point was emphasized not only by Beneš himself, but in a much greater detail and with abundant supporting documentation and statistical data by Elizabeth Wiskemann, J.W. Wheeler-Bennett and Radomír Luža whose works have already been mentioned; the most comprehensive is Johann Wolfgang Bruegel's book Tschechen und Deutsche: 1918-1938 (Munich, 1967) which is de facto a tribute to pre-Munich Czechoslovakia by a Sudeten German now living in England. Dr Bruegel, born in Moravia, was during the first Republic one of the Sudeten German Social Democratic leaders and activists. He maintains that, with the possible exception of the German minorities in Latvia and Estonia, no German minority in any European state in the interwar period was treated more fairly than the Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia and that nothing in the Czech-German relations warranted the "suicidal" policy of Henlein and his Sudeten Deutsche Party. He is convinced, moreover, that if Hitler had not interfered in Czechoslovakia, the Sudeten Germans, in agreement with Beneš' concept of gradually establishing sincere Czech-German co-operation, would have eventually reconciled themselves to the Czechoslovak state and would have entered into collaboration with the Czechs, an arrangement that would have been fruitful and beneficial for both. This book got an excellent review in the Neue Zürcher Zeitung of May 27, 1967 by Elizabeth Wiskemann who herself is an expert in the field of Czech-German relations and the author of several monographs, the most relevant of which is her Czechs and Germans - A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia, (London, 1938). In her review of Bruegel's book E. Wiskemann underlines another event which Bruegel brought for the first time to light and which confirms his thesis that there was genuine friendship between Beneš and the Germans. In 1926 Dr Hodža, who was "above all a capable opportunist" attempted to stage a plot by which would be President Masaryk and Foreign Minister Beneš removed from their offices and replaced by Prime Minister Švehla and himself. Hodža evidently hoped to receive help from Berlin; State Secretary Schubert had, however, written to the then German Minister at Prague Koch that the Germans had to avoid everything "what could create the impression that we wanted to conspire against our Friend Beneš". (For further details about this letter see the next Note No 120). Even the German Minister at Prague during the pre-Munich period Eisenlohr told British Minister at Prague Bentinck on January 22, 1937 that

Czechoslovakia's vital self-interest to immediately take all the necessary steps to remedy justifiable grievances of its minorities. The accusations levied at Beneš not only during the First Republic but even at the present time that he always intensively hated Germans and did so as a matter of principle do not withstand any serious examination; certainly this was untrue before he and his country had to undergo, at the hands of the Germans, their crucifixion in the period before, during and after Munich, as well as during the entire period of World War II.[120]

"unfortunately history might not give Dr Beneš the time he needed for settling the minority question". (BFO R 689/188/12, FO 371/21127, Bentinck's dispatch No 18 to Sir Anthony Eden dated January 25, 1937).

120 Of the numerous discourses and controversies on this subject, one of the most interesting and revealing took place comparatively recently between two Sudeten Germans when Dr Rudolf Urban, Director of the Johann Gottfried Herder Institute in Marburg ob der Lahn wrote an article dealing with the concept of the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia. He therein accused Beneš of having always been "hostile towards Germans as a matter of principle". (The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 6, 1965, p. 12).

In answer to Dr Urban, Dr J.W. Bruegel (see the previous note No 119) wrote an article entitled "Beneš was not hostile towards Germans" wherein he explained that "the legend about 'Beneš having been hostile towards Germans as a matter of principle' was an invention of the German National Socialists which had not even the least support in the facts as they existed until 1938..." To support this thesis, Dr Bruegel then quotes from a letter written by State Secretary of the German Foreign Ministry von Schubert to German Minister in Prague, Dr Koch on August 19, 1926 where the former spoke of "our friend Beneš"; Dr Bruegel also noted that the same line was written by Wenzel Jaksch in May, 1944 on the occasion of the sixtieth birthday of Beneš (this was already at the time when the differences in regard to post-war Czechoslovakia between Jaksch who was the leader of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party living in the exile in England, and Beneš became irreconcilable), and even by the German National Socialists themselves in their confidential memoranda. Dr Bruegel concluded by an emphatic statement: "...Regardless of what Beneš might have said and done during and after the World War II, efforts to blacken him as having been 'hostile towards Germans as a matter of principle' are no more than attempts to cleanse Hitler". (The Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, November 27, 1965, p. 12).

To arrive at, and practice a concept of hate against anyone as a matter of principle would have been completely alien to Beneš' guiding personal principles which did not make allowances for accommodating any emotions in arriving at, and effecting his policies. As a strictly-trained and self-disciplined sociologist-politician he accepted Czechoslovak Germans as a reality, independent of some wishful thinking or emotional considerations, as politico-social factors which had to be dealt with in an objective and just manner not only for their own benefit but also, and above all, for the benefit of the Czechoslovak State. The former were, furthermore, a very significant part of the latter, and to follow, in accordance with Dr Urban's allegations a policy of hostility towards the Czechoslovak Germans as a matter of principle would have never found place in a strictly rational mind of Beneš whose principal aim of Czechoslovakia's strength, viability and preservation implied, ipso facto, the strength, viability and happiness of all of its components. He was willing to achieve an equitable solution of the Czechoslovak Germans' demands, and had no desire or preconception to dominate them since "they had become part of his state mainly because of historical, geographical, economic and political circumstances".[121] The paradox was that the very existence and independence of Czechoslovakia involved the presence of such a large German minority within its frontiers. Yet during the pre-1938 period Beneš remained convinced that

---

121 Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Woodward E.L. and Butler R., eds., Third Series, Vol. I, p. 188. (Hereafter cited as DBFP).

it would ultimately be the Republic's democratic regime which would bring about a permanent solution to the problems of not only the German but also of the Hungarian and Polish minorities.

Hitler's rise to power and the subsequent rapid transformation of Nazi Germany into an explosively aggressive totalitarian state, determined to use the German minority in Czechoslovakia as an instrument for the destruction and subjugation of the Republic by Germany, were inevitably bound to make an impression upon the Sudeten Germans and bring forward some of its most radical elements which crystallized around Henlein and his Sudeten Deutsche Party (SDP).[122] While the SDP, having already then been financed by Berlin, had ostensibly succeeded in achieving an impressive showing in the May 1935 elections by electing 44 deputies (all other German parties combined elected only 22 deputies),[123] Beneš, after having subsequently analyzed the SDP, wrote that the party was "such a conglomeration that it will soon fall apart. Finally, there will remain a solid Henlein block of 25 deputies which will correspond to the real situation".[124] This analysis would certainly have proved correct had not Henlein and his supporters kept on receiving an ever-increasing support by Berlin,[125] and

---

122 History of the Sudeten Germans during the 1933-38 period in general, and of the Henlein's Party in particular, had become a subject of numerous studies - for a comprehensive list see Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 327-356.

123 Táborský, E., Czechoslovak Democracy at Work, London, 1945, p. 85.

124 Berber, F., Europaeische Politik 1933-1938 im Spiegel der Prager Akten, Essen, 1942, p. 49.

125 In an address given at Vienna on March 4, 1941 which appeared

if they had not succeeded, to a considerable extent, by skillfully exploiting complex alleged and real political and economic grievances fabricated especially for England to make from the question of German minority in Czechoslovakia, against all Beneš' endeavours to prevent this to happen, an international issue.[126]

---

two days later in the official Prague German newspaper Der Neue Tag, Henlein openly admitted his own and his Party's aims from the very beginnings were the annexation of the borderlands of the Czech Historic Provinces by Germany and the destruction of Czechoslovakia. (For excerpts from this address see The Central European Observer, London, May 2, 1941; Urban, V., Hitler's Spearhead, London, 1945, pp. 16-17; Beneš, V., op.cit., pp. 171-172). Beneš explained that events of 1938 and subsequent years clearly demonstrated that any idea of co-operation with Henlein's Nazi party was fundamentally erroneous. (See Klepetář, H., Seit 1918, Moravská Ostrava, 1937, p. 397; Král, V., Politické strany a Mnichov, pp. 20-21). Beneš was on solid ground in this regard because he was in April, 1935, in favour of the dissolution of the Henlein's Party but President Masaryk who regarded Henlein as merely an honest German schoolmaster, decided to give his Party an opportunity to work within the Parliament. This is one of the rarest examples where Beneš differed with President Masaryk in a fundamental concept - while the latter had his way and his decision was effected, it was the former who was correct. Beneš' thinking on the subject underwent, however, a complete change by 1935. On November 26, 1933, Beneš in an interview with the American Minister at Prague, while having admitted that there was a certain amount of Nazi sentiment among the Germans in Czechoslovakia, he did not feel that there was any danger of the German element attempting to leave the Czechoslovak Republic for incorporation in Germany". (RG 59, USDS, 860F.00/354). Beneš passed a very harsh judgement on Henlein and his above noted address in which "Henlein himself confirmed that all that what was being conducted in this regard (meaning co-operation with Czech political parties under Parliamentary rules - note by the author) was a dirty, vulgar and treacherous fraud. All what he undertook from the first moment of his appearance in politics with all those who with him ever walked, could shortly be summarized in these several words: restricted, uncultured, baseness, vulgar, uncivilized treason. A typical German Nazi from Bohemia". (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, pp. 24-25).

126 The all-important aspect of Beneš' relations with England which were governed during his Presidency in the pre-Munich period by the issue of the German minority in Czechoslovakia are dealt with in Section (b) Problems of the Czechoslovak External Politics, Sub-section (II) Foreign Relations.

Beneš stated that as a part of the third point of his program to strengthen the Republic after his election to the Presidency was to work for a gradual solution of the problem of German minority,[127] applying towards this goal those powers of accommodation which had made him the most conspicuously successful Foreign Minister in the post World War I era. He understood that the German minority issue was not only a political but also a psychological problem which could only be dealt with and settled by degrees.[128]

After the passage of the State Defence Law,[129] Beneš' concept in regard to national minorities called for immediate measures to be taken to ensure that all the members of these minorities, and especially the Germans who had proclaimed their loyalty to the Republic, had equal rights with the Czechoslovaks even in minor points of administrative nature. To effect this concept had become in 1936 a difficult and frustrating task. Nazi Germany's incessant vicious propaganda against Czechoslovakia and Henlein's ever-increasing demands and hostility towards Prague made in accordance with orders from Berlin, provoked among the vast majority of the Czechs a reaction of hostility and distrust towards the Sudeten Germans. Beneš argued that the Republic, having been strengthened by its State Defence Law,

---

127 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, pp. 7-9.

128 Documents on German Foreign Policy, Series D., Vol II: Germany and Czechoslovakia 1937-38, Washington, 1950, p. 122. (Hereafter listed as DGFP).

129 This subject is dealt with in the next sub-section (v) Role of the Armed Forces, Note 149.

had reached the position where it could well afford such step.

Travelling first in June, 1936 to the German-speaking districts of Moravia, he visited two months later NorthernBohemia in order to combat Henlein's influence on the Czechoslovak Germans, to gain among them more confidence and to explain them his concepts in regard to the Czech-German relations, Beneš made on August 19, 1936 three extremely important speeches. At Liberec he outlined the essence of his political creed and his concept of the respective roles of the Czechs and the Germans in the life of the Republic, he defined the prerequisites for their mutual understanding:

> My relation to the Germans of our State is a human one; they are my compatriots, my fellow-workers, suffering with me in the days of need, and rejoicing with me in the days of prosperity. I have confidence in the Germans and Czechs... I am convinced that... the Czechs and Germans will in the fairly near future come to a definitive political understanding in the State. I am in favour of the Germans in our Republic receiving all that they require for their cultural and economic prosperity...
>
> ...The question of our national policy and also of our Germans has recently become a topic of interest both inside and outside our country... the reasons for this are to be sought in the chaotic conditions prevailing in the international sphere, in the high tension that pervades national sentiment in Germany, and in a certain radicalization of the racial minorities not merely with us but in all countries...
>
> According to universally recognized international law, nationality questions are an internal concern for all countries without exception. Czechoslovakia adheres to this principle unconditionally and will continue to do so... No European state has any right to intermeddle in these questions and Czechoslovakia, as a sovereign state fully conscious of its dignity and rights, will in no circumstances suffer such intervention. The sole external influence which our state allows in these matters is the supervision exercised by the League of Nations... We permit no other pressure, no other intervention in either the juridical or political sphere and so cannot discuss our nationality questions with anybody else...[130]

---

130 Beneš, E., Probleme der Tschechoslovakischen Republik, Kundgebungen des Praesidenten der Republik in Nordböhmen, Prague, 1937, pp. 13-17.

He then asked the German-speaking citizens to follow in the footsteps of those great Germans who were admired by the Czechs as well, such as Herder, Lessing, Goethe and Schiller, and to disregard those temporary ideologies which separate peoples instead of drawing them together and which soon and inevitably would be ousted by the genuine ideals of humanity and a sensible Europeanism. After rejecting fascist, totalitarian and communist principles as being unable to provide any solution to the problem of the Czech-German co-existence and co-operation, which Czechoslovakia would solve in its own way and by employing its own methods which he believed would be successful because its people have enough necessary energy and good will, he stated that since Czechoslovakia has remained and would always remain a democracy, its Constitution provided a common meeting ground for all its inhabitants:

> Our Constitution is of such a liberal character that it suffices to meet all these problems. Our political philosophy and morality take the form of democracy - democracy that provides us with a solution of all our problems since it postulates in all political negotiations a respect for the human personality and assures complete civil equality, irrespective of differences of class, nationality or religion.[131]

---

131 Ibid., pp. 30-31. Beneš' Liberec speech was dealt with in detail and with comments by the American Chargé d'Affaires J. Webb Benton in his Dispatch No 535 from Prague, dated August 22, 1936. He placed the main emphasis on Beneš' statement that nationality questions were in all countries matters of internal policy and that Czechoslovakia insisted absolutely on this principle and no country in Europe had the right to interfere in this respect. (USDS, 860F.00/421).

In his other two speeches given the same day in Železný Brod and Jablonec, Beneš explained to his German-speaking audience the main aspects of the Czechoslovak foreign policy and stated that "the problem of our relations with Germany is for us the most important problem..."[132] Beneš was amply justified to make this statement in the light of Germany's support and guidance of the SDP leaders on the one hand, and its skillfully conducted violently anti-Czechoslovak propaganda coupled with threats of a war in the Western democracies where it was succeeding in creating

---

132 Ibid., p. 41.
In his dispatch No 175 to Sir Anthony Eden, of August 25, 1936, British Minister at Prague, Addison made a violent attack on Beneš accusing him, inter alia, of making statements, promises and "declarations of his good intentions at Geneva and elsewhere, which he knew that he had not the faintest intention of even attempting to put into execution... He is ruthless in his internal policy and suppresses political opponents... while so far as the minorities are concerned, he is only restrained from more vigorous action by motives of expediency. It is with these considerations in mind that his acts should be judged and, in the present instance, his recent visit to the German area, which I venture to state was only meant as political window-dressing... I do not attribute undue importance to the visit of Beneš to German area... His speeches mean less than nothing and will, in any case, not be followed by the Adoption of any adequate measures..." (R 5216/32/12, FO 371/20375).
On the same day Addison transmitted the copies of Beneš' speeches, and Cheetham of the Foreign Office, under the influence of the above Addison's dispatch to which he specially draws attention, makes therein the following remark: "Very uninteresting and platitudinous speeches. The passages which make out that the Government really have the interests of the German districts at heart are particularly unconvincing..." (R 5219/32/12, FO 371/20375).
It is interesting to note that the German Minister Eisenlohr's dispatch dealing, inter alia, also with Beneš' speeches in Northern Bohemia was far less hostile and incomparably more objective than that of the Minister of a "friendly country". (See dispatch A.III.I. Allg. from Eisenlohr, October 17, 1936, POL IV 3783, GFM, CGD, Washington, Serial No 1941 H, Roll 1077, Negative Frame numbers 434773-86, National Archives, Washington, D.C.)

demoralization and extreme nervousness among the British, on whom, as Beneš clearly foresaw, the preservation of his country depended on the other han without England, France would not go to war against Germany to help him, and without France, there would also be no Russian help.

Beneš' concept for achieving the permanent solution of the minority problem in Czechoslovakia called for the implementation of the following three principles by means of which the Republic "would have automatically and gradually been changed into a state of truly equal, possessing equal rights and jointly governing and state-administering nationalities:

> (a) Implementation of more liberal administration or of moderate amendments in some administrative laws or in measures from the point of view of the minorities (e.g. a better arrangement of the Language Law, a law against forcible denationalization...);
> (b) Consistent implementation in the state administration of proportionality in the nomination of public servants and in the distribution of the state budget;
> (c) Improvement in implementation of the principle of autonomy, which was otherwise in principle legalized in our Constitution in that there would be carried out in a greater measure the regional administration".[133]

While he had considered the first and the third above principles to be of non-controversial nature and their implementation simple and comparatively easy, it was the second one which he had regarded as having been extremely difficult to translate into reality - its realization could only be based on a genuine feeling of mutual trust between the Czechs and the Germans. This trust had not existed, however, at that time, and Beneš understood that it would require some time before it would appear, strengthen

---

133 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, pp. 8-9.

and form on both sides a solid and reliable political factor. He was well aware that on occasions the Czech-German relations were aggravated by the Czech Administration's 'policy of nationality's prestige and by authoritarian, politically non-psychological behaviour of Czech Public Service towards the German population." This was, however, never a fundamental problem..." it was, above all, the question of proper education of our bureaucracy and of greater courage and honesty of political parties. In course of time these phenomena could have been fully removed".[134]

---

134 Ibid., p. 9. - There are numerous examples when Beneš was giving illustrations of administrative ineptness of the Czech bureaucracy towards the Germans. One of the best examples was provided by the American Minister at Prague, Wright, in his confidential Dispatch No 471 of June 20, 1936 which was devoted wholly to his conversation with President Beneš who had just returned from a trip to the German-speaking districts of Moravia. In the course of the discussion, Wright mentioned that on several occasions he was informed that in some German-speaking districts local authorities of Czech nationality abused their positions and were a source of irritation to the local population and brought up a case of a Czech official in Northern Bohemia who insisted upon the examination of the luggage of an American diplomatic officer. Beneš said that he could give Wright an even better example of what he had termed stupidity on the part of local officials: in a purely German-speaking village a notice of the Ministry of Finance with regard to local taxation was posted in Czech. Since nobody understood it, nobody took any action and it took some time before this matter came to the President's attention - from then on all notices were posted also in German. Beneš stated that he wanted to solve all these problems, that this was the purpose of his trips and of his frank speeches, and that an article in The Moravia of June 18, 1936 - the journal which was known to be severely critical of the Government - had paid a genuine tribute to his efforts and intentions along this line. (USDS, 860F.001/73).

While Beneš genuinely attempted to effect these principles over an ever-increasing opposition of the Czech public opinion reacting to violently hostile propaganda attacks by Berlin and to subversive activities of Sudeten German radicals centered around Henlein's followers, and his theory of closely co-operating with the German Activist Parties and accommodating their just and reasonable demands, and personally shunning Henlein,[135] seemed to have been paying some extremely valuable dividends,[136] he was consistently being frustrated in his efforts not only by high Nazi officials in Berlin and their tools - the Henleinists-[137]

---

135 Since Beneš' most fundamental concept called for the preservation of the Czechoslovak state, it was for him inconceivable to deal with Henlein, about whom he had ample evidence (this point is emphasized by the former Chancellor in Beneš' office, J. Smutný in his work published in London in 1956: Němci v Československu a jich odsun z Republiky, p. 46), that he was set, acting on directives from Germany, to destroy the Republic. In his Dispatch No 22 of January 31, 1936 Hadow reported from Prague that Beneš, after having explained the four main points of the SDP's treacherous activities, "was keeping, for the moment, the SDP at arm's length and making clear to them that until they really meant to co-operate, as loyal Czechoslovak citizens, with the rulers of present-day Czechoslovakia, they would be left severely in the cold, even if it meant their disintegration". Beneš was very harshly criticized by the British F.O. officials who, as usual, and by their own admission, did not comprehend the underlying reasons, for his having taken this attitude. (R 675/32/12, FO 371/20373(. On the very same day the British established their own direct contact with Henlein. (See Hadow's letter from Prague to O'Malley of F.O. of January 31, 1936, R 706/32/12, FO 371/20373). More on this subject will appear in Section (b) Problems of the Czechoslovak Foreign Politics, Sub-Section (II) Foreign Relations, of this Chapter.

136 The best example is the Agreement between the Czechoslovak Government and the German Activist parties of February 18, 1937 concerning a program of proportional German participation in public services, distribution of public expenditures on a regional basis, allocation of a just share from public funds for German welfare and cultural purposes, the placing of government contracts with German contractors in German districts, and the use of both languages in all official communications to communities of

but, above all, by the British.[138] It was the overwhelming influence of these factors coupled by the British ability to pull with themselves, in the end, the French into an abyss of appeasement, and not some fundamental fault in Beneš' concepts towards the German minority that brought about the disaster of Munich and the inevitability of World War II.

---

under 3,000 inhabitants. (For details see Bruegel, J.W., op.cit., pp. 374-387, Luža, R., op.cit., p. 96, Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, pp. 12-15, 349-351).

137 The SDP had been in intimate and systematic contact with the Nazi authorities in Germany, and in accordance with orders received from Berlin, it had to follow a double policy: outwardly to stand for the integrity of the Czechoslovak state and advocate autonomy as the implementation of the right of self-determination as long as the international situation was not ripe enough to force the acceptance of its real goal of the incorporation of the predominantly German-speaking districts into Nazi Germany (DGFP, Vol II, pp. 55-57); but secretly in harmony with Berlin, to undermine the international position of the Republic by such actions as Henlein's visit to London, and its internal order (Ibid., Vol. II, p. 60). In effect, the assistance of Germany was a precondition for the success of the policy of the SDP which alone, as Beneš well understood, could not have succeeded. Berlin's support made out of a clearly internal affair an international issue, and made from the SDP the tool of Nazi Germany's imperialist policy towards Czechoslovakia. (See International Military Tribunal, Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Vol 32, p. 10, 3061-PS; also Trials of War Criminals Before the Nuernberg Military Tribunals under Control Council Law No 10, Vol 12, p. 783; and DGFP, Series C, Vol IV, pp. 679, 614-615, 742, 821 and 1026).

138 With very few exceptions, such as Sir Anthony Eden, Duff Cooper and Sir Robert G. Vansittart, the British Foreign Office Staff did not understand even the fundamentals of the developing European crisis, and their accusations and attacks on Beneš are legion, and have demonstrated towards him an a priori hostile disposition, prejudging him often in a most abrupt and brutal manner. Among the most prominent "experts" in this group were Addison, Hadow, Carr, Cheetham, Bramwell (who, as already mentioned understood Sub-Carpathian Russia to be "the Czech bit of the Teschen gebiet" and placed this knowledge proudly in writing in a Dispatch from Newton), Sargent (not always but on numerous occasions). It must, however, be objectively added that their fear of a possible conflict with Germany coupled with an even greater fear of Bolshevism, were powerful motives for the way in which they conducted their affairs. For further details on this subject see (b)(ii) of this Chapter.

A distinguished historian of this period and subject had written that "after 1936 at the latest, the history of Czechoslovakia was in essence the history of her Germans, just as the history of Germany, and indeed of Europe, was the history of Hitler".[139] While this statement is in principle a correct one, it had omitted, in the case of Czechoslovakia, the most decisive and essential political factor - Beneš. Since he initiated, presided over or personally dealt with every single step of major importance in the Czechoslovak internal and external policies in general, and, above all, in the problem of the Czechoslovak Germans in particular,[138a] the above statement has to be amended to encompass truly the entire picture of the then existing situation: "after 1936 at the latest, the history of Czechoslovakia was in essence the history of Beneš and her Germans".

There can be no more fitting conclusion of this reflection on Beneš' theoretical and conceptual approach towards the Czechoslovak minorities in general and the German minority in particular, than a statement made on this subject by a person who saw and worked with Presidents Masaryk and Beneš on a

---

138a In telegram 173 from Prague of September 1, 1938 US Minister Carr stated that he had learnt from a confidential non-Czech source that President Beneš was in full charge of the negotiations with the Sudeten Germans and was pressing for a solution. (USDS, 760F.62/641).
In the next telegram, 174, of the same day Carr said that he was informed "by a person closely associated with the Sudeten moderates" that a week ago the intransigent attitude of the more radical Sudetens "created virtual panic among the Czech negotiators and Beneš took charge of the negotiations". (USDS, 760F.62/642).

139 Wiskemann, E., Europe of the Dictators 1919-1945, New York, 1966, p. 144.

daily basis as Chancellor of their office, and who understood his Presidents' efforts, hopes, frustrations and even temporary despairs which gave in, however, to new ideas and hopes:

> I am convinced that nobody could have accomplished more in the field of the improvement of Czech-German relations in the circumstances under which the political life in the Republic and the conditions in Europe were being formed than T.G. Masaryk and E. Beneš. Both of them exerted towards this goal much efforts, saw clearly into the future and undoubtedly arrived at successes not only in the Czech political camp but also on the German side.[140]

And if it were not for Hitler and Nazi Germany, and if Germany were governed by people of the type of the State Secretary in the German Foreign Ministry of mid-1920's, Beneš' concept that the Czechs and the Germans in Czechoslovakia would gradually learn to trust each other and to co-operate together for their own and their state's benefit, would have ultimately triumphed.

---

140 Smutný, J., op.cit., p. 45.

(v) Role of the Armed Forces

> Only two states carried out their war preparations expertly and efficiently - Germany and Czechoslovakia.[141]

Nobody could have paid a greater tribute to Beneš who was undoubtedly principally responsible for the fact that "by the summer of 1938 it ranked among the best equipped armies of the world,"[142] than his archenemy Adolf Hitler in the above quotation. It is well documented that as early as July 1932 Beneš had warned the Czechoslovak General Staff that "a dreadful crisis" was inevitable and told them: "I give you four years. The crisis will probably come in 1936 or 1937. By that time the Republic must be fully prepared militarily".[143] Yet Beneš' studies of, and involvement in, military affairs went much earlier; they had their practical basis in his organizational military activities from 1917 when, for the first time, the establishment of Czechoslovak independent military units in France, Italy and Russia

---

141 Statement made in 1941 by Adolf Hitler, as reported by the former director of the Armaments Works at Brno, K.J. Staller, in Generál Ingr, prepared and published by the Svaz československých důstojníků v exilu, Washington, 1957, p. 15.

142 Luža, R., op.cit., p. 89. There are very numerous instances of foreign diplomats and observers commenting to the same effect. See e.g. comments of the American Military Attaché at Prague, Riley of April 25, 1938 - (USDS, 860F.00/513); also the report of July 28, 1938, (860F.20/61); Newton's Dispatch No 266 of September 14, 1937 transmitting report of British Military Attaché at Prague, Col. Stronge (R 6191/6191/12, FO 371/21135).

143 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 22.

appeared to be feasible. Having been already, at that time, together with General Štefánik, instrumental in building the first Czechoslovak army, he was forced to solve even such basic practical military problems as the recruitment of soldiers, the nomination of officers, the design of insignia, and many others. Because of his most important personality trait of preferring always to work alone and to depend on no one except himself, as well as his eagerness to arrive at his own decisions and taking for them fully the responsibility, he immediately set out to become an expert in military matters:

> I therefore bought a quantity of military literature and quickly studied the organization of an army, modern military affairs, innovations introduced in the World War and, in general, all the various military actualities.[144]

In his first speech after his return to Prague Beneš, explaining why the struggle for an independent Czechoslovak state ended in victory emphasized that one of the main reasons was the fact that

> we immediately understood that we had to have a national army... we saw that the world was conducting a war and that it was therefore necessary for the realization of our goals that we would also fight... Without the army and without the real conduct of the war we would most likely have not gained our independence. Without a strong, democratic and of the national goal's conscious army we also will not be able to preserve our independence in the present situation in Europe...[145]

The last sentence governed Beneš' political theory and practice in regard to the Czechoslovak army during the entire period of the First

---

144 Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, p. 361.

145 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 14-15.

Republic. During his Foreign Ministry while fighting in Geneva for the preservation of world peace, for peaceful settlement of international disputes and, in general, for the implementation of the principle of collective security, he always called, at the same time, for a strong Czechoslovak army. While he undoubtedly was one of the most prominent spokesmen for the New World Order as represented by the League of Nations, his supreme goal of the preservation of Czechoslovakia in its entirety gave him a powerful and indeed the only motivation for his attitude towards the army:

> If the League of Nations will not properly function at the critical moment, our army and the armies of our Allies and friends will function. It is impossible to do more for our security.[146]

"The first point of Beneš' efforts after his election to the Presidency in December 1935 was the improvement of the Czechoslovak army".[147] The rapidly deteriorating international situation due to

---

146 Beneš, E., Jak pracovat pro mír, quoted by Galla, K., "Benešovo pojetí války a armády" in Hartl, A., ed., op.cit., p. 171. Galla deals in his work in detail with all the aspects of Beneš' relations with the army. (Pp. 171-214). While many of the ideas presented therein are undoubtedly interesting, they have unfortunately been tainted by the author's great efforts to subjectively present President Beneš in a role of an almost national hero. While in the grave dangers of 1937 when this work was written, such efforts were plausible and eagerly accepted by the Czechoslovak population, its present value is much more in the field of history than political science. It is however a good source of various statements made by Beneš until that time on this subject.

147 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Note No 1, p. 519. - Thus only few weeks after his election to the Presidency, Beneš had granted an unprecedented interview to the British Air Attaché Sqd. Leader Beaumont on February 13, 1936 (the latter expressed his surprise at being granted such an interview since he was the first Attaché having been received by

the successfully conducted aggressive actions by the totalitarian Powers and the demonstrated incidents of weakness by the Western Democracies forced Beneš to pursue a policy of making the Armed Forces popular among his countrymen who gradually abandoned their anti-militarist traditions. Since the President of the Republic was, in accordance with the Constitution of 1920, ipso facto Commander - in - Chief of the Armed Forces[148] was well within his rights to instigate

---

President Beneš), and told him that though he was a pacifist at heart, he realized that to keep the peace "you must have a good policeman behind you". Therefore, being now the head of the State, he was going to make every effort to ensure the proper development of the Czech Army and Air Force. Hadow who transmitted this report to London commented that "in singling out Beaumont for this interview, Beneš meant to indicate his desire for the establishment of closer relations between the fighting forces of Czechoslovakia and Great Britain as well as making a public demonstration of the 'unity of purpose of the two countries in opposing any German designs on Czechoslovakia!..." (R 999/999/12, FO 371/20376).

On Nov. 9, 1936 British Minister at Prague, Bentinck sent to Sir Anthony Eden a memorandum of conversation between Beneš and British Military Attaché Col. Daly, held on October 28, 1936 in which the former stated that as long as he remained President of the Republic, the army would have his particular attention and interest; he thought it was his special duty in these times to stand up for democracy in Central Europe and it was not of any use doing this by words - force, unfortunately, was the only thing that mattered in this particular period of European politics. The Czechs were not a military people but were determined to retain their liberty and to resist aggression. His object was to have an army as efficient in every way as the German Army; technically the Czechs were very nearly as efficient as the Germans. During the next few years extensive fortifications would be built, told Beneš to Col. Daly and asked him to let the authorities in the British War Office know that the Czechs were a determined people, ready to make enormous sacrifices and that their cause was the British cause. (R 6719/157/12, FO 371/20376).

In his Dispatch No 51 of December 6, 1937, the US Minister at Prague, W.J. Carr, commenting on Foreign Minister Krofta's speech on the "Political Preparedness for National Defence", underlined Krofta's statement that "ever since his maiden speech as Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Czechoslovak Assembly in the autumn of 1919, the present

all the necessary steps towards the greatest and quickest military preparedness possible but he was also instrumental in the adoption, by Parliament in the Spring of 1936, of the State Defence Law which provided for emergency measures on the outbreak of the war, had immediately established a permanent Supreme Defence Council nominated by the President and legalized, under certain conditions, of a state of "defence-preparedness" militarizing nearly all the frontier districts within a zone of approximately 25 km from the frontiers.[149] While this law added more fuel to Henlein's contention that the Sudeten Germans were being subjected to discrimination and oppression by the Czechs, Beneš had by early 1936 no doubts about the inevitability of an early crisis, and under such conditions his concept of Czechoslovakia's preservation called for any measure which was capable of strengthening his country. He was determined to ensure that any conflict between

---

President of the Czechoslovak Republic Dr Beneš has advocated the necessity of an efficient army for the defence of the State..." (USDS, 760F.00/57).

148 For further details on the rights and duties of the President in terms of the 1920 Constitution see Táborský, E., Czechoslovak Democracy at Work, pp. 19-24.

149 Both the benefits and the shortcomings of this extremely controversial law were discussed at length by Wiskemann, E., Czechs and Germans; see also Seton-Watson, R.W., A History of the Czechs and Slovaks, p. 352. - It drew many attacks from the then British Minister at Prague, Addison - e.g. in his letter to Eden of July 21, 1936 he speaks of "ruthless application of policy of economic and political destruction of the Sudetendeutsche..." - (R 4430/32/12, FO 371/20374); in an earlier Dispatch No 124 of June 22, 1936 Addison wondered whether Dr Beneš had the will and ability "to overcome the fanatically Czech spirit of the Ministry of National Defence to whom war in the near future is inevitable. Aided by the French military

Czechoslovakia and Germany would be a clear-cut general conflict involving not a matter of one country such as the Sudeten-German problem but a matter of universal and fundamental nature.[150] While feverishly presiding over the ever-increasing tempo in the construction of border fortifications, in the production of most modern armaments and in the organizational efficiency of all military

---

mission who are of like mind, they are therefore making preparations against this early eventuality, being guided by two main principles:
(a) The Sudetendeutsche are part of Germany's forces and are neither to be trusted nor to be spared - even today;
(b) Defence of the central part of this country is alone feasible. Factories in the north or near the western frontier must therefore be transferred and set up at once elsewhere..." (R 3672/32/12, FO 371/20374).

150 In Mnichovské dny, p. 18, Beneš confirmed that in 1936 he was completely unable to entertain any doubts about "an early explosion" of the approaching crisis. On April 7, 1936, the then Czech Minister to London, Jan Masaryk told Sargent of British F.O. that "Dr Beneš was very despondent and foresaw a war in two years". - F.O. Minute from Sargent to Sir R. Vansittart of April 7, 1936. (R 2126/32/12, FO 371/20374). In his letter to O'Malley from Prague, dated December 19, 1936, Hadow said that "Ever since the failure of the Disarmament Conference, he (Dr Beneš) had acted on the assumption that war was inevitable. He was doing all he could to put Germany into the wrong and to force her to be clearly the aggressor in order that Czechoslovakia might benefit when war came by the sympathy and, if possible, the assistance of other countries..." (R 7727/32/12, FO 371/20375).
Dr Beneš made during the period of his Presidency before Munich regular statements about the great improvement in the Czechoslovak military and political situation. (The US Military Intelligence Division Report of November 18, 1936, USDS 860F.00/13). In his Christmas Message of 1936 Beneš expounded his concept of the role of the Czechoslovak Army for the defence of its state and democracy: "...our democracy is strong, firm, calm, fearless and courageous, and at the decisive moment our army would do its duty, as few other European armies, to the very last consequences... democracies must not be afraid, they must not live in a state of panic and psychosis, of the fear of war or internal convulsion. A strong democracy in the perturbed Europe of today - this means faith in our good mission ... this means being prepared to defend ourselves and our State with

operations,[151] Beneš kept on maintaining in his speeches and statements his usual optimistic views that the European peace would ultimately be preserved, and on giving reassurances that because his country was getting militarily prepared did not signify the inevitability of a war and should not give any credibility to those who hoping for its occurrence, were spreading rumors that a war would soon begin. Thus speaking to the Czechoslovak Germans on this subject,

---

dignity, firmness and inflexibility, and, if need be, by the sword; this means the courage and candour to say to oneself and to others that life today, despite all its pains and troubles, is worthy of being lived, for it gives us more opportunities than ever before to do good and to create a new world..." (Beneš, E., Christmas Message, 1936, Prague, 1937. pp. 16-19).

151 Beneš dealt in his Memoirs in detail with his relations with the Army. After stating that when he was elected to the Presidency he could sense that German attack on Czechoslovakia and the general war were inevitable "I therefore decided in the first place to redouble our efforts to bring our army to a high pitch of perfection. To this task I dedicated myself with greater energy and devotion than anything else before. My first and principal reform was to establish a Supreme Council for the Defence of the State... For three whole years I had regularly and systematically discussed and settled with our military experts the more important questions concerning the readiness of our army, in my capacity as Supreme Commander of the armed forces of the Republic... It is a fact that in the late summer of 1938, our army, in spite of all its deficiencies, which I did not conceal from myself, was at the time of the Munich discussions, one of the best in Europe and that it was fighting fit in its morale as well as in its equipment - as our two mobilizations, in May and in September, demonstrated. Our officers' corps was in no way inferior in technical ability... I was always proud of the fact that in these three years the Czechoslovak Republic did more in this direction than any other democratic State in Europe and that when we mobilized in September, 1938, the Republic was properly prepared for war - with two exceptions - one of these was in the sphere of civil air-raid defence... the other was the unfinished state of the fortifications on our Southern frontier with Austria..." Beneš concluded this Section by defending himself against those who told him that all

he had stated:

> Do not believe the talks that a war is imminent, and that this war will come tomorrow. It does not mean, because we are here preparing ourselves so intensively for the defence, that a conflict will break out tomorrow. The state must and shall always be prepared for its defence. As politicians, we are responsible for the state; we would be called with emphasis and severity to account if we would let ourselves get caught by surprise. Therefore, we must be prepared at present for all the eventualities... Myself, I am not afraid of anything, I believe that we will preserve the peace and that we will reach an agreement both in Europe and with our neighbours, on mutual co-operation and on European policy in general...[152]
>
> Do not believe that somebody is set about to suddenly attack tomorrow Czechoslovakia. Do not believe that we are preparing a war and that in our country or in its neighbourhood some changes are about to take place...
>
> I do not deny forever the possibility of conflicts, but in the first place they are neither inevitable nor necessary, neither present nor near; and secondly both we and our friends are prepared so to defend the State to the last breath that such a conflict would hardly bring any benefit to an aggressor. For that reason conflicts can be avoided. I am today convinced that the Locarno Powers will come to some agreement this autumn about collaboration in Europe and that good neighbourly relations on a treaty basis will be achieved between Germany and ourselves...[153]

In harmony with his statement that in order to bring the

---

these costly military preparations were futile since they were not used at the time of Munich. (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 27-29).

152 Beneš, E., Probleme der Tschechoslovakischen Republik - Speech given in Jablonec on August 19, 1936, p. 51.

153 Ibid., Speech given in Liberec on August 19, 1936, pp. 30-31.

Czechoslovak Army "to a high pitch of perfection"[154] he had dedicated a great deal of his energies towards this task; he felt that to be able to do so successfully and efficiently, he had to follow in detail military questions from the social, economic, organizational, technological and educational point of view. He studied technical literature on the organization of the army and war, strategy, fortifications, armaments, logistics, tactics, supplies - anything which he had considered to be of benefit for making his country "a European fortress".[155] His accumulated knowledge of military matters and his keen interest in the Armed Forces reflected in his Presidential Army Orders or speeches to Army representatives; they also reflected his general political concepts of which the preservation of his state in its entirety was the leit-motif. Thus only two days after having been elected to the Presidency, after having highly praised the co-operation of the Czechoslovak Army with the Czechoslovak Foreign Policy, he stated to the Army representatives:

> During the last four years there was indeed much achieved for our Army, and much had been caught up with in that what was impossible to achieve in earlier years. In this work we will continue and here I beg you for your help. For my own part I promise you my complete support...[156]

---

154 See n. No. 151.

155 Beneš described his country in this way in his conversation with Leo Kennedy of March 16, 1938, which was transmitted to British F.O. by Newton in his Dispatch No 75 of March 22, 1938. (C 2117/1941/18, FO 371/21713).

156 Beneš, E., Armáda, Brannost národa a obrana státu, Z projevů presidenta od 18. XII. 1935 do 2.VII.1937, Vojenská kancelář presidenta republiky, Praha, 1937, An address to the representatives of the Army of December 20, 1935, p. 21.

In his Presidential Army Order issued only a few weeks later he expounded, for the first time as President of the Republic and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, his military theory:

> A modern army is an enormous technical organization, utilizing the most modern discoveries of sciences. It must stand highly not only through its scientific but also through its cultural level; it must be flexible through its spirit and its will in order to be capable to quickly adjust itself to the changing conditions of the war, it must be technically first-class, always firm, energetic and prepared. Its brain must be the commanding body, expertly trained, standing highly through its education and penetrated by devotion and love to its profession. We will therefore undertake all to maintain step in this direction with the first states in Europe and will especially take care to ensure that all those tasks and preparations which we imposed upon ourselves during the last years for the preparedness of our Armed Forces, would be completed in the shortest possible time. Always being prepared in this way... we are and will be invulnerable. I am well aware of the seriousness of this period. As Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces I am looking, however, with peace and courage towards the future. I am certain... that we shall victoriously overcome the difficulties of our time. Officers... soldiers... be prepared every moment to carry out all these patriotic tasks! I will carry out with you all in this spirit my own duties of Commander-in-Chief.[157]

---

157 Ibid., The Army Order of the President of the Republic of January 17, 1936, pp. 11-13. Ideas like these caught the imagination not only of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces, but, by being well publicized, of the entire Czechoslovak population. Their patriotism and love for their country, greatly encouraged by Beneš, reached their zenith just at the time of Munich which represented a greatest imaginable disaster for the Czechoslovaks and exacerbated in its most extreme form, for the Czechoslovak Army and its Commander-in-Chief on whom fell the curse of having to make the ultimate decision. A military defeat - that was something which every Czechoslovak soldier and, under the then existing European conditions, even every Czechoslovak citizen, was prepared to face, after having fought for his state's independence and existence to the very last possible resistance; but an acceptance of Munich which was de facto an ultimatum given to a defeated nation without even being able to fire a shot in self-defence by being betrayed by its own friends - that was a calamity which brought about the destruction of the spirit of the

A year later at the State Dinner given in honour of the highest ranking representatives of the Armed Forces, Beneš underlined his favoured topic of the special Czechoslovak position in Europe and its importance for the maintenance of peace and democracy.[158] Having appreciated significant successes achieved in all the Branches of Armed Forces, Beneš stated:

> We are living in peace but it is an ever-increasingly armed peace. As the state we have a special position, and in Europe and in the world our own special peace mission. It is a mission of the state whose existence, strength, stability and political and social equilibrium is a substantial factor of the European political and military balance. Through our democracy we are bound to the peace for which I, with the government, am not ceasing, more than ever, to sincerely and honestly work... I do not believe in any early war and I consider the recent anti-war statements of various political representatives in England, France and Germany to be sincere...[159]

Czechoslovak nation from which the Czechoslovak Republic has not yet recovered even at the present time. (This subject will be dealt with in the next chapter - "Disaster of Munich").

158 This concept which Beneš promulgated since the very beginnings of the Czechoslovak state was stated by him in its clearest and most concise form in his last speech as Foreign Minister before the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Czechoslovak Chamber of Deputies and Senate on November 5, 1935:

> ... our State has a special mission of peace in Central Europe and in Europe generally. This is a profound truth of application to all Europe... our geographical position is a dangerous one... but it is so because that geographical position is so important and far-reaching for the whole of Europe. It means that our State is the key to the whole post-War structure of Central Europe. If it is touched either internally or internationally, the whole fabric of Central Europe is menaced, and the peace of Europe seriously infringed. It would not be long before all Europe would be grievously conscious of the fact... (Beneš, E., The Struggle For Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, p. 58).

159 Beneš, E., Armáda, Branost národa a obrana státu, An address given on February 25, 1937, pp. 27-31.

One of the most patriotically-inspired and patriotically-inspiring Presidential Army Orderswas issued by Beneš on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the famous battle at Zborov where the Czechoslovaks achieved on July 2, 1917 their first victory against Austria-Hungary and Germany which, having been followed by a series of further Czechoslovak victories, had contributed so greatly, in Beneš' judgement, to the political victory of the Czechoslovak cause and led to the establishment of an independent Czechoslovak state. He had a high praise for the victory at Zborov stating that:

> ...By this battle had at that time been symbolized, and is being symbolized even at this time, our entire military struggle for the liberation of the nation and the recognition of the independent state. Politically, diplomatically, by having employed propaganda, but above all with arms in the hand we conducted this struggle during the World War almost on all the battlefields. It was a struggle for our own national liberty, but also for liberty of other nations, for new ideals of life, for democracy, for peace, for political and social justice and, in general, for ideals of a new man... Zborov is therefore politically one of the fundamental, and militarily one of the most beautiful, sides of the tradition of the modern Czechoslovak Army...

Having then told the Army representatives that for the accomplishment of their task - to preserve and defend the established liberty and independence of their state against anyone under all the circumstances - they have good conditions because behind them was standing with its entire moral and material armaments a firm, united and fully developed state, he concluded:

> ...We are threatening nobody, we do not want, and will not, disturb peace, we are not reaching for foreign territory, and are not ill-disposed to anyone. We want to co-operate

> honestly in peace and in calm with all, especially with all our neighbours. We are, however, morally, politically and militarily well prepared to defend ours under all the circumstances.[160]

No justice would be served to Beneš if an impression were left that he did not pay special attention to the rapidly growing Czechoslovak Air Force, the importance of which in a possible conflict with Nazi Germany became increasingly evident since Goering's determination to make his country invincible through its air power. Thus, on the occasion of his meeting with the Czechoslovak military pilots who after the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games were a year later again very successful in the international competition at Zürich, Beneš, after having given them praise and thanks, said that he wanted them to know that "the aviation would play an extremely important role in the future "and asked them to make certain that "the high standard which was held by the Czechoslovak Air Force at this time would never be lost".[161]

President Beneš' preoccupation with the establishment and growing strength of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces which was an inevitable reflection of the increasing threat of Hitler's Germany to his state, had its theoretical foundations in his earlier works and statements made during his Foreign Ministry and supported fully his primary object of the preservation of the entire Czechoslovak state.[162]

---

160 Ibid., The Army Order of the President of the Republic on the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of the battle at Zborov, dated July 2, 1937, pp. 14-17.

161 The Prager Presse, Friday, August 6, 1937.

Having pointed out that the geographical position of Czechoslovakia "on the cross-road of the three great cultures: West-European, Germanic and East-Slavonic: gave it the task of uniting the West with the East, he emphasized that this reality made it inevitable that Czechoslovakia had to place its Army into the forefront of its defensive interests. He saw ahead the dangers and difficulties with the realization of European pacifism and disarmament; and even if all the instruments of the post World War I "New Order" were functioning flawlessly - the League of Nations, the Treaties and Agreements made with the Allied and friendly nations -

> ...the first condition upon which all this is based is our own military strength. Again and again it has been seen in the deliberations at Geneva, that a nation which has not defended itself against attack to the utmost of its powers has been in the end abandoned even by Geneva, even though truth and justice were fully on its side. We must never forget this for the future, and I add that any nation and State which does not persevere to the very end in defence of its independence and its territory could easily be sacrificed not-withstanding the support of the League of Nations...[163]

---

162 The two most important works by Beneš in this field were his: Válka a kultura, Praha, 1922, and Demokratická armáda, pacifism a zahraniční politika, Praha, 1932. For further details and excerpts from Beneš on this subject see Galla, K., cit. in Note 146 of this Chapter.

163 Beneš, E., The Struggle For Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, pp. 51-52.

(vi) Role of the All-National Organizations

> ...our struggle for freedom actually was a common struggle of a great unity of hearts, wills and actions of our people. And, therefore, I always rejected all kinds of dividing into components according to where this struggle was conducted - at home or abroad. In the same fashion as there was unity of this liberalizing struggle at that time, so there also must be all the time unity of our constructive work even if there would again be necessary unity of struggle for the defence of liberty, ideals of democracy and for the right of inviolability of the Czechoslovak Republic...[164]

Having had to fight during the entire period of his Presidency for the unity of the Czechoslovak nation,[165] Beneš placed great emphasis and fully appreciated the importance, for the maintenance and strengthening of this unity, of such all-national organizations as the Sokol,

---

164 Excerpt from Beneš' speech to the representatives of the Československá Obec Dobrovolců (the Czechoslovak Association of Volunteers) made on July 22, 1938 and contained in: Československá Obec Dobrovolců, President Dr Edvard Beneš a Dobrovolci, Praha, 1946, p. 17.

165 As stated earlier Beneš, having accepted Palacký's interpretation of the Czech history, was consistently being haunted by the fear of a discord among the Czechs at some critical moment in the rapidly approaching international crisis which would have meant the utter destruction of their Republic and the failure of his self-imposed mission of its preservation. He vividly described his desperate struggle, during his Presidency before Munich for the unity of the Czechoslovak nation in the intensive struggles among the various political parties greatly intensified by the German minority's problem and the SDP's connections with Berlin associated with their ever-growing boldness and increase of their demands. He noted, with a certain degree of satisfaction that "...The goal, however, which I kept all the time on my mind: regardless of the happenings to preserve at all costs the unity of the nation till the termination of the whole struggle - was achieved at least outwardly and to a certain extent even in the reality..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, p. 24).

the Československá Obec Legionářská and the Československá Obec Dobrovolců.[166] He was always prepared to accept their delegations, to be present at their Festivals or to give addresses to their conferences: this was one of the very few political functions which he really enjoyed and where he could be at his best.[167] There were two principal reasons for this particular attitude of Beneš, the first of these having been of the political nature: as a politician, he was convinced that by promulgating and practicing the all-national ideas affecting the Czechoslovak people, they were significantly aiding him in his aim of maintaining unity of the Czechoslovak nation and thus directly supporting his self-imposed mission of the preservation of the Czechoslovak state in its entirety.[168] The second reason was of the

---

166 Yet these organizations, while having on the one hand encouraged unity of the nation by uniting as their members people of diverse opinions and interests, they also had, on the other hand, a dividing effect - their own establishment had often resulted in the establishment of another organization based on the same or very similar ideas yet designed for a specific limited membership. Thus as counterparts of the all-national Sokol Organization, there were created the Orel (for the Catholics) and the D.T.J. (for the workers) organizations. (For details about these organizations see Bušek, V. and Spulber, N., eds., Czechoslovakia, New York, 1957 and Rechcígl, M. Jr., ed., Czechoslovakia Past and Present, The Hague, 1968).

167 This point was confirmed by the former Mayor of Prague, the Czechoslovak Deputy Prime-Minister and the leader of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party who has been living in exile in the U.S.A. since the Communist Coup d'état of 1948, Dr Petr Zenkl, in an interview given to the author on November 5, 1970 in Washington, D.C.

168 See e.g. Jednota Československých legionářů, čtyři projevy presidenta republiky československé Dra Edvarda Beneše, Hořice, 1938, 38p. - The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 996.

psychological nature: as a human being, because of his personality trait of working always alone, arriving at his own decisions and taking for them fully responsibility, and his conviction that only he, having been a true disciple and follower of T.G. Masaryk, was above all the "petty" political parties' influences, rules and interests in which he was subsequently confirmed by his election to the Presidency - the highest all-national political institution of the Republic - he felt personally happiest with groups which representing also all-national ideas and interests, looked towards him as they did towards his teacher and predecessor - acknowledging him as someone on whom rested the ultimate "salus res publicae".[169]

There were instances when Beneš, having been a constant target of his political opponents and personal enemies, would make an appeal to one of the all-national organizations, presenting his case and while ostensibly asking for improvement of political life - for "higher political culture and spiritual revolution",[170] he was, de facto, indirectly asking for their intervention, on his behalf, and their help against these attacks. He felt that by directly addressing one of

---

169 This point had originated with the author after careful studies of Beneš' personal and human aspect of his political behaviour. It was also a matter of lengthy discussions with several prominent Czechoslovak democratic politicians now living in exile in the West - both his enemies and friends. None of them was able, however, to present any convincing argument to refute this observation.

170 See Note 5, Chapter 1 of this study. It was one of such appeals, his letter addressed to the Convocation of the Československá Obec Legionářská (The Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries) dated September 12, 1926, entitled "For the Cleanness of Public Life" (in Czech), (The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol.1044).

these organizations, he was indirectly addressing the entire nation in a similar fashion as he was doing, after his ascent to the Presidency, in his regular Christmas Messages.[171]

In his concept of the growth of ideological foundations for the establishment of the Czechoslovak state, Beneš gave the most prominent place to the all-national Sokol Organization. Speaking later, during World War II, he gave this definition of his interpretation of the role played by the Sokol in this regard:

> When we are recalling today the eightieth anniversary of the birth of the Sokol, we are recalling almost the whole cultural and political development of the nation of the last century... It is impossible to imagine the rise of our nation without the Sokol, without the Sokol-idea. Without Tyrš, without Fuegner,[172] without Sokol-halls, without Sokol-songs, without the magnificent Sokol-Festivals, it is possible to imagine neither the past eighty years of our life, Prague, the outlook of our cities and villages, nor it is possible to imagine the true spirit of the nation. The Sokol-idea gave us a firm faith in democracy, in national and civil equality, in allegiance to the nation and to the people...[173]

In the critical year of 1938, just a few months before Munich, there was held at Prague the tenth Sokol-Festival. Beneš gave on this occasion an address which was truly addressed to the whole nation and to other nations as well. After having emphasized the Sokol-idea of

---

171 That Beneš was in these endeavours to a significant extent successful witness the various publications prepared by the all-national organizations on occasions of some noteworthy events in his life, such as the one prepared by the Czechoslovak Association of Legionaries to his fiftieth birthday: Československá Obec Legionářská, 50 let Edvarda Beneše, Vzpomínky, svědectví, úvahy, Praha, 1934, 354p. As will be seen later, Benes would employ more frequently this practice after World War II.

172 Tyrš and Fuegner were the founders of the Sokol Organization on February 16, 1862.

173 Krejčí, A., Sokolství Dr Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1948,

brotherhood of men, he stated that this Sokol-Festival demonstrated that the Czechoslovak people and state wish above all to live in peace and calm co-operation with all within the state as well as with all its neighbours and other nations. The Sokol-spirit showed the whole world that every people was only a part of all humanity and therefore a unit that must be useful to the whole humanity. He concluded his address with an appeal to the Sokol leaders: "In this sense you must also understand what we shall be doing in the near future to promote the co-operation of the individual nationalities in our state..."[174]

---

pp. 5-7; also in Krejčí, A., President Dr Edvard Beneš Sokolstvu, Praha, 1947, pp. 14-15.

174 Telegram No 285 from the British Minister at Prague, Newton, dated July 5, 1938, dealing with Beneš' address made on July 4, 1938 at the Sokol Festival at Prague. (C 6778/1941/18, FO 371/21726).

(vii) Youth of the Country - Safeguard of its Future

> I am also recommending you to learn fellowship and reciprocity, to help each other and to honour and to love already from your youth the country in which you had been born and which is your second mother. In contrast with us older who had fought out, and in the first years built, our state, you, the younger generation, will have the task to continue in building our free Republic and, above all, to preserve it. The present difficult state of affairs in the world indicate that it will not always be an easy task. The free fatherland in which you had been born, its freedom and state independence, is the basis of the free development and of the happy life of our every citizen, without it our life would be difficult, insecure, politically unsuccessful, culturally unworthy. It is one of the greatest values which mankind has, honour it, defend it, defend and protect it intrepidly and firmly and defend it till the death!...[175]

It was stated that as a human being, Beneš felt at ease with the delegations or representatives of the all-national organizations; yet he was in this aspect at his best, and felt happiest, with children. While this could be explained that as an astute politician and patriot he was he knew that with the youth rested the future of his state, such an explanation would not suffice: it was much more a genuinely humane, psychological part of his personality which overtook him when he was in the company of children or young people. Having not been blessed with children of his own, his attitude towards children was very similar to that of a Catholic priest who likes to think of all the

---

175 Beneš' speech given on June 11, 1938 to more than 50,000 secondary school students from the whole Republic on the occasion of the Fourth Secondary-Schools Games at Prague (The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1088).

children in his parish or in his village, as being spiritually his own, calls them "his children" and is also considered by them as being their spiritual Father and addressed by them "Father". Having also felt to be their spiritual Father, Beneš' usual approach consisted by providing them first with a fatherly advice and instruction that they should "acquire right from their early age those qualities which would make from them good people and honest citizens of the Republic." He would then urge them to be always ready to fight for the truth "from which springs forth the respect for moral laws, and which also is the basis of love for the fellow-man".[176]

He did not make any distinction among children by their nationalities - he expressed his love and admiration to them all alike. He asked all the children to help each other, and it was here that would usually appear the pure human part of Beneš' personality which he otherwise always kept hidden well beyond the surface of his ideas and actions to such an extent that he was so often accused of not having any feelings or human emotions. Thus on one occasion while talking to the primary-school children from Prague who came to congratulate him to his fifty-fourth birthday, after having emphasized the point that the Ruthenian and Slovak children should not be forgotten "because they need most of our love and help", he made to them an extremely important statement which refuted Dr Urban's accusations of Beneš of having always

---

176 Beneš, E., "Dvě řeči Presidenta republiky k mládeži in the Československá skautka, Vol. 3, No 6, June 1938, pp. 51-54.

been "hostile towards Germans as a matter of principle"[177]: "Do not forget these children (the Ruthenian and Slovak children - author's note) and do not also forget especially the German children from our mountainous border regions where there is a lot of stones but sometimes a little bread. Learn mutuality and leave each other neither in good nor in bad times!..."[178]

Having spoken on one occasion to young men on the subject of the choice of their profession and their life task, he had first elaborated his own history of struggles in this regard, and then provided his listeners with a rare and profound insight into his own political behaviour by means of a resume of his principles for a young man which "is and always was my own personal creed and according to this creed even I am striving myself to do

---

177 See note 120 of this Chapter.

178 Beneš, E., An address of May 25, 1938 to primary-school children in reply to their congratulations to his fifty-fourth birthday (The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1088).

There are numerous examples of Beneš' friendly attitude towards the children of German nationality and of his policy of encouraging and effecting fraternization between the Czech and German children. Thus e.g. he proudly informed British Minister at Prague, Newton on April 7, 1937 that a performance in German had been given for the German children in the Czech National Theatre at Prague. The magnitude of this event which was unprecedented could not have been, in Beneš' own words, overemphasized since their National Theatre at Prague was "a bastion of all the Czechs and the feelings underlying its creation were so strong that it was one of its rules that no word in German could ever be pronounced within it - even on the stage.. "In order to mark the importance of the occasion which demonstrated clearly such an advance on the path of conciliation between the two traditionally hostile races, Beneš and Minister of Education Dr Franke (an Activist Czechoslovak

my own work and only in this manner I am finding in it satisfaction...":

1. Life is and will remain a struggle: one must be capable of honestly making his way through, never to despair, to have a healthy optimism.
2. One has to do his own things properly.
3. For the intellectuals: by pursuing deeper studies, to become a specialist in a certain discipline within his wider sphere of action.
4. One has to gradually change, within the meaning of these principles, his work into creation, and by doing so, also into joy: after all, this is a key to the happiness in the world.
5. One has to always perform his work with the knowledge of his responsibility, to accept openly, directly and honestly this responsibility.
6. By following all this one has to work out himself into a well-balanced man, into a modern man of the synthesis of heart and intellect.
7. For us Czechoslovaks this therefore means to come out from the old slavery and provincialism,[179] to be Europeans and to really be that what the French call "citoyens du monde": to be good Czechs, Czechoslovaks and at the same time to be good people...[180]

German) were present and both spoke in German. In a similar fashion, a performance in Czech had been given for the Czech children in the German Theatre at Prague. (Newton's dispatch No 113 of April 28, 1937; R 2994/188/12, FO 371/21128).

179 This was one of Beneš' favourite topics which he had already elaborated in some of his earliest publications such as: Naše politické vzdělání a potřeba vysoké školy sociálně-politické, Brandýs nad Labem, 1910; Stranictví, Brandýs nad Labem, 1912; Povaha politického stranictví, Praha, 1920; Povaha politických stran, Praha, 1923; Pro čistotu veřejného života, Praha, 1926; Boj o vyšší narodní politickou kulturu, Praha, 1932.

180 Beneš, E., Podmínky úspěšného života, Speech given at Y.M.C.A. at Prague on March 22, 1929. (The Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, Vol. 1036, pp.12-13).

Beneš concluded his instructions to young men by emphatically stating that success, the ultimate success could only come there, where honour, honesty and truthfulness rule, and by warning them that this did not mean that the truth won by itself: "The devise 'Truth triumphs' means that we must work for the truth, we must help it, we must always and tirelessly fight for it!"[181]

Beneš' personal policy towards primary-school children and younger secondary-school students called for providing them with general instruction, given by him in a fatherly fashion, towards becoming good people and citizens of the Republic, and to effect all the necessary, and above all, in the existing difficult circumstances, possible measures to achieve genuine fraternization between the Czechoslovak children on the one side, and those of other nationalities of the Republic in general, and those of the German nationality in particular. By doing so he would have succeeded if he were given the needed time to gradually eliminate the traditional racial enmity which persisted so extensively in the older generations in the country. This policy was greatly affected by his personal attitude of having been happy among these children that he gladly devoted much of his busy time for frequently accepting their delegations or personally visiting them - on both occasions he enjoyed talking to them as their "Great Father"; he was particularly pleased when he saw that his efforts in this

---

181 Ibid., p. 13.

direction began already paying some dividends so vital for the future of his state.

His policy towards undergraduate and graduate students called inevitably for more complex explanations of contemporary political and philosophical problems, and for more elaborate instructions in regard to their future life, his personal attitude remained basically the same as that taken towards younger children:

> I have come gladly among you. By doing so I want to emphasize not only my own interest in the students but also the fact that the students are an important component of our national and state life, and that it is proper for the leading functionaires of the state to pay the students their attention, to be interested in their needs and interests and from time to time to tell them, in a friendly and fatherly manner, what they would wish them to do...[182]

At the beginning of the critical year of 1938 Beneš felt the urgency to outline to the Czechoslovak students his interpretation of the existing continuously deteriorating political situation, of the role of a politician and statesman, of the Czechoslovak state and democracy,[183] as well as of its citizens in general and of its students in particular. His address was presented in the form of a lecture given in his usual

---

182 An address given by Beneš to the Czechoslovak students on the occasion of his visit of the Academic Hall in Prague on January 15, 1938 in: Fialka, J., ed., President republiky Dr Edvard Beneš Československému studentstvu roku 1938, Praha, 1938, p.5.

183 As on many other occasions, Beneš did not make in this instance any distinction between the terms of "Czechoslovak (or our) state" and "Czechoslovak (or our) democracy" - both of them meant Czechoslovakia.

fatherly manner and demonstrated his ever-present optimism; since it outlined Beneš' political concepts which he followed in principle until his death, they provide a clarification of his subsequent political behaviour. Furthermore, they are as actual today as they were at the time they were given, and applied fully to his country's tragedies of 1938 and 1948 and provide a convincing explanation of the unrest even among the Czechoslovak Communists and their recent attempts to effect the relevant Beneš' concepts, at least to a certain extent, which were shattered by the Russian invasion of 1968:

> ...Let us try to see the events before which we are standing in their lengthy developmental advance, in their philosophico-historical meaning... to see things... in their historical development, in their social meaning. To understand how they have come, how they are developing and what is their present meaning and where they are heading in a longer period of time - that is the purpose of a sagacious, scientific and statesmanlike politics... The first law of the successful state and national politics for the responsible officials and general public is to preserve calm, not to succumb to momentary impressions and happenings, and not to arrive from these at hasty, premature conclusions, but to always be on guard and be prepared...
>
> ...That what is taking place today, that is a typical sign of all the revolutionary epochs. In such times a politician and statesman has to be as a great, powerful judge, standing high above all this daily bustle. Although he has to take care even of these daily trivialities, he must not lose that wide, remote and deep view of the events...
>
> ...Be very critical and cautious of all that what comes to you in the present disorganized world from the Left and from the Right as messianic theories and messianic solutions of the difficulties of the present era. Beware of blind admiration but be also cautious of blind judgement and criticism. Be aware of the fact that all that what was installed here and there as a new regime, as a new world, as a new ideology, is impossible to detach from local conditions, for internal, deep and historical suppositions which belong to the original milieu, and that it is impossible to transfer that blindly

> elsewhere. To imitate in politics and in social field is always a tremendously dangerous experiment. It is usually placed on some superficial and external resemblance, it forgets the deep developmental and historical differences of a great extent, and from this are afterwards inevitable failures and catastrophies...[184]

Beneš then urged students to objectively examine their own as well as their country's conditions, traditions, historical and developmental suppositions, to pay attention to Czechoslovakia's geographical location, its cultural development, its social structure and its state milieu because only then could they truly understand why their state was and would remain a democracy.[185] Having explained to them what he considered to be the essence of statesmanship and what was the political concept and spiritual basis of Czechoslovak democracy,[186] he spoke of his own personal stand towards the various totalitarian

---

184 Fialka, J., ed., op.cit., pp. 7-12.

185 Beneš added: "Precisely in that is the great power of our democracy that it comes out of the deep suppositions of our life, from our strongest national traditions, from our social structure, from all the social, economic and cultural conditions of our environment". (Ibid., p.14).

186 Beneš had talked here in reality about himself: "The true essence of statesmanship is in that one correctly knows material conditions of the country, that one understands its traditions, economic and social suppositions and evolutionary possibilities, and that to all this one attaches as a spiritual basis the correct ideology, comprising ideals of political, social and national justice for all the individuals, and from all that one subsequently creates an evolutionary, progressive political program and goal, for the realization of which the nation and state, by employing intellectual, evolutionary means and methods but consistently, obstinately and unyieldingly, then goes its own way. That is the political concept of our democracy. The spiritual basis of our democracy is then laid on the one philosophical and moral principle: the subject of our political life is man, an individual in his human nature, in his humanity, not a party, not a class,

theories:

> ...I was always opposed that sociological theory which, being in essence a materialist one, made out of various social collectives independent social organisms superior and prior to an individual. I am therefore even today against all the so-called totalitarianism in social field, economics or politics. Our democracy is governed by these principles. It comes out of these true and concrete suppositions, it has deep foundations in our centuries-old social development, being based at the same time on its philosophy of pure humanity... We call it therefore humanitarian democracy...[187]

Beneš then emphasized his stand that while he did not want to urge others to follow the same road as his own country and wanted to respect their own development and attempts to organize their nations and states according to their own best judgement, he would not allow anyone to force the Czechoslovaks to follow his road or to try to meddle in the Czechoslovak politics. He said that his countrymen were critical of themselves and others but they were, at the same time, consistently tolerant and displayed proper manners towards others, going firmly and with dignity their own way. This effort he considered to be one of the ways on which Europe was able to get out of its pervading tensions, conflicts and disorganization, and to gradually settle its differences in a sensible fashion eventually arriving at an atmosphere of mutual friendship. He concluded

---

also not only the nation, that is no collective. This is for us the sociological truth, reflecting our scientific conception of the essence of society". (Ibid., p. 15) - (For statements of this nature Beneš was persistently being accused of having followed the course of political utopianism - that between his concepts and the reality there existed an unbridgeable chasm).

187 Ibid., p. 17.

by striking his usually optimistic note:

> ...Dear friends, I believe in this. And, above all, I diligently work towards it... I believe in good development of our state and nation because I believe in good and happy development of you...[188]

On reflection, it is necessary to ask for reasons which prompted Beneš to give to the Czechoslovak students such an important and comprehensive address on this specific subject at this particular time. This question has neither been answered nor attempts were even made to have it answered. The contemporary newspapers and political revues had either printed this address in its entirety or in its greater part but besides a few introductory notes and usual compliments reserved for the President, no serious comments were made. Having studied this problem at considerable length[189] and after having brought it up during his numerous interviews with the prominent Czechoslovak democratic politicians in exile, the author was able to penetrate this seemingly coincidental event appearing to have, with the exception of Beneš' normal political considerations, no apparent causal connection, and to arrive at the conclusion that there was an important psychological reason for Beneš' visit of the Academic Hall on January 15, 1938.

---

188 Ibid., p. 24.

189 The main reason for doing so was the discovery, by the author, of some striking resemblance in this aspect of Beneš' political behaviour which appeared for the first time in the late 1937-early 1938 period, and re-appeared exactly a decade later - in the late 1947-early 1948 period, as will then be explained.

It was already established that contrary to the generally accepted notion and prevailing opinion, both at home and abroad, that Beneš was an extremely clever but cold, robot-like politician who having continuously been buried in, and living only for, his political work, was incapable of having feelings and was immune to human emotions, Beneš was actually in this respect as any other human being but only by having practised a very strict self-discipline he was able to always suppress his feelings and emotions in public. Late in 1937 and early in 1938 he was undergoing a serious emotional crisis: although he did not show it outwardly but kept it hidden within himself, his mental depression and anxiety came about as the result of his physical and mental exhaustion caused by his incessant fights for the national unity, by his attempts to arrive at a reasonable solution of the problems of national minorities, by mounting personal attacks and criticism of his policies both at home and abroad, by the rapidly collapsing Versailles Order and of the Little Entente, by his growing doubts about the intentions and reliability of the country he always loved and admired so much - France, but, above all, by the death of his only friend to whom he owed his entire political career - his predecessor in the Presidency, Tomáš G. Masaryk. Although during the last few years before his death, Masaryk was no more able, because of his age and ill-health, to actively participate in the Czechoslovak politics, he kept on providing his student during the latter's frequent visits with, for him invaluable advice and help, and even the sole knowledge that his teacher was always standing by in the background to help him in

the time of need, gave Beneš a feeling of security in a very insecure era.

The loss of this feeling of security was mainly instrumental for Beneš' mental depression and he therefore felt a need of, figuratively speaking, lifting up his spirit in a happy atmosphere among the youth where he would not be an object of personal attacks and criticism of his policies but would be venerated and listened to with awe and where he would most fittingly be able to demonstrate in his elaborate address that he remained and would always remain faithful to his departed teacher's legacy in accordance with the solemn promise he gave at Masaryk's funeral.[190]

Beneš knew that a crucial test was for him rapidly approaching and that he was alone to bear the heaviest cross in his country as he was prepared, in accordance with his personality trait, to accept the responsibility for the ultimate decisions; he therefore wanted to gain all the spiritual strength he could find to be able to succeed. He was frightened by a possibility that he would fail in his self-imposed, and for him sacred mission of preserving the Czechoslovak state in the form in which it existed for almost two decades; he was even more frightened by a thought that his own fear, if left unchecked, within himself, would grow to such an extent that it would become outwardly apparent. Having observed, on that for him so fateful day in January 1938 the trusting

---

190 While Beneš could have been even happier among the younger, primary-school children, he was unable to pay a visit to them because his address would have been by far too complex for them.

eyes of the students, their vitality, energy and élan, and especially their positive reaction to his address inspired Beneš to overcome his fear and to make to himself the most solemn and resolute decision of his life: we would indeed fight to keep his promise given to his only friend, and would under no circumstances allow the failure of his mission.[191]

---

191 This conclusion is based on the testimonies given to the author by Prof. Dr Václav Beneš (President Beneš was his uncle), Dr Petr Zenkl, Dr J. Stránský and V. Majer, and by his vast studies conducted throughout North America and Europe.

(b) Problems of the Czechoslovak Foreign Politics

(i) Fight For the Preservation of the Post World-War I Order

> ...in the years 1936-38 Czechoslovak policy rightly diagnosed what was the matter in Europe. It did everything, really everything, to retrieve the situation of Czechoslovakia, of its friends and of all Europe in face of Fascist gangsterism and pan-German Nazism and of war itself. In that period when the European and world crisis was approaching, there was no State in Europe which could have a clearer conscience of doing its duty towards its Nation and its friends than the Czechoslovak Republic under the presidency of Masaryk and myself...[192]

World War I, in which "the ideological and the philosophical conception represented by the Central powers was defeated,"[193] brought about, in turn, two "Great Ideological Revolutions" which in their final shape,[194] if brought to their logical conclusions, were mutually exclusive. The first of these revolutions which attempted to democraticize the whole contemporaneous society and to make the world safe for democracy, took its concrete definition in the President Wilson's Fourteen Points considered by him as having been necessary for peace settlement. They called for the establishment of a new democratic era

---

192 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 33.

193 Beneš, E., Democracy Today and Tomorrow, p. 42. Beneš defined this ideological and philosophical conception as militarism, Prussianism, Pan-Germanism, absolutism.

194 The word "final" is of key importance here since it means the second and final stage of the Russian Revolution - the communist one. The first stage, being of the bourgeois liberal character was actually attempting, in the fundamentals, to imitate liberal revolutions of the Western democracies of the past and to catch up with them in their political development.

in which world society would be governed by the principle of self-determination of peoples and for the establishment of a League of Nations which would effect a democratization of international politics and self-determination of nations.[195] Masaryk and Beneš were from the very beginnings of this New Order among its most prolific champions: the former having been among its chief proponents, the latter among its most passionate and able exponents. They both understood that it was of vital importance to Czechoslovakia which had owed its existence to the ideas implemented by the Versailles, the St. Germain and the Trianon Treaties,[196] that this world-democratizing revolution be successfully realized; otherwise, the geographically isolated new Czechoslovak state would constantly be facing a threat to its security and existence from its actually and potentially hostile neighbours - friendly Rumania having constituted an exception to this rule.

The second of these revolutions, the Bolshevik Revolution of Lenin in Russia, having overthrown the bourgeois-liberal Revolution of Kerenský, attempted, by employing ruthless violence of "dictatorship of the proletariat" behind its theory of class-struggle, to incite communist revolutions throughout the world and thus to convert all the countries of the world to Communism.

---

195 For more details of Beneš' interpretation of World War I and the subsequent era see his "Democracy Today and Tomorrow", New York, 1939, Chapter II, pp. 22-52.

196 Beneš had signed all these three Treaties on behalf of Czechoslovakia: the Versailles Treaty with Germany on June 28, 1919; the St. Germain Treaty with Austria on September 10, 1919 and the Trianon Treaty with Hungary on June 4, 1920.

Neither the Western Democracies nor Bolshevik Russia were however able to bring these two Great Ideological Revolutions to their logical conclusions in the period between the two world wars. Both of these Revolutions had to be substituted by compromises: the former, plagued by the inabilities of the Western Powers to overcome their traditional policies of jealously following their own selfish interests which brought about their unwillingness to provide the League of Nations with their all-out support, rendered that new institutions impotent to act at the time of crises, involving disputes between Great Powers.[197] The latter Revolution had soon its hopes of staging a successful World Communist Revolution shattered and Stalin imposed a substitution - his view that the next task of World Communism was to strengthen the Soviet Union because only a powerful "Mother Country of Communism" would be a guarantee of further successes of this Revolution in other countries in the future.

While both of the two post-World War I ideological revolutions had to be replaced in the practical politics of post-war era by their

---

197 There were, of course, other causes for "The Downfall of the Postwar Democracies in Europe" - (the title of Chapter III of Beneš, E., Democracy Today and Tomorrow, pp. 53-92, wherein he provided the enumeration and explanation thereof). As one of the main causes Beneš listed "Communism and Its Postwar Policy Against Democracy" - (Ibid., pp. 61-70). Insofar as the League of Nations was concerned, it was to him "An Expression of the Democratization of Europe and of the World" - (Ibid., Chapter IV, pp. 93-136) and he attributed its failure to: a) Conflict between theory and practice, b) Difficulties with economic and military sanctions, c) The distrust of individual states for the policy and principles of the League of Nations, and Beneš concluded that the most fundamental cause was the decline of European Democracies.

substitutions, and even these appeared to have been beset with insurmountable difficulties, there re-appeared on the European political scene totalitarian ideologies which were designed to propel revisionist states towards attacking and destroying the European status-quo.

Fascism in Italy and Nazism in Germany, the latter of which was particularly dangerous to the existence of the new European Order in general and of Czechoslovakia in particular. Beneš held a view that it had always been the law of history and international politics that after every war the defeated party had tried to wipe out its defeat either by political and diplomatic means or by a new war. He explained that Germany which had not ceased to be a Great Power even at the time of its defeat at the end of World War I had begun, almost immediately after the signing of the Versailles Peace Treaty, to fight for its revision and for the destruction of the new European status quo which had been the result of its military defeat and of the partially effected two Great Ideological Revolutions.

On October 31, 1933, the then Foreign Minister Beneš had outlined in Parliament at Prague the meaning and aims of Nazi Germany:

> Until the arrival of the present regime in Germany, fourteen years of post-war European policy have been taken up with the struggle to secure peace in Europe on the basis of the Paris Peace Treaties. During this period, it became clear to all, even in the camp of the former victorious powers, that it would not be possible to hold the defeated nations in a position of permanent inferiority, and that agreement between the two camps must be gradually prepared. The change must be brought about peacefully and the respective positions be adjusted so that, by a process of gradual compromise, a new peace organization of Europe will finally be reached.
>
> The German National-Socialist revolution has interrupted this gradual development. In my opinion, the final aims and

> ideals of Stresemann's policy were, broadly speaking, not much different from the final aims of the policy of present-day Germany. The two differed only in their external manifestations and procedure and in the better understanding of the aims, efforts and needs of the rest of Europe, which exercised a passing influence on the tactics and methods of Stresemann's Germany.
>
> Ever since the unification of the German nation in modern times, especially after the revolution of 1848, German policy has had a Pan-German basis. The Reich of Kaiser Wilhelm followed this policy as well as present-day Germany. Europe must reckon with this as a fact and must prepare itself accordingly.
>
> But present-day Germany considered the pace and methods of Stresemann's Germany for the realization of German national aims, as too slow. It has therefore broken away from this line of development and begun to use more radical methods. The consequence is that nearly all European countries have been taken by surprise by the sudden expansion of German national dynamism...[198]

Having understood that the revisionist camp on the one hand, and the status quo camp on the other hand would either have to reach an agreement on the way of peaceful development and co-existence or they would inevitably get involved in another war, Beneš had pursued a foreign policy which would guarantee that Czechoslovakia would successfully emerge either from any diplomatic and political negotiations or even from a possible war. Towards achieving this goal he got so often involved as Foreign Minister in matters purely of Great Powers' concern because he always strove at keeping all the World War I Allied Nations in the state of unity and co-operation, and at maintaining Czechoslovakia's Alliances

---

198 Beneš, E., La Révolution Allemande et la Nouvelle Phase de la Politique Européenne, Beneš' address to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate given in Prague on October 31, 1933, Prague, pp. 15-17 - See also Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 4-5.

with France and the states of the Little Entente. He was convinced that a peaceful compromise would only be possible if Germany were to see itself opposed, at the critical moment, by a solid coalition of the status-quo states, and would not, furthermore, succeed in disturbing this coalition so as to be able to commit its acts of aggression against each state separately and successively. His Russian policy was also governed by these considerations - besides his well-known phobia of a Russo-German Alliance against the rest of Europe which would have meant extreme danger to, if not an outright destruction of, the Czechoslovak state, he also believed that in any future conflict "victory would go to the side to which the Soviet Union ultimately gave its support".[199]

In theory, Beneš' Czechoslovak foreign policy was guided by the three governing principles which remained unchanged during the entire period of the First Republic: the principle of securing the existence of the Czechoslovak State, the principle of peace and reconstruction, and finally that of peace and democracy. The first principle was to Beneš the one of supreme importance expressing the aim of his self-imposed life-mission; the other two were subordinated to it;[200] it also encompassed

---

199 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p.6. - For further details on Beneš' policy towards Soviet Russia see the next Section of this Chapter: (ii) Foreign Relations.

200 Beneš presented his earliest explanation of these three principles to the Plenary Session of the Czechoslovak House of Commons on October 30, 1923. (See: Beneš, E. La situation internationale, Prague, 1923, 15p.; also Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 261-277). He emphasized the fact that every move, every action of the Czechoslovak foreign policy was inspired by, and had "always and systematically the only goal: to consolidate and secure existence of the state". (Beneš, E., Problémy,

the principle of securing the preservation of the post-World War I international political Order. The League was to Beneš "ipso facto an attempt to introduce into international relationships the principles and methods employed in the mutual relations of private individuals".[201] By doing so he followed the theoretical line of international morality which was laid down by President Wilson in his address to Congress on the declaration of war in 1917:

---

pp. 274-5). While explaining, at the same time, that the principles of peace and democracy held by Czechoslovakia were identical with those held by the League of Nations, he admitted that he was well aware of the "relative weakness of the League of Nations. During the last difficult conflict at Geneva it was almost possible to feel this weakness. I know that the League of Nations is unable today to fully decide European politics, I know, however, that it would be a very fateful error not to duly appreciate the League of Nations, not to follow its policies, not to everywhere support it and not to help it become stronger. The League of Nations represents a great idea of international moral authority and a great idea of democracy, employed in international relations. Every democratic nation must strive at having the League of Nations on its side. The Czechoslovak Republic will therefore continue to carry out consistently and everywhere a policy of peace and democracy in harmony with the intentions and ideas of the League of Nations..."(Ibid., p. 274).

The principle of peace and reconstruction encompassed according to Beneš his efforts to conclude agreements with Czechoslovakia's actually or potentially hostile states which were its immediate neighbours - Germany, Austria, Hungary and Poland, to build a tradition in foreign policy with France, England, the United States and Italy and with its closest friends in the Little Entente, as well as economically helping states such as Austria and Hungary in order to prevent their falling a prey to the rule of anarchy - this last consideration played also an important part in the Czechoslovak attitude towards Soviet Russia and Germany in the early years of the post World War I period. The goal of this principle was to "ensure the state an internal peace so that it could devote itself without difficulties to its internal work". (Ibid., p. 274).

201 League of Nations, Fourth Assembly, Vol. 1, p. 144.

> We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states.[202]

Until his departure from Geneva in December 1935, when he had to vacate the League's highest office to enter the highest office of his country - the Presidency of Czechoslovakia, he fought at Geneva in a most vehement manner for the implementation of the Wilsonian ideas of a new democratic international community, and kept on even afterwards publicly expressing his optimism and faith in the effectiveness and future role of the League. Yet as early as on March 25, 1935 - even before the League's Abyssinian fiasco - he gave an astonishingly realistic and pessimistic appraisal of this international organization to the American Minister at Prague.[203] While the latter expressed his

---

202 Public Papers of Woodrow Wilson: War and Peace, Vol 1, p. 11, quoted by Carr, E.H., The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919-1939, New York, 1964, p. 153. Carr presents in this work President Wilson, President Roosevelt and Dr Beneš as the three principal representatives of the theory "propounded by most utopian writers, that the same code of morality is applicable to individuals and to states" (ibid., p. 153). Having selected the above quotations from Beneš' and President Wilson's speeches (listed here as Notes 201 and 202 respectively), Carr uses for his argument in regard to President Roosevelt the latter's October 5, 1937 Chicago speech where he stated that "national morality is as vital as private morality" (ibid., p. 154). In opposition to this theory there was, according to Carr, another theory, held mainly by realists, that "relations between states are governed solely by power and that morality plays no part in them" (ibid., p. 153). While Carr places Beneš in this respect in the opposite camp from the realists as he understood them, Beneš was truly a "realist" in the strict interpretation of this word - he knew that only by being a consistent and effective exponent of the ideas of democratization of the world was he able to hope that his self-imposed mission to preserve his state, would be successful.

203 J. Butler Wright's Dispatch No 131 from Prague of March 25,

surprise about Beneš' frankness in this matter, the then American Ambassador at Berlin W.E. Dodd fittingly commented: "Virtual death of League admitted by Dr Beneš in March, 1935".[204]

Until the disaster of Munich, Beneš resolutely followed the ideals of Wilson and T.G. Masaryk, the ideals which brought his state to life and which laid down the foundations of the new European Order. He was attacked because of his stand both at home and abroad, having been accused of rigidity, uncompromising attitude and, above all, of procrastination and inability of amending his policies to accommodate the changing European political conditions;[205] the truth

---

1935 about his conversation with Beneš of the same date. He reported that after having asked Beneš about the authority and activities of the League, the latter "...said that frankly he believed that the activities of that organization must necessarily be limited to study, counsel and advice, rather than any united action which, unfortunately, would be controlled more now than ever by the respective political considerations of the various countries and also because many small nations were so busily engaged in adjusting their policies to the rapidly changing sequence of events that they would not be in a position to recommend unanimous action of the League of Nations which would in any way entail the use of force". The American Minister then concludes: "I was particularly interested in this observation of Dr Beneš and the frankness with which he thus admitted this weakness of the League - an unusual admission for one who has been so consistently dedicated to that organization". (This document was discovered by the author in the William Edward Dodd Papers, AC. No 8,077; 9,732; 10,089; 10,106; 12,828. II-31-0,1-P,4; Cont. 48. Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress).

204 W.E. Dodd was a convinced opponent of Nazism who resigned his post in 1937 because he was unable to get understanding and support for his stand towards Nazi-Germany at the State Department. (His remark was written on the document identified in the previous note - 203; see also Note 234 of this Chapter).

205 At home most of these attacks were carried out by the Henlein party, by other extreme rightist parties and by his personal enemies; abroad they originated mainly at Berlin and in the British Foreign Office

remains, however, that he had done so for the simple reason that there just existed no other theory he could have followed towards the preservation of his state.[206]

---

and its diplomatic staff. (For the latter see Section (a) Problems of the Czechoslovak Internal Politics, Sub-section (i) Necessity for the Democratic Regime, of this Chapter).

206 See the next Chapter and the development of Beneš' theory of undoing Munich and of re-establishing of Czechoslovakia within its original boundaries, based precisely on his stubborn following of the Wilsonian ideals and his fight for the Preservation of the post-World War I Order.

(ii) Foreign Relations

(aa) Introduction

> ...we have succeeded by our foreign policy in gaining recognition in Europe and, ... throughout the world; we are a small state, but smallness of size does not exclude world significance. The Czech question, as I have always believed, is a world question, and the Czechoslovak state must follow a world policy. It is doing so. We are compelled to follow a world policy owing to our geographical position and historical development... we must attentively watch the development of post-war Europe and the entire world, for the peaceful adjustment of Europe means a great change of States and their mutual relations. Not only the victorious but also the defeated states are developing and we are affected to a very considerable degree by their development...[207]

The Czechoslovak geographical position coupled with Masaryk's-Beneš' interpretation of the Czech history laid down the foundations of the Czechoslovak foreign policy carried out by Beneš. This policy had to encounter, right from the very beginnings, forces emanating from most of its immediate neighbours and which gave every indication that they would become stronger with the passing of time. A summary of Beneš' policies and the manner in which he carried them out towards the individual Great Powers, Czechoslovakia's immediate neighbours and Yugoslavia[208] as well as their reaction to his policies, his state, his

---

207 Masaryk, T.G., Speech of the President of the Czechoslovak Republic on the Tenth Anniversary of the Attainment of the Country's Independence - October 28, 1928, Prague 1928, pp. 11-12.

208 Yugoslavia held a special position because of its membership in the Little Entente and constituted an exception to the rule that only the Great Powers and Czechoslovakia's immediate neighbours played an important role in Czechoslovakia's foreign relations affecting individual states.

nation[209] and, above all, his personality, provides the essential understanding of his desperate attempts to preserve the existence of his state in its entirety during the changes which were so rapidly taking place in these states in the pre-Munich era of his presidency.[210]

---

209 The word "nation" is given here the meaning of the Central European literary and customary use; it connotes a group of people characterized by a common language, culture, territory, history, character and will. (Among the Anglo-Saxons this term is used in the sense of "political state".)

210 For a detailed study of Czechoslovak foreign relations and Beneš' political personality during the period of the First Republic see the following works which were selected by the author as being the most representative ones:

(a) Works by Beneš - his addresses, speeches, exposés, articles and monographs dealing with this subject, and listed here in a chronological order:

1. Problémy Nové Evropy a Zahraniční politika československá, Projevy a úvahy z r. 1919-1924, Praha, 1924.
2. The Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia, a speech in the House of Commons on January 27, 1921, Prague, 1921.
3. La Conférence de Gênes, an address to the Czechoslovak Parliament on May 23, 1922, Prague, 1922.
4. Réponse Faite par M. Beneš à la séance de la Chambre du 30 mai 1922, aux interpellations relatives à son exposé du 23 mai 1922, Prague 1922.
5. La situation internationale, a report made in the House of Commons on October 30, 1923, Prague, 1923.
6. Five Years of Czechoslovak Foreign Policy, a speech in the Czechoslovak Parliament on February 6, 1924, Prague, 1924.
7. The Diplomatic Struggle for European Security and the Stabilization of Peace, a speech in the Foreign Committee of the Senate on April 1, 1925, Prague, 1925.
8. The Problem of the Small Nations after the World War, a lecture delivered on December 2, 1925 at the King's College, London, University of London, 1926.
9. La Situation internationale et la politique étrangère Tchécoslovaque, an address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on June 6, 1928, Prague, 1928.
10. Les problèmes internationaux actuels et la Tchécoslovaquie, an address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on October 4, 1928, Prague, 1928.

11. The problems of the Limitation of Armaments, Prague, 1929.
12. European Situation, the League of Nations and Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1930.
13. The Austro-German Customs Union Project, a speech in the House of Commons on April 23, 1931, Prague, 1931.
14. Les problèmes de L'Europe Centrale, an address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on March 22, 1932, Prague, 1932.
15. Le Dilemme Européen: La Guerre ou la Paix? An address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on November 7, 1932, Prague, 1932.
16. Le Pacte D'Organisation de la Petite Entente, An address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on March 1, 1933, Prague, 1933.
17. La question du Directoire Européen et la revision des frontières, An address to the House of Commons on April 25, 1933, Prague, 1933.
18. La révolution Allemande et la nouvelle phase de la politique Européenne, An address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on October 31, 1933, Prague, 1933.
19. The Problem of Central Europe and the Austrian Question, an address to the Joint Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate on March 21, 1934, Prague, 1934.
20. A New Phase of the Struggle For European Equilibrium, an exposé to the Czechoslovak Parliament on July 2, 1934, Prague, 1934.
21. Vers un regroupement des forces en Europe? An address to the Czechoslovak Parliament on November 6, 1934, Prague, 1934.
22. Le sens politique de la tragédie de Marseille, Speeches at the Council of the League of Nations at Genève on December 7 and December 10, 1934, Prague, 1934.
23. Boj o mír a bezpečnost státu, Czechoslovak Foreign Policy in Speeches of Beneš during the 1924-1933 period, Prague, 1934.
24. The Struggle for Collective Security in Europe and the Italo-Abyssinian War, a speech in the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament on November 5, 1935, Prague, 1935.
25. Probleme der Tschechoslovakischen Republik, Speeches given in Northern Bohemia on August 19, 1936 in Liberec, Železný Brod and Jablonec, Prague, 1936.
26. President in Southern Bohemia, Speeches given there from May 6 - May 8, 1937, Prague, 1937.
27. Germany and Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1937, (2 Vols.):
    Vol 1: Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia;
    Vol 2: Czechoslovakia at the Peace Conference and the Present German - Czechoslovak Discussion.

(b) Works by the Democratic authors:

(i) Czechoslovak authors -

1. Borovička, J., Ten Years of Czechoslovak Politics, Prague, 1929.
2. Hodža, M. Federation in Central Europe, London, 1942.
3. Krofta, K., Z dob naší první republiky, Praha, 1939.
4. Papoušek, J., Czechoslovakia, Soviet Russia and Germany, Prague, 1936.

(ii) Foreign authors -

1. Bruegel, J.W., Tschechen und Deutsche, 1918-38, Munich, 1967.
2. Grant-Duff, S., German and Czech, London, 1937.
3. Seton-Watson, H. Eastern Europe Between the Wars 1918-41, Cambridge, 1945.
4. Seton-Watson, H., Twenty-Five Years of Czechoslovakia, London, 1945.
5. Thomson, H.S., Czechoslovakia in European History, Princeton, 1953.
6. Wiskemann, E., Czechs and Germans, London, 1938.

(c) Works by the Nazi or pro-Nazi authors:

(i) Czechoslovak authors -

1. Košák, V., O budoucnosti Čechů v nové Evropě, Praha, 1942.
2. Lažnovský, K., Ein Tscheche ueber das Benesch - Regime, Praha, 1940.
3. Moravec, E., Das Ende der Benesch - Republik, Praha, 1941.
4. Vajtauer, E., Češi v nové Evropě, Praha, 1941.

(ii) Foreign Authors -

1. Berber, F., Europaeische Politik 1933-38 im Spiegel der Prager Akten, Essen, 1942.
2. Bittner, K., Deutsche und Tschechen, Leipzig, 1936.
3. Frank, K.H., Čechy a Morava v Říši, Praha, 1942.
4. Lades, H. Die Tschechen und die deutsche Frage, Erlangen, 1938.
5. Tewes, E., 20 Jahre Benesch - System, Bremen, 1939.

(d) Works by the Communist or Pro-Communist authors

(i) Czechoslovak authors*

1. Gajanová, A., ČSR a středoevropská politika velmocí 1918-1938, Praha, 1967.
2. Gottwald, K., Spisy, 15 Vols., Praha, 1950-61.
3. Kubka, F., Mezi válkami, Praha, 1969.
4. Kvaček, R., Nad Evropou zataženo, Praha, 1966.
5. Laurová, J. et al., Náboženství, církve, klerikalism a naše dějiny, Praha, 1962.
6. Leták, M., V osidlech zrady, Praha, 1965.
7. Nosek, V., O československé zahraniční politice v letech 1918-39, Praha, 1956.
8. Olivová, V., Československo v rozrušené Evropě, Praha, 1968.

(ii) Foreign Authors -

1. Litvinov, M.M., Vnějšaja politika SSSR, Moskva, 1937.
2. Majský, I.M., Kdo pomáhal Hitlerovi, Praha, 1964.
3. Potěmkin, V., et al., Dějiny diplomacie III, Praha, 1949.
4. Prasolov, S.J., Československo v době ohrožení fašismem a hitlerovskou agresí, Praha, 1956.
5. Prasolov, S.J. and Rezonob, P.J., Sovětsko - čechoslovackie otnošenija meždu dvumja vojnami 1918-1939, Moskva, 1968.

* This group may theoretically include authors who were neither Communists nor pro-Communists; for practical purposes, however, no substantial difference would be seen since they had to write along the lines which were acceptable to the Communist regime at the given time.

Note: The author admits that he may be accused of having arbitrarily selected some works which others would have omitted and omitting some of those which others would have included. Having spent a considerable amount of time and effort in preparing this selection he believes, however, that taking Beneš and his political behaviour as the primary object, this list is of help to those who are seriously attempting to gather further information on this subject during the given period.

(bb) France[211]

> ...Je me suis permis de parler ainsi parce que je sais que mes paroles seront comprises telles qu'elles ont été pensées: comme l'acte de foi d'un homme qui croit à la grande mission de la France et à son grand avenir, parce qu'il connaît ses grandes ressources intellectuelles, morales et matérielles et parce qu'il croit à la vérité, à l'honnêteté et à la fraternité humaine...[212]

Post World-War I France became the most important basis for the orientation of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy. This situation was due not only to the well-known Masaryk's statement that Czechoslovakia had to have one friend who would always come to its help and that friend was France,[213] and Beneš' greatest admiration and love held continuously

---

211 For further information see:

1. Bonnet, G., Défense de la Paix, 1, Genève, 1946.
2. Chastenet, J., Vingt ans d'Histoire diplomatique, - Genève, 1945.
3. France, Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, Commission de publication des documents relatifs aux origines de la Guerre 1939-45: Documents Diplomatiques Français 1932-39 - 1re Série (1932-1935); 2e Série (1936-1939) Paris, 1963-1973.
4. Janišová, M., "Francouzská zahraniční politika a Československo v období příprav Mnichova" in the Československý Časopis Historický (quoted hereafter ČSČH), Vol XI, No 5, 1963, pp. 573-593.
5. Jírů, J., "Od Delbose k Bonnetovi" in the ČSČH Vol XV, No 1, 1967, pp. 35-50.
6. Kvaček, R., "K francouzsko - sovětsko - československým vztahům po květnu 1935" in Fiala, Z., and Nový, R., eds., Z Českých dějin, Praha, 1966, pp. 269-287.
7. Paul - Boncour, J., Entre deux guerres, souvenirs sur la IIIe république, III, Paris, 1945.
8. Renouvin, P., Les crises du XXe siècle, VIII, Paris, 1958.

212 Beneš, E., La France et la Nouvelle Europe, discours prononcé le 18 October 1932 à Paris, à la cérémonie du Centenaire du rétablissement de l'Académie de Sciences morales et politiques, Paris, 1932.

213 See Note 66 of Chapter I - in addition he had also proposed at this time the conclusion of a formal treaty of alliance with France.

by him from his stay in France during his early student years until the tragedy of Munich but to the reality that post-war France was the only Allied Great Power which was willing, because of its political interests, to play this role. Beneš' policy never wavered from this closeness to France "which had done so much for us because of the continental European policy and our position in Central Europe".[214]

During the decade following the Locarno Pact Beneš had to witness, despite his determined efforts to strengthen the deteriorating Czechoslovak and French positions in Europe, the continuously increasing signs of weakness displayed by France insofar as its determination to preserve the European status quo was concerned. One of the most damaging events of this kind took place on March 7, 1936, less than three months after Beneš' election to the Presidency, when after denouncing the Versailles Treaty and the Locarno Pact, Hitler marched his troops into demilitarized Rhineland. Beneš who expected a quick and positive reaction from France and Great Britain in order to stop Hitler's first all-out act of aggression and an open defiance of international agreements, was bitterly disappointed:

> ...Hitler, by occupying the left bank of the Rhine, struck one of the last, decisive blows against European peace. At that time, Czechoslovakia was ready to enter the conflict against Germany at the side of France... We told the French Minister in Prague clearly that we would follow France, in accordance with

---

214 Beneš, E., "Our Revolution", an address to the Czechoslovak Revolutionary Assembly on September 30, 1919 in Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 31, Praha, 1924.

> our treaty obligations, if she would draw the logical conclusion from Hitler's act. Hitler had violated the Treaty of Locarno with its so-called Rhine Pact which gave international authority to France and Great Britain in this specific case to go to war immediately. The Western democracies could have stopped Germany and its criminal policy in time. In my opinion, Czechoslovakia was in duty bound to go with them and would have done so. But nothing happened.
>
> Here, France committed the most fatal error the results of which were felt throughout Europe. It failed to act according to a treaty which had been concluded for this very contingency, in full agreement with Germany, whose signature the Treaty actually bore. The Western Democracies acted on this occasion with inexplicable weakness, irresolution and the most frivolous lack of foresight...
>
> ...This fatal step on the part of the French policy was the ultimate and direct cause of the decay and tragedy of France, From it, derived Munich and the French capitulation of June, 1940. In March, 1936 France deserted itself and it was so much the easier for it to desert us in September, 1938. Its own capitulation in 1940 and its consequent degradation were merely the direct consequence of its former error...
>
> ...Europe now (March, 1936) knew for certain that France and Great Britain were not prepared to intervene energetically to prevent further violations of a treaty so important for them and for Europe as the so-called Rhine Pact signed at Locarno...[215]

There was rarely written an evaluation of this French (and also British) debacle in a clearer manner. Yet not so clear and comprehensible

---

215 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 12-13. This event had caused that "in Yugoslavia... the policy of turning away from France was much strengthened... Rumanian policy was much shaken... Beck's Poland hinted with cynical and malicious glee that it was now clear how right Poland had been to conclude its treaty with Germany in January, 1934... France,.. was not even defending itself. How could then Poland count on France defending Poland in accordance with their alliance?..." (Ibid., pp. 13-14).

Speaking more than six years after this act of Hitler's aggression to the British audience, Beneš made an interesting remark which was clearly directed at England's foreign policy of the 1936-38 period:

> ...The refusal of the Western Powers to march into the Rhineland in the Spring of 1936 revealed to all the countries of Eastern and Central Europe the dangerous fact that a European equilibrium cannot be maintained exclusively by the so-called French security system. But nothing radical was ever done to alter that policy... (Beneš, E., What Would be a Good Peace,

is the negative answer to the question if Czechoslovakia, in a similar fashion as the other states, began subsequently to adjust its foreign policy by taking into account the then existing realities on the international scene, and ceased to entertain any hopes that France "deserting itself" was going to help others. The explanation of this phenomenon is that Beneš was just unable to believe that France would dishonour itself by refusing to observe its signature on the solemn treaty of mutual assistance in the case of an unprovoked German attack. He furthermore believed that in the ultimate moment of German threats to his country, France, supported by Great Britain, would throw off its recent displays of weakness and hesitation and would rise again in its full traditional grandeur.[216] He honestly believed even at the most critical times before Munich when Czechoslovakia alone remained a faithful ally of France, and France itself appeared to be deserting him at times, that this policy was the only one available to him which would enable him to successfully accomplish his life-mission of preserving his state in its entirety; since he had by then considered a European war to be inevitable, this policy presented to him also a guarantee that Czechoslovakia would find itself again in the victorious camp after the cessation of hostilities.[217]

An address to the University of Manchester on December 5, 1942, London, 1943, p.7.)

216 In this belief Beneš was consistently confirmed by assurances extended to him by the Quai d'Orsey and by the French Minister at Prague de Lacroix and his predecessor Naggiar. (See documents listed in No. 3, note 210, especially 2e Série). This subject will also be dealt with in the subsequent section of this Chapter dealing with Great Britain.

217 This author is convinced that Beneš' policy towards France was not only the best, but indeed the only, policy for Czechoslovakia to follow if it were to survive intact the forthcoming ordeal.

(cc) Great Britain[218]

> ...Our relations with England have been during these five years at their best. Insofar as the interests are concerned, we are quite apart but there do exist many indirect relations... Its traditional policy has always refused to enter into any firmer obligation on the Continent, especially in Central Europe... Until today it is uncertain if England would make an exception in the case of France and Belgium. We ourselves have always considered, and are still considering, an Anglo-French Entente as the key to the solution of European situation and as the guarantee of European peace for many decades to come...[219]

The whole essence of the Anglo-Czechoslovak relations during the First Republic was summarized by Beneš in the above statement: these relations rested on two contradictory ideas, one of which was represented by England and the other by him, and which were in their extreme forms mutually exclusive. This being so, there had to be the inevitable clashes of interest and in the end, in accordance with the law of history and with the brutal law of international power politics, it was to be the fate of

---

218 For further information see:

1. Avon, Earl of, The Eden Memoirs - Facing the Dictators, London, 1962.
2. Barker, Sir E., "British and Czech Democracy" in Opočenský, J., ed., Dr Edvard Beneš, London, 1945, pp. 41-53.
3. British Foreign Office - Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939- General Correspondence Files and Cabinet Papers.
4. Churchill, W.S., The Second World War, Vol 1, Boston, 1948.
5. Documents on International Affairs, Vol II, London, 1943.
6. Feiling, K., The Life of Neville Chamberlain, London, 1946.
7. Halifax, Rt. Hon Viscount, Speeches on Foreign Policy 1934-40, Oxford, 1940.
8. Henderson, Sir N., Failure of a Mission, New York, 1941.
9. Kennedy, J., Why England Slept, New York, 1940.
10. Law, R., "Czechoslovak -British Relations" in Opočenský, J., ed., op.cit., pp. 33-40.
11. Reynolds, P., Die britische Aussenpolitik zwischen den beiden Weltkriegen, Braunschweig, 1952.

219 Beneš, E., Problémy, Praha, 1924, p. 298.

the small state - Czechoslovakia to be sacrificed by the Great Power - England. Thus on the one hand England was determined to pursue its policy of non-commitment, certainly insofar as Central Europe in general, and Czechoslovakia in particular, were concerned, and on the other hand Beneš was equally determined to ascertain a direct commitment by England to France and through this arrangement its indirect commitment to Czechoslovakia - he understood that only England and France acting united had the necessary deterrent power capable of stopping Hitler's aggressive plans. It was for this reason, coupled with the British fear of Soviet Russia and a possible Bolshevik revolution taking place in European countries ravaged by war into which he was determined to draw them that the British Foreign Office had generally adopted a hostile attitude towards Beneš in whom they furthermore saw the principal factor who was able and capable of destroying their own schemes.[220]

---

220 BFO's hostile remarks and attacks on Beneš are legion: some of them have already been noted earlier in this study. There were undoubtedly some which were prompted by Beneš' persistently optimistic statements which were considered by the British officials to be unwarranted or by some of his forecasts which never came true (e.g., he predicted for years an early collapse of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy); most of these attacks were brought about by the clash of the two irreconcilable basic concepts of their foreign policies towards each other and by Beneš' unceasing efforts to force his concept on England by forcing it one way or other to clearly declare its readiness to stand by France, Czechoslovakia and the other two countries of the Little Entente in any future conflict with Nazi Germany.

Only a few of the most representative hostile remarks and attacks on Beneš can be included in this note:

1. Sir Samuel Hoare's letter from Geneva of September 13, 1935 about his talk with Beneš drew the following remarks by Foreign Office officials:

The greater were Hitler's threats to Czechoslovakia, the

Chatham: "Dr Beneš' remarks about his country are of course misleading... The remark about the Henlein Party is quite absurd."

Gallop: "If M. Beneš' statements... are to be judged from his comments on the internal situation in his country, they can only be highly misleading."

Carr: "I am afraid Dr Beneš' views cannot be taken very seriously. He is getting more and more in the habit... of talking for effect and with little regard for facts". (R 5886/234/12; FO 371/19492).

2. Dr Beneš was described as "a gullible creature" by Labonehen of F.O. on June 29, 1935 in connection with Sir J. Addison's report on Beneš' visit to Russia. (N 3240/160/38; FO 371/19461).

3. Sir J. Addison's vicious attack on Beneš in his Dispatch 175 of August 25, 1936 - Dr Beneš was according to him "too small-minded,.. ruthless in his internal policy... he suppresses political opponents... In foreign affairs he persuades himself, by constant repetition that certain facts are as he would wish them to be... His speeches... mean less than nothing..." (R 5216/32/12; FO 371/20375)

4. O'Malley accuses Beneš in his letter to Sir A. Eden of October 13, 1936 of "personal inelasticity and obstinacy".(R 6724/32/12; FO 371/20375)

5. Hadow's letter to O'Malley of December 19, 1936 accuses Beneš of "unfortunate insincerity". (R 7727/32/12; FO 371/20375).

6. Very strong and emphatic attack by the F.O. on Beneš (because in this case the two above-mentioned irreconcilable basic concepts of their foreign policy towards each other met head-on) for hinting in the semi-official organ the "Prager Presse" of February 15, 1936, "for the greater comfort of the nervous in Czechoslovakia that Great Britain is now ready to defend any Danubian state subjected to attack, with the implication that to the Russian is added the British Air Force as a potential defender of the Czechoslovak frontiers" (quotation from Hadow's report). Reaction by the FO officials ranged from statements that this was "a very unsafe assumption by the Prager Presse" (Cheeltham) to "His (Beneš') attitude really suggests that he believes himself to have the French Army and the British Air Force at call" (signature illegible and could not have been deciphered by the FO staff at London on June 15, 1971) to comments that "...Any such belief is, of course, illusory... and is probably known to be illusory to Dr Beneš. But this does not deter him from suggesting the contrary to an audience who have only the foggiest ideas of the exact nature of our obligations... and our probable intentions. I have characterized this state of affairs as dangerous because it is liable to lead such countries as Czechoslovakia, to adopt towards Germany a less conciliatory policy..." (O'Malley) and "...We have got to be very careful of this sort of propaganda. It is evidently being run by Dr Beneš and I strongly suspect that it is being put round in the lobbies of the French Chamber. M. Litvinov (Foreign Minister of Soviet Russia - note by author) is, of course, an adept at it". (Wigram). (R 999/999/12; FO 371/20376).

greater were, on the one hand, the British Foreign Office's efforts to

---

7. In a note to Bentinck's letter to Sir A. Eden of December 7, 1936 about Major Stronge's interview with Beneš, Sir R. Vansittart remarked that "Dr Beneš' optimism usage quite untrue. It does not impress most people in Central Europe and he belies it by his repeated and feverish hunts for more security and operative allies". (R 7442/1162/12; FO 371/20377).

8. Bentinck reports in his letter to O'Malley of December 2, 1936 that Beneš spoke to him and to Capt. Wedgwood Benn "with his usual... exaggerated optimism... as though the Sudeten-German question could not be solved in this generation. I fear he is living in a world of fantasy in this respect and will not face up to the danger of the situation..." (R 7381/1799/12; FO 371/20378).

9. In a note to Sir R. Hoare's Telegram 5 from Bucharest of February 12, 1937 that President of Council Tatarescu was "utterly convinced that European peace could only be assured if it were the declared intention of Great Britain to join France and the Little Entente in defending Czechoslovakia against attack", Bramwell of F.O., having first of all drawn Beneš into the picture, sarcastically remarked: "Both M. Beneš and M. Tatarescu are busy angling for some declaration that this country will come to the aid of Czechoslovakia and putting it about that we will..." (R 1130/188/12; FO 371/21127).

10. In a note to Hadow's Telegram 12 from Prague of February 12, 1937 about his talk with Beneš, Sargent wrote: "...As for Dr Beneš' arguments they are so contradictory that it is, I think, clear that the poor man does not know which way to turn... I dislike these discussions with M. Beneš on questions of political strategy..." (R 1131/188/12; FO 371/21127).

11. Telegram 13 from Hadow of February 16, 1937 about his talk with Beneš about the Sudeten-German question prompted by an article from the "Daily Telegraph" of February 13, 1937, that England had urged Prague to seek closer collaboration with the German minorities, drew these observations: "I have little doubt that Dr Beneš is furious at this article but he is clever enough to pretend that it is going to help him with his Czech chauvinists. Unfortunately, I am inclined to include Dr Beneš himself in this category". (Sargent) - "Yes, Dr Beneš was furious at this article and did not disguise his fury. He is a blind little bat who has done a lot of flapping in his flight". (Vansittart) -(R 1132/188/12; FO 371/21127).

12. Sir R. Campbell's confidential letter to Sir R. Vansittart from Belgrade of April 26, 1937 about his talk with Prince Paul about Dr Beneš' visit which he concluded by a remark that "I do not suppose there is anything very new in any of this... Personally it always seems to me that Beneš has a tendency to say one thing one day and another the next according to his mood", drew the following Sargent's note: "It is, as we know, part of

ensure that no commitment would be made by England and at the same time to put pressure on France that Beneš be forced to make concessions to the Sudeten Germans,[221] and correspondingly greater were, on the

---

Dr Beneš' technique to practise an imperturbable optimism in all circumstances... from our point of view it has the inconvenience of making it impossible to accept any Dr Beneš' statements... and his views, therefore... are to my mind entirely valueless..." (R 3066/2594/12; FO 371/21134).

13. In a note to Newton's telegram 30 from Prague of March 19, 1938 that Beneš had told Sir R.B. Lockhart that recent purges in Russia had been very necessary, Walker of F.O. observed that "President Beneš states the things that he wishes as if they were facts...." (N 1622/26/38; FO 371/22286).

14. After reading Newton's Dispatch 75 from Prague of March 22, 1938, about Dr Beneš' talk with Leo Kennedy of March 16, Lord Perth sent from Rome on May 14, 1938 to Cadogan in London a letter with his observations on Beneš that "it was a typical Beneš conversation. I knew Beneš intimately for many years and personally liked him considerably but although he is a persuasive and eloquent talker, he has <u>always</u> been wrong in his political European prognostications and this is particularly the case as regards Italy and Germany. When Mussolini first came into power he assured me that he could not last for a year, after the year had expired that he gave him another 12 months, etc. I remember too, his telling me (and these observations were not in casual conversation but in meetings which some of us had regularly with him at Geneva) that Hitler could not possibly remain in power for more than six months. He has for years past maintained that the economic conditions of Italy and Germany were such that a collapse was imminent. Remembering all this, I felt when I read the dispatch in question that Beneš had learnt nothing from experience and that his present reasoning was likely to be as completely incorrect as the earnest, and I believe sincere, prophecies which he had made in the past". (C 2117/1941/18; FO 371/21713).

221 British Diplomatic Papers reveal how disturbed was the B.F.O. about the existing French policy of advising Beneš to be firm towards both Germany and the Sudeten Germans that it feverishly set the wheels in motion to force upon the Quai d'Orsay the British policy. London feared that as the result of the then existing French policy, Beneš would not yield to the Sudeten-German demands and that ultimately both the French and the British would become involved in an inevitable Czechoslovak - German military conflict. Only the opening of this political drama where the more powerful state - England forces its will on the weaker one - France, is of importance for this study of Dr Beneš'

other hand, Dr Beneš' and his French and Rumanian friends' efforts to induce England into making a definite declaration as to its determination to join France and the Little Entente in defending Czechoslovakia

---

political behaviour: the relevant documents reveal that the French, in contradistinction to the British understood, before they gave in to London, that the Sudeten-German problem was only a pretence, on the part of Nazi Germany, to conquer Czechoslovakia and thus to open the way for their future conquests in Eastern and Southeastern Europe. It also becomes clear that in the circumstances Dr Beneš had every reason to believe De Lacroix and other French officials that in the final show-down with Germany, France would fulfil its obligations. (for the immediate pre-Munich developments, see the next chapter).

1. Hadow's Telegram 11 from Prague of February 15, 1937 that he was told by the French Minister at Prague De Lacroix that "France was nervous about any Czechoslovak-German negotiations and was trying to hold Dr Beneš back", (R 1078/188/2; FO 371/21127).

2. Newton's Dispatch 88 from Prague of April 12, 1937 that De Lacroix told him that the French Government would probably not welcome an arrangement between Germany and Czechoslovakia, (R 2574/188/12; FO 371/21128).

3. Newton's confidential letter from Prague of July 12, 1937 to Cadogan that De Lacroix told him that Czechoslovakia's intention to negotiate with Henlein "had made a bad impression on him". He was totally opposed to the idea of having included the Henlein Party in the Government since this would have made from Czechoslovakia a vassal of Germany, (R 4942/188/12; FO 371/21130).

4. Thomas from the British Embassy at Paris confirmed on August 6, 1937 after having talked to President of the Council of France, Bargeton that De Lacroix views correctly reflect policy of the French Government which did not favour an arrangement which would appear as a surrender on the part of the Czechoslovak Government to the SDP. Note by an FO's "expert" Nichols: "... this confirms our fears that the French Government are taking a short-sighted and foolish line in Prague," (R 5455/188/12; FO 371/21130).

5. Confidential letter to O'Malley from Hadow from Prague of August 10, 1937 that he was able to positively state that De Lacroix advice "day in and day out" to Beneš was to have nothing to do with the SDP which France regards as the thin end of the German wedge which would destroy her control of Czechoslovakia and De Lacroix' instructions were at all cost to "saboter" the slightest endeavour at a rapprochement between the two countries. Hadow added that as long as this persisted he was unable to see how Beneš could afford to change his policy though he knew that

against any German attack and thus to assure European peace for a considerable length of time.[222]

---

his principal hope of salvation was in England and not in France, and urged F.O. to impress upon the Quai d'Orsay the British point of view that Czechoslovakia had to come, or at least to make all efforts towards coming, to terms with the SDP. Hadow concluded that it was his firm belief that Dr Beneš who was a "superb and supreme realist" would not fail to reach an agreement with the SDP and thus to solve a problem of great importance to Europe. -Vansittart's note: "What about saying something to Paris... M. De Lacroix seems to play a disastrous role and I wish we could get it altered." - Cadogan agreed. (R 5708/188/12; FO 371/21130).

In this manner wheels were set into motion by the BFO to force upon France its policy of non-commitment towards Czechoslovakia and the subsequent adoption by both of these countries the policy of pressure and threats on Dr Beneš.

222 Beneš made numerous statements directed at England in which he pleaded for such British declaration. Particularly representative is the record of Leo Kennedy's conversation with Dr Beneš of March 16, 1938 which took place shortly after Hitler's invasion of Austria. After dwelling upon the considerable material resources and industrial equipment of his country, Dr Beneš stated that due to its geographical position, Czechoslovakia was a European fortress which, if it fell, would involve the fall of other countries. At the end of the conversation Beneš stated that "unlike Austria, we will fight. We shall be massacred but we will fight". Kennedy then added: "Although he never once, as it were, begged for British support, I could see that his whole mind was bent on getting some sort of guarantee from Great Britain. The idea of an alliance seemed particularly to appeal to him and every time I said something implying that such guarantee was improbable, his face fell. He seemed in an anxious but nevertheless courageous frame of mind". (This report was sent by Newton as Dispatch 75 on March 22, 1938 - C 2117/1941/18; FO 371/21713).

It is now a matter of history that there were situations, right until the fateful Munich Agreement that one of these two sides - London and Dr Beneš - appeared to have triumphed only to have lost the gained ground shortly thereafter. There were so many forces determining the outcome of individual events over which neither Dr Beneš nor the British had an effective control - the most powerful and unpredictable of these forces having been Hitler. It is also a matter of history that Beneš' interpretation and prediction of events proved to be the correct one. The British, having believed that Hitler was only interested in the welfare of the Sudeten Germans, saw in Beneš and his "repressive policy" of the SDP the main culprit for the ever-growing worsening of the Czechoslovak-German relations which threatened the European peace. They could find some consolation in claiming ignorance of the Central European issues and the true nature of Hitler's intentions as well as in their attempts to follow the traditional non-committal policy in Central Europe which was to them a matter of overriding importance. Above all, however, they could claim, and justifiably so, that it was no other than the Czechoslovak Minister in England Jan Masaryk who personally asked the British Foreign Office in the first place, on May 25, 1936, to put pressure on Dr Beneš through the British Minister at Prague as well as through himself. He also stated that he had "all along, strongly disagreed with Dr Beneš' repressive policy". The record of this conversation between O'Malley and the F.O. and Jan Masaryk which until now has been totally unknown, and about the authenticity of which this author found no reason to doubt,

is just as much astonishing on the grounds of ignorance as on the grounds of treachery displayed by this Minister.[223] This discovered

---

223 This document is so important that it has to be shown here in its entirety:
"Record of conversation of May 25, 1936 at the Foreign Office between Jan Masaryk and Mr. O'Malley on Sudetendeutsche problem in which Masaryk said openly, but privately that he had, all along, strongly disagreed with Beneš' repressive policy. In fact he indicated that he had pressed his objections almost to the point of resignation. Sir R. Vansittart's remonstrances (R 2128/32/12) had been of the greatest service to him (Note by author - for more detail on this subject see immediately below) in pressing a point of view on which he and we agreed and really the only concrete point which emerged from the conversation was his anxiety that when Mr. Bentinck got to Prague, pressure should be put upon the Czechoslovak Government by the British Minister as well as through the Czechoslovak Minister in London. One other point which he raised was that we should be more specific in our criticism of the Czechoslovak administration. To this I answered that so long as Czechoslovak administration had not been judged to be an infraction of the Minorities Treaties, the repression of the Sudetendeutsche was a very delicate subject for us to handle, seeing that it was essentially a question of Czechoslovak internal administration. Such being its character, it was not really fair to expect us to be more specific and less general in our expressions of view than we had been, nor was this necessary. If we could convince Dr Beneš that he was being unwise in the general course he was following, Dr Beneš himself would be much the best judge of how, where and when to modify his policy". Sg. O'Malley, (R 3290/32/12; FO 371/20374).

The Two Documents Preceding and Related to the Above Document:

A Foreign Office Minute by Sargent of April 7, 1936 to Sir R. Vansittart indicates that Jan Masaryk came to see him before going to Prague for Easter and said that "it was high time that we all of us got away from generalities and that his Government was told some home truths, however unpalatable". Sargent then asks Vansittart to impress upon Masaryk next day the actual danger of the present Czech Government policy in regard to the Sudetendeutsche problem... (R 2126/32/12; FO 371/20374).

Record of conversation between Czechoslovak Minister Masaryk and Sir R. Vansittart of April 8, 1937 (Note by Author: mentioned in the first document in this note). Vansittart told Masaryk that he thought that the Czechoslovak Government, by their unwise treatment of the Sudetendeutsche were giving the Germans a grievance which they might exploit in the future... The Czechoslovak Government would be far wiser to deprive the Germans of any semblance of grievance which would otherwise be certainly

document constitutes a very grave judgement on the conduct of Jan Masaryk who was entrusted by his state to look after its most vital interests in the most important place during the most critical period. Instead of fulfilling his duties, and while Dr Beneš had desperately tried over and over again to persuade the British that he was doing all possible towards the solving of the SDP problem, and at the same time no less desperately tried to secure London's commitment so vital to his country because England was the sole European state which had the power to deter Hitler from attacking Czechoslovakia, his own Minister in England went behind his back to the BFO, spoke about "Dr Beneš' repressive policy" and requested even harsher and more specific criticism of the Czechoslovak administration than the British were prepared to render at that time. Is it any wonder that a couple of years later when it suited their purposes, the British were more than willing to oblige Mr. Jan Masaryk by granting his request?

---

turned to ill account. Moreover by doing so they would consolidate their own position at home, since there was ground for believing that the Sudetendeutsche could be conciliated. Masaryk asked if he could give this as a personal message from Vansittart to Dr Beneš. Vansittart replied that he certainly could do so and that he was really perturbed at this gratuitous provision of grievances when the right policy for Czechoslovakia should lie in exactly the opposite direction. (R 2128/32/12; FO 371/20374).

(dd) The United States[224]

> In Czechoslovakia I had an hour and half with Dr Beneš. He is clear-headed, objective-minded and a very able man. He is a real democrat... he spoke in terms of the greatest admiration of the "magnificent contribution your great President Roosevelt was making to Democracy..." ... in the event of German attack they could hold out some time and would go down "fighting to the last man". Tragic position of Czechoslovakia - an outpost of democracy in Europe. Masaryk, Beneš and their associates have done a fine job in this little country... But they are almost hemmed in by avaricious neighbours...[225]

The United States of Woodrow Wilson which had made such an enormous contribution to the establishment of Czechoslovakia, had withdrawn soon after World War I from Europe and returned to its traditional isolationist policy. By doing so and by its refusal to become a member of the newly-established League of Nations, it dealt a mortal blow to Masaryk's and Beneš' aspirations to fully put into effect the Wilsonian principles of a new era of World Democratic Society. The American withdrawal from Europe was so complete that in

---

224 For further information see:
1. Baker, R.S., Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement, Vol 3, London, 1933.
2. Davies, J.E., Mission to Moscow, New York, 1941.
3. Dodd, W.E., Ambassador Dodd's Diary 1933-38, New York, 1941.
4. Hull, C., The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, 2 Vols., New York, 1948.
5. Kennan, G.F., American Diplomacy 1900-1950, Chicago, 1951.
6. Mamatey, V.S., The United States and East Central Europe 1914-18, Princeton, 1957.
7. Pergler, Ch., America in the Struggle for Czechoslovak Independence, Philadelphia, 1926.

225 Personal letter of US Ambassador Joseph E. Davies to President Roosevelt from Moscow of September 13, 1937, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, PSF: Russia 1937-41, Item 47.

1924 Beneš was only able to express his hopes that there would "finally take place a preparation at least towards a partial participation of the United States, first of all in the economic and financial politics of Europe".[226] Thus the main, if not the only, American political contact with Europe during the entire period between the two wars was through its diplomats and the State Department, and to a lesser degree through its journalists, prominent personalities and industry.

During his Foreign Ministry Beneš had never lost an opportunity to present his views to any American whom he was able to meet at Geneva, on his European trips or at home; after having been elected to the Presidency, he made it a habit to extend personal invitations to prominent Americans who were visiting Europe, and above all, to grant to the American Minister at Prague a privileged and special treatment.[227] The main reason for doing so was Beneš' principal concept of his policy towards the United States which was governed by his conviction that it would ultimately have to be that country which would put pressure on, and persuade, Great Britain to openly declare its intention of joining France in the defence of his country in the case of Hitler's attack.

---

226 Beneš, E., "První pětiletí Československé zahraniční politiky", An address to the Foreign Committee of the House of Commons and the Senate in Prague on February 6, 1924 in Problémy, pp. 279-280.

227 This reality, not generally known, appeared for the first time during an interview held by this author with the former Czechoslovak Deputy Prime Minister Dr Petr Zenkl at Washington, DC on November 5, 1970; it was subsequently confirmed by his studies of the US Diplomatic Papers in the National Archives, Washington, DC, the Masaryk-Beneš Collection, University of California, Berkeley, and the Thomas Čapek Collection and the Edward O. Tabor Papers in the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

He was determined to do all in his power to ensure that a great majority of the American people would openly express their sympathy towards his "outpost of democracy in Europe... almost hemmed in by avaricious neighbours" and thus make it possible for their Government to cast away, insofar as Czechoslovakia was concerned, its isolationist policy and take some form of active intervention on its behalf in London, Paris and even possibly in Berlin. For this purpose he always emphasized to the Americans his own and his country's great efforts in strengthening democracy, their traditional democratic ideals and their "greatest admiration of the magnificent contribution your great President Roosevelt was making to Democracy" as quoted by the American Ambassador at Moscow.

Beneš' relations with the American diplomats accredited to Prague,[227a] especially their last two Ministers - J. Butler Wright and Wilbur J. Carr were very cordial, and their reports were written in an objective, sometimes almost in a friendly and sympathetic manner, insofar as Czechoslovakia and Beneš were concerned, especially during the immediate Munich period. There were no malicious reports of the Addison's or Hadow's type in the US diplomatic reports emanating from

---

227a Referring to W.J. Carr's becoming the new American Minister accredited to Prague, the US Secretary of State Hull stated, in July, 1937, that "Mr Carr's appointment was made at one of our most vital listening posts". (USDS, 760F.00/54).

Prague.[228] Beneš' efforts did not pass unnoticed in the United States where also a large number of American citizens of Czech and Slovak origin[229] contributed to the building up of Czechoslovakia's reputation second to none - in Czechoslovakia the Americans saw the early stages of their own history and their efforts to maintain at that time their democratic way of life and liberty similarly against seemingly overwhelming odds.[230]

There was, however, another powerful concept (hereafter called the "Hitler against Stalin" concept) among the officials of the State

---

228 Unfortunately for Beneš and Czechoslovakia this was not the case insofar as such reports from the three most important posts were concerned - London (Kennedy), Paris, (Bullitt) and Berlin (Wilson). Their reports were written not only in the spirit of appeasement of Hitler but in a distinctly pro-Nazi tone. Thus Bullitt in his strictly confidential and urgent telegram 826 from Paris of May 24, 1938 reported about his talk with French Foreign Minister Bonnet in which the latter told him that "Beneš had been more consistently wrong about foreign policy than any statesman in Europe", and that "France would not be driven into war to please Beneš", and Bullitt added: "Public opinion has evolved so rapidly in France during the past two weeks that this country, sadly and tragically, but with a fatalistic resignation has accepted the idea that once more France will be obliged to go to war with Germany. And the Communists affected by Jews of all classes who are unanimously eager for war against Hitler, will make full use of this mood..." (USDS 760F.62/334). Kennedy, Bullitt and Wilson were among those in the United States, France and England who considered Soviet Russia a greater danger than Hitler. (For explanation see further in this section).

229 The most precise available statistical data indicate that in 1920 their number was 1,242,662, in 1930, 1,382,079. (Bušek, V., "Proměny krajanské pospolitosti" in the Proměny, a quarterly of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, Vol. 2, No 3, July 1965, p. 36).

230 For further development of this subject see Beneš' tours in the US during the Spring of 1939.

Department, its diplomats and some prominent personalities, especially among those representing American industrial and commercial interests, who were Nazi-sympathizers not per se but because they feared most of all Soviet Russia and Bolshevism.[231] They believed that any European military conflict such as the threatening Czechoslovak-German war involving other European countries would result in further advances of Communism in the chaotic conditions which would then inevitably follow.[232] They saw in Hitler's Germany the state which was capable of eliminating Bolshevism in Russia and expected that sooner or later a conflict between these two dictatorial and expansionist Powers would become inevitable. It was therefore their strategy to prevent in the meantime at all costs any possibility of a conflict between the Western Democracies and Nazi Germany.[232a] It was exactly at this time that Hitler started

---

231 There were also those who admired Mussolini: e.g. American Ambassador to Italy, Breckenridge Long (1933-36) whose dispatches were glowing with praise for the achievements of Fascism.

232 Thus in his telegram 271/of August 29, 1938 from Moscow, Ambassador Kirk reported that he believed that even the Germans, with the possible exception of Hitler, realized that in the event of a general conflict in Europe, the Soviet Union was in a position to derive the maximum profit with the minimum risk - regardless of what alignments might take place or the course of military operations, the internal strain on the countries involved in war would prepare the way for a social upheaval within those countries. Kirk also doubted about the real intention of the Soviet Government to get involved in war because it would gain more by being a passive rather than active participant in a war. (USDS 760F.72/614).

232a Bullitt dealt partly with this vast problem in his conversation with the Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires at Bogota, Columbia, Koška, held aboard the "Isle de France" on May 25, 1938. The record of this conversation of the same date was sent by the latter to Prague. Bullitt stated, inter alia, that English conservatives were afraid of their own

his campaign of threats against Czechoslovakia under the pretence of being only interested in the welfare of the Sudeten Germans but employing at the same time his incessant accusation of Czechoslovakia being a base of Bolshevism in Central Europe. Beneš, while having been prepared to go to the absolute limits in his concessions to the SDP, knew its ultimate futility because the SDP was only an instrument of Berlin the goal of which was the complete conquest of Czechoslovakia; he also was at great pains to refute all the accusations that he was spreading Bolshevism throughout Central Europe and was in reality making out of his country a stronghold of Moscow. Having held that Nazi Germany presented the greatest danger not only to his country but Europe and ultimately the world and that Hitler had to be stopped before it would be too late, he stood firm and pleaded to the other Western Democracies to do likewise. Beneš' actions which threatened the destruction of the "Hitler contra Stalin" concept, had made him out of its protagonists bitter enemies: they adopted a hostile attitude towards him because they feared that he could and would start a war at any given time when he was almost certain of the French and English support against Nazi Germany and that he would not make any concessions to

---

people and with French conservatives they saw in every strike communist influence and the danger of bolshevization of France". Russia is now the problem... Nobody wants a new European war..."
(German Foreign Ministry: Political Department II, Czechoslovak Documents (Secret), Serial No 1809 H, Roll 1040, Frame Nos 412777-78, Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, D.C.)

the SDP.[233] They brought to life powerful forces in the international politics of 1937-38 which although primarily involving Czechoslovakia, were not strictly in the field of the US-Czechoslovak relations and as such were completely out of Beneš' control or even direct influence. There were, of course, protagonists of this concept in other West European countries such as France and England, but the US one had done the greatest damage.[234] They were so powerful that they caused

---

233 In his telegram 811 from Paris of May 22, 1938 Bullitt states that "Dr Beneš can throw the Continent into war by shooting some more Sudetens. And the question is whether or not he has decided it is in the interest of Czechoslovakia to provoke war now, when the support of France and Great Britain is almost certain. From a mass of reports, verbal and written, I am inclined to believe that Beneš prefers war to real concessions. Under such circumstances, I believe that a statement to Beneš by the American Minister in Prague of the nature suggested by Bonnet (to state that the Czechoslovak Government would not have the sympathy of the American Government if it should not attempt seriously to produce a peaceful solution of this conflict by making concessions to the Sudeten Germans which would satisfy Henlein and Hitler) is fully justified..." (USDS 760F.62/281).

234 This is what the resigned Ambassador William E. Dodd had in mind when he wrote a pleading letter on September 24, 1938 to US Secretary Hull that "nothing seems clearer to me than the necessity of Democratic people, especially England, France and the United States cooperating if Europe is not to fall under Hitler's control. If that happens, our people will see how they will suffer. I have reported this necessity to you and the President for fully 2 years; but I have been told my reports, even hand-written letters, were not delivered to you and the President. I may doubt these reports to me, but no real replies were ever written. The English, French, Swiss representatives and others from small countries agreed entirely and longed for our co-operation - their danger being annexation, especially Switzerland, Holland and Denmark. Our government officials have, in my judgment, done more to give Europe dictatorship than any other country. Can't we do something real for democracy?" William E. Dodd. (Cordell Hull Papers, Ac. 9681, II-15-H, -M,3, Container 43, Folder 107, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.).

Ambassador Dodd's resignation, bound Secretary Hull's hands and ensured that the "Great President Roosevelt was making magnificent contribution to Democracy"[235] by having been preoccupied with laying down the foundations for his unprecedented third re-election. And Beneš was in the meantime sentenced to listening to an ever increasing barrage of personal attacks from those quarters from which he expected them the least.[236]

---

235 See note 225 - Beneš' description of President Roosevelt to Ambassador Davies.

236 See Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, p. 23.

(ee) Italy[237]

> ...My trip to Rome had for us also a great political importance. It was my first direct contact with new Prime Minister Mussolini after the well-known overthrow in Italy. Prime Minister Mussolini got involved in our affairs before the war and was helping our national affairs during the war, it was therefore easy to reach an agreement on general lines of our common policy...[238]

The Italo-Czechoslovak relations after the victory of Fascism in Italy were in reality governed by the personal relations between Beneš and Mussolini. The latter began just before World War I when Mussolini had written a book "The Martyrdom of Jan Hus" which was vehemently anti-Catholic and Beneš had written a favourable criticism of it. They met in 1917 and 1918 when Beneš, greatly impressed by Mussolini's courage and convictions, wrote him a letter predicting that some day he would be Prime Minister of Italy. At that time Mussolini still was a socialist and a democrat, and it was not until after he began developing Fascism in Italy of which he then became undisputed Duce that these two men parted for good; their political ideas and activities became irreconcilable.

---

237 For further information see:

1. Anfuso, F., Rom-Berlin in diplomatischen Spiegel, Munich, 1951.
2. Carena, A., La politica italiana nell'Europa Orientale sui documenti diplomatici, Milano, 1930.
3. Ciano, Count G., Ciano Diary 1937-38, London, 1952.
4. Currey, M.I., Italian Foreign Policy 1918-32, London, 1932.
5. I documenti diplomatica italiani, Ottavo series, 1935-39, Roma, 1952-53.
6. Macartney, C.A., Italy's Foreign and Colonial Policy, 1934-37, London, 1938.
7. Muggeridge, M., ed., Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, London, 1948.
8. Salvemini, G., Mussolini diplomate, Paris, 1932.

238 Beneš, E., "Náš Cíl: Politika rekonstrukce, míru a zajištění státu", an address to the Plenary Session of the House of Commons at Prague

After the 1923 August meeting they still met in May 1924 when Duce greeted Beneš with great cordiality, remarking: "I remember very well the letter you wrote me before I became Prime Minister when you predicted that I would one day be the head of the Italian state".[239] Those were, however, only the last expressions of an old friendship having to inevitably come to an end, and it was, at the same time, signally apparent that sooner or later a parallel deterioration of the Italo-Czechoslovak friendship and relations would follow.

Having been utterly frustrated by its inability to extend its power to which it felt it was entitled because of its participation in the Allied Camp during World War I and by the inability of its democratic parties to govern it satisfactorily, Italy succumbed quickly to Mussolini and his Fascism;[240] he was promising the creation of a new "Imperium Romanum". After having established and stabilized his power in Italy, Mussolini began vehemently fighting for the destruction or, at least, a drastic revision of, the post World War I Order on which rested security and the very existence of Czechoslovakia, and for the preservation

---

on October 30, 1923, in Problémy, p. 264. (This meeting between Beneš and Mussolini took place on August 26, 1923).

239 Hitchcock, E.B., I Built a Temple for Peace, p. 254. (For further details on Beneš' personal relations with Mussolini see ibid., pp. 254-256 and p. 53.).

240 This was Beneš' explanation of the reason why democracy failed in Italy - see e.g. his address of April 29, 1935 to a meeting of the German Social Democratic Teachers Association held at Teplice and reported in Benton's Dispatch 160 of April 30, 1935, (USDS 860F.00/384).

of which Beneš was fighting even more vehemently: the two old friends found themselves to be waging their struggles in the opposite camps. The first climax of this drama unfolded itself during the Italo-Abyssinian crisis at Geneva on October 10, 1935 when Beneš who was then President of the Assembly of the League of Nations - the League's highest post - made a ruling which refused Italy to allow the issue of forming a Committee for co-ordinating sanctions against it to be evaded by any side-tracking manoeuvre of its delegate:[241] "Mussolini never forgave that ruling, and at Munich he had his revenge for it".[242]

Having left nothing in common, the two men and their countries were actually presenting to each other considerable threats to their respective ambitions. Ever since Mussolini took over power in Italy, Beneš had been indulging himself in prophesizing that Mussolini could not last for more than a year, then giving him another year, and so on.[243] His remarks did not pass unnoticed in Rome and Mussolini's retaliation was devastating to Beneš' policy and to Czechoslovakia. Mussolini was successful in preventing formation of any Danubian basin Federation or Entente, he was successful in instigating Hungary against Czechoslovakia and in vetoing any closer Prague-Vienna relations by putting pressure on the latter. Finally, in co-operation with Nazi Germany he was able to

---

241 See Notes Nos 98 and 99 of Chapter I of this study.

242 Mackenzie, C., op.cit., p. 174.

243 See item No 14 of Note 220 of this Chapter.

disintegrate the Little Entente by subtly playing on, and exploiting of, Yugoslovia's and Rumania's anti-Soviet feelings, aligning Beneš with Stalin, and demonstrating to them not only his well-known violent anti-Communist stand but his willingness to protect them from the danger of Bolshevism if they kept aloof of Czechoslovakia.[244] To emphasize his determination to fight communism within the area he considered to be his sphere of interests, he periodically warned Prague through its Minister at Rome that should Russia attempt in any way to interfere directly or indirectly in affairs of Central Europe or bring armed assistance to Czechoslovakia, Italy would immediately oppose with her entire armed forces.[245]

---

244 Thus Hassell from the German Embassy at Rome was able to report in his telegram 363 of December 20, 1937 that Count Ciano told him that during his visit at Rome, Stojadinovitch declared quite clearly that in no case would Yugoslavia fight for Czechoslovakia. (German Foreign Ministry, Pol. Dept. IV, Serial No 1220, Roll No 703/T-120, Pol IV 6719/37, Frame No 333073, Captured German Documents, Nat. Archives, Washington, DC.).

245 One of these warnings was reported by British Minister in Prague, Bentinck in his letter of December 8, 1936 to O'Malley of the BFO. It also included a very interesting development surrounding this particular warning which caused Beneš much difficulty with the Agrarian Party: After having personally received from Mussolini the described warning, "The Czechoslovak Minister reported to Prague, and being a member of the Agrarian Party, sent a copy of his report to the Secretary of the Agrarian Party, Beran. On Krofta informing Beneš, he was instructed by him to make no mention whatsoever of the threat in the Cabinet or to party leaders; but Beran taxed Krofta with having received this report, Krofta confessed and the Agrarian Party demanded: (a) an end of the secret conduct of foreign affairs; (b) assurances that Dr Beneš would not continue his secret negotiations with the Soviet Government. Forced to give way lest the Agrarian Party should carry out their threat and take away the Ministry of Foreign Affairs from his nominee, Krofta, Dr Beneš sent for and rated the Italian Minister who received instructions from Mussolini to maintain what had been said in Rome. This greatly angered President Beneš..." (R 7447/1799/12; FO 371/20378).

During the entire period of German campaign of threats against Beneš and Czechoslovakia, Italy stood solidly behind Germany although "it wished to have no direct connection with it,"[246] and put the entire blame for the crisis on Beneš declaring that the responsibility for the future devolved entirely upon him. Beneš was according to Mussolini unwilling to make any reasonable concessions to the Sudeten Germans "because he, like the old Austria whose chief heir he is - is also an idea or an hour behind the times".[247] Italy has also conducted a violent anti-Dr Beneš campaign of its own making various accusations against his conduct, such as that in 1923 Beneš wanted to have Mussolini eliminated.[247a]

Finally, before he played his fateful role at Munich, Mussolini categorically declared, at the most critical moment of international

---

246 Italian Foreign Minister Count Ciano's statement to the US Ambassador at Rome, Phillips, contained in the latter's confidential Telegram 217 of August 30, 1938 (USDS 760F.62/627).

247 Ambassador Phillips' telegram 241 from Rome of September 13, 1938 - he also mentioned that Count Ciano reiterated that "the responsibility for the choice between the Sudetens to join the Reich, and war was entirely with Beneš". (USDS 760F.62/789).

247a The "Giornale d'Italia" of February 23, 1938 carried a story that in 1923 Beneš had remarked to a diplomatist (not named) in Prague that Mussolini had to be eliminated; Official Prague denial published in Czech newspapers of February 28, 1938 was reported by Newton to Halifax in his Dispatch 48 of March 1, 1938. (R 2165/2165/12; FO 371/22340). Ciano had stated on February 26, 1938 to Hungarian Minister at Rome Villány that the report of the "Giornale d'Italia" that Dr Beneš wanted to eliminate Duce had come from "the most reliable source and was completely authentic" and added that "the state whose head is capable to resort to such criminal means does not deserve to exist, and it also will not exist much longer". (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Allianz Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini, Budapest, 1966, Document No 21, p. 162).

anxiety, in an open letter to Runciman that the only possible solution was a plebiscite not only for the Sudeten Germans but for all other minorities in Czechoslovakia that requested it. He stated that there was no doubt that such a plebiscite would mean the end of Czechoslovakia but that "the resultant homogeneous state of "Bohemia" would be stronger, more sure of itself, more progressive and would be a state with which Italy could be friendly".[248]

---

248 Quoted by Ambassador Phillips in his telegram 249 from Rome dated September 15, 1938 (USDS 760F.62/835).

(ff) The Little Entente[249]

... For a great many years I had the opportunity to observe him at his work and I was able to appreciate his excellent statesmanlike qualities and his indisputable service on behalf of Czechoslovakia and its Allies... his whole political activity is penetrated by passionate faith and deep conviction, that is giving him strength towards remaining on the good road, and confers so much authority to his word...[250]

...Edvard Beneš ... gives a beautiful example of faith and conviction through the performance of his political work. He is a courageous and indefatigable fighter for the strengthening of the Little Entente and for making the work of peace firmer.

I wish his country and all of us that he could still keep on for a long time bravely and vigorously in his work which he is conducting with such magnificent distinction...[251]

---

249 For further information see:

1. Adamová, M., "Maďarsko a Malá Dohoda v období před 2. svět. válkou" in the ČSČH, Vol XI, No 6, 1963, pp. 742-758.
2. Crane, J.O., The Little Entente, New York, 1931.
3. Deak, L., "Siedmý marec 1936 a Malá Dohoda", in the ČSČH, Vol XVII, 1969, pp. 323-349.
4. Hoptner, J.B., Yugoslavia in Crisis 1934-1941, New York, 1963.
5. Kiszling, R., Die militaerischen Vereinbarungen der Kleinen Entente 1929-1934, Munich, 1959.
6. Krofta, K., La Tchécoslovaquie et la Petite Entente dans la politique actuelle de l'Europe, Praha, 1937.
7. Machray, R., The Little Entente, London, 1929.
8. Machray, R., The Struggle for The Danube and the Little Entente 1929-38, London, 1938.
9. Mousset, A.G., La Petite Entente, Paris, 1923.
10. Stojadinović, M., Ni rat ni pakt, Buenos Aires, 1963.
11. Titulescu, N., Documente diplomatice, Bukurest, 1967.
12. Volkov, V.K., Germano-jugoslavskije otnošenija i razval Maloj Antanty 1933-1938, Moskva, 1966.
13. Výbor pro vydání Sborníku, Edvard Beneš a Malá Dohoda, Praha, 1934.

250 Statement made by King Alexander of Yugoslavia on the occasion of Dr Beneš' 50th birthday on May 28, 1934 and quoted in item No 13 of the above note (249), p. 10.

251 Statement made by King Carol II of Rumania on the occasion of Dr Beneš' 50th birthday on May 28, 1934 and quoted in item No 13 of Note 249, p. 14.

Rarely was a statesman glorified to a greater extent than was Beneš in the Volume of complimentary statements, addresses and greetings written by prominent Czechoslovak, Yugoslavian and Rumanian personalities and prepared in 1934 on the occasion of his fiftieth birthday and dealing specifically with his work for the Little Entente. He was greeted and admired as one of its most capable and vigorous exponents and leaders who "was being called Father of the Little Entente"[252] who "clearly sees his own country, this country thereupon in the Little Entente, and the Little Entente in Europe, and for each of these relations he has a well-prepared and a clear plan... To Dr Beneš belongs the old Roman and the French title: 'He deserved well of his country! He deserved well of the Little Entente!'"[253] Originator of the idea of creating a close alliance between Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Rumania was President Masaryk who stated in his first speech in the Czechoslovak National Assembly on December 22, 1918 that according to his plan those three states would form "a trio firmly held together".[254] Beneš was the most determined exponent of this Masaryk's idea ever since his first meetings held on this subject between him, Pašič of Yugoslavia and Jonescu of Rumania at Paris late in 1918. They agreed that individually their states held at the International Forum inferior positions belonging to small states, and having many common interests and problems, especially the constant threats of violent irredentist

---

252 See item No 13 of Note 249; therein Černý, J., (the then Provincial President for Moravia and Silesia), p.33.

253 Ibid., Lazarevič, B., (the then Yugoslavia's Minister at Warsaw, and former Minister at Prague - 1926-1929), pp. 101-102.

254 Masaryk, T.G., Cesta demokracie, Vol 1, p. 47.

attempts against them by their common neighbour - Hungary, they should form a political block which would represent their interests and exercise power and prestige comparable to that of a Great Power.[255]

During the twenties and early thirties when their common interests dominated their mutual relations, this Alliance was undoubtedly successful in many of its endeavours but since Hitler's taking over power in Germany, and especially since the fateful Soviet-French and the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaties, and the subsequent demonstration of weakness by the Western Democracies in the Hitler's military occupation of Rhineland there were brought forward the irreconcilable interests of the members of the Little Entente as well as the inherent weakness of this Organization caused by the fact that this Alliance covered only the case of an unprovoked Hungarian attack.[256] Beneš has to bear for this situation a primary responsibility in that he did not take measures to remedy such fundamental flaw in the very concept of any alliance of similar nature. Earlier when he could have succeeded in enlarging the existing scope of the Little Entente so that it would have covered all cases of unprovoked attacks on any of the three signatories, Czechoslovakia had not then been facing any direct and seemingly imminent danger, while

---

255 For Beneš' detailed account of the origins of the Little Entente see his "Utvoření Malé Dohody", An exposé to the Foreign Committee of Parliament at Prague on September 1, 1920 in Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 83-99; also his account of the first five years of the Czechoslovak Foreign policy given before the Foreign Committee of Parliament at Prague on February 6, 1924 in ibid., pp. 279-306.

256 For a critical, in some aspects even sarcastic, description of the Little Entente see: Lisický, K., Československá cesta do Mnichova, London, 1958, Vol II, pp. 22-25.

Yugoslavia did so in regard to Italy and Rumania in regard to Soviet Russia. In such circumstances he was not prepared to enlarge the scope of the Little Entente because he did not want to involve his country in any direct conflict with Italy, and, above all, with Soviet Russia. When he finally proposed, because of the ever-increasing German threat to his own country, in the Fall of 1936 to Rumania and Yugoslavia an enlargement of this alliance so as to cover all the cases of unprovoked attacks on any of the three signatories regardless of from what quarters it would have originated, and a subsequent treaty of alliance between the Little Entente so amended and France, it was too late to effect such proposal and the necessary unanimous agreement was no more possible. Even a year earlier Beneš' proposal might have probably been successful,[257] but since his 1935 Fall visit to Paris and talks with Laval, Stojadinović had reached the conclusion that the French were determined to grant Mussolini considerable concessions in the interest of keeping friendly relations with Italy and that in the case of need they would give preference to Rome rather than to Belgrade.[258] Having considered that Italy, and not Germany, was constituting the greatest threat to its security, and immensely hating Soviet Russia because of Bolshevism which also presented a deadly threat to the existence of its regime, Yugoslavia started to look for its security elsewhere than in

---

257 Lisický, K., op.cit., p. 23.

258 Stojadinović, M., op.cit., pp. 368-369.

Paris and the Little Entente. Stojadinovič's and Prince Paul's secret negotiations with Mussolini and Germany were bitterly attacked by Beneš who called Stojadinovič to be the "Fuehrer".[259] Yugoslavia successfully prevented any of Beneš', French and Rumanian attempts to bring Belgrade back to its former pro-Little Entente and pro-French policy - Beneš' visit to Belgrade[260] and his appeals to Stojadinovič during the latter's attendance of President Masaryk's funeral[261] were also totally unsuccessful. Prague's attempts by conspiring with the Yugoslav opposition parties to bring about downfall of the Stojadinovič regime, although denied by Beneš nevertheless confirmed by various sources,[262] have also been signally unsuccessful.

---

259 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 29-33.

260 This visit took place on April 5-7 1937 - for the complete text of speeches given on that occasion on April 5, 1937 by Beneš and Prince Paul, as well as of the communiqué issued on April 7, 1937 see Zahraniční Politika, an Organ of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1937, pp. 312-314. Both of these speeches provide an excellent example of insincerity of both speakers who spoke in the friendliest tones giving a picture of complete agreement when at that time already existed an irreconcilable divergence of their policies by which they tried to achieve their own security.

See also: Dispatch 71 from the British Minister at Belgrade, Sir.R. Campbell of April 9, 1937 in which he stated that he believes that Beneš' talks with Prince Paul and Stojadinovič had "no considerable effect of a practical kind, regardless of all public speeches and ceremonies". (R 2594/2594/12, FO 371/21134).

Telegram 13 from the US Minister at Belgrade Wilson of April 8, 1937 informed that there was belief in diplomatic circles that President Beneš was unsuccessful in his efforts to induce Yugoslavia to increase its military obligations to Czechoslovakia and France. (760F.60H/43). (This belief was confirmed by Wilson in his telegram 14 of April 10, 1937 after his talks with the French and the Rumanian Ministers - 760F.60H/44).

261 This event took place on September 20, 1937.

In contradistinction to Yugoslavia, Rumania stood by Czechoslovakia for a considerable period of time[263] trying along with Dr Beneš to bring about a clear British declaration of its intention of taking part along with France and the Little Entente in the defense of

---

262 Thus the French Minister at Prague wrote after his talk with a prominent Czechoslovak journalist (most likely Hubert Ripka) on March 21, 1936: "My partner did not hesitate to state that Stojadinović's fall was considered to be necessary... There is no doubt about his venality. In the Alliance we have an enemy..." (Documents diplomatiques français, 2e séries, Tome 1, No 476, pp. 624-6).

In Telegram 13 from Prague of January 19, 1938, German Minister at Prague, Eisenlohr reported about the possibility of the Czechoslovak General Staff which had many connections with the Yugoslav Army, to effect in Yugoslavia military intrigues - "Umtrieben" (German Foreign Ministry, Pol. Abt. IV, 408/38, Serial No 1220, Roll 703/T-120, Neg.Fr. No. 333079, Capt. Germ. Documents, Nat. Archives, Washington, D.C.)

In his Dispatch 73 to Halifax of March 22, 1938 Newton reported that during the conversation with Beneš, Sir R.B. Lockhart, who had just spent two months in the Balkans, expressed the view that Czechoslovakia had lost ground both in Rumania and Yugoslavia because (1) She had been intriguing in their internal politics and backing the democratic opposition (2) because of the unpopularity of the Franco-Soviet Pact. Beneš denied that Czech diplomacy had dabbled in the internal politics of Rumania and Yugoslovia but admitted differences of outlook between them and Czechoslovakia. Yugoslavia and Rumania embarked on an opportunist policy very largely because the internal weaknesses of France had a certain psychological effect and because they had no feeling of certainty about British policy. - In a note by Ross of the F.O. he remarked that "Dr Beneš' denial cannot be accepted. On the other hand, his views on the reasons for the present policy of Rumania and Yugoslavia are very sound". (R 3266/718/12, FO 371/22339).

263 Even Beneš who had some harsh words in his "Memoirs" for Yugoslavia and Rumania had to admit that King Carol of Rumania "tried sincerely to remain faithful to the policy of the Little Entente as long as possible", and his translator G. Lias added a very important fact that "Rumania was the only one of Czechoslovakia's Allies who mobilized at the time of Munich". (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 46). King Carol's 1936 visit to Prague was also being interpreted as having been "evidently carefully planned by Dr Beneš to strengthen his and his country's position" (Bentinck's Dispatch 224 of November 7, 1936 to Sir A. Eden, R 6716/70/12, FO 371/20376), and was given a great amount of importance by Beneš in his speech given on that occasion on October 28, 1936 and in the two communiqués issued on October 28 and 31, 1936 (See Zahraniční Politika, 1936, pp. 708-712).

Czechoslovakia in the case of an unprovoked attack by Nazi Germany.[264] When all these attempts proved unsuccessful Rumania began to search its own way to security, yet attempted, even at that time, to preserve from the Little Entente those ideas which had originally brought this Alliance into being.

Besides France's demonstrations of weakness and of willingness to retain Mussolini's friendship even at the price of some concessions, and England's refusals to make any commitments in Central and South-Eastern Europe, Dr Beneš himself has to bear a great deal of blame for the failure of the Little Entente because:

(1) his personality trait of doing most, if not all work in which he became involved alone, and of arriving at his own decisions to which he then stubbornly clung which was so clearly evident in Czechoslovak politics, translated itself into a more subtle form in his work in the Little Entente and caused him and his country much resentment and jealousy in Belgrade and Bucharest;[265]

---

264 See item No 9 of Note 220 of this Chapter.

265 This point was brought to the author's attention (a) directly by his interviews with Dr L.K. Feierabend (former Chairman of the Czechoslovak Wheat Board, Minister of Agriculture and, during World War II, Minister of Finance at London who left this Cabinet post in February 1945 against Dr Beneš' wishes because he did not agree with his government's policy towards Soviet Russia), held at Washington, D.C. on September 17, 1967, Msgr. J. Bezdíček held at Rome on September 21, 1971 and Dr. P. Zenkl held at Washington, D.C. on November 5, 1970; (b) indirectly by his studies of the relevant diplomatic material dealing in particular with Beneš' statements in regard to the Little Entente - from these Beneš' domineering tendencies to have his ideas and policies followed by the other two members of the Little Entente become evident: he warned them against following a course he did not approve of (e.g. Newton's Dispatch

(2) he did not fully appreciate the strength of anti-Soviet feelings in Rumania and Yugoslavia and kept on antagonizing their governments by his Russian policy which both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy successfully exploited in Belgrade and Bucharest;[266]

(3) having always acted as the leading theoretician and, at the same time, exponent of the Little Entente's policies, it therefore fell into the realm of his responsibility to abolish the narrowly defined policies of self-interest of each of the three member-states and to work-out and propose at an earlier date the consolidation of their separate treaties into one single treaty operative against all states.

---

20 of January 25, 1938 that Dr Beneš told him he had warned King Carol of Rumania against the "pitfalls of dictatorship" - R 801/718/12, FO 371/22339); he decided to try to stop negotiations by means of which a member state tried to improve its position and security (e.g., Dr Beneš describes the negotiations of Prince Paul and Stojadinović with Mussolini and states sharply: .."I decided to try to stop this development by ... making a personal intervention..." - Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 31); he reproached the Prime Minister of a member state (e.g. Ibid., p. 32, in this particular case of Yugoslavia, Stojadinović).

This domineering attitude of Beneš resulted in Stojadinović's attempts not only to follow an independent policy but also to destroy Beneš' and Prague's leading role in the Little Entente. (Stojadinović told the German Minister at Belgrade, von Heeren that Titulescu's dismissal from the post of the Rumanian Foreign Minister (on August 29, 1936) "was by him very welcome because as a result of this step the more would Belgrade acquire leading role in the Little Entente the nearer would Rumania come to Yugoslavia". (Quoted in Zaharia, G., and Tutu, D., Aspects de la politique extérieure de la Roumanie pendant les années 1933-1936, Bucharest, 1966, p. 206).

266 For details on German and Italian activities in regard to the Little Entente, in general, and Yugoslavia and Rumania in particular, see: Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, D.C.:
(1) Serial No 1895, (Negative Frame Nos 426544-426936, Roll 1060);
(2) Ser. No. 7184, (Neg. Fr. Nos. E 527621-671, Roll 3190).

The failure to act in time when such an endeavour could have yet been successful, demonstrated that while Beneš was accusing Great Powers of conducting those policies which were of benefit to them alone and not to the community of states as a whole, he conducted the same policy in relations to his Allies in the Little Entente;[267]

(4) by continuously asking Rumania and Yugoslavia to recognize Soviet Russia and by entering himself into a Pact with that Power, Beneš violated the fundamental law of political reality of the Little Entente: each of its member-states was a neighbour to a traditionally hostile Great Power, each of whom was just waiting for a suitable moment to satisfy its expansionist policy by conquering and annexing some or all of that particular member-state's territory.[268]

---

267 Lisický, K., op.cit., p. 23.

268 In this point Beneš is open to the most serious criticism in his entire policy towards the Little Entente: from Rumanian interpretation of political realities it was totally illogical and unfair for Beneš to ask Rumania to fight for the defence of Czechoslovakia against Germany which did not present to its security the threat comparable in its magnitude to that of its traditional enemy Soviet Russia, on the side of which it was being asked to fight. Bucharest clearly realized that regardless of the outcome of such a war, it would pay dearly: if Germany were to win, Berlin would never forget or forgive Bucharest's participation in the opposite camp; if, on the other hand, Germany were defeated, Rumania's participation in the victorious camp would not only be of no benefit but actually constitute a grave danger to it since victorious Soviet Russia would, as an award for its participation, expand its territory through annexations of various regions of its neighbours: the Rumanian Provinces of Bukovina, Bessarabia and Moldavia, it was felt in Bucharest, would have been among such regions. Due to its out-stretched geographical position, Rumania feared that no other Great Power would be able, if this were to take place, to prevent such annexation, and that in the resulting chaotic conditions there was a grave danger that the rest of the country would succumb to Bolshevism. On the other hand, Rumania was not in a position similar to Yugoslavia in considering a possibility of entering a Pact with Germany because of the fear that such

Dr Beneš was reported to have been told in October, 1936 by King Carol - one of his, and Czechoslovakia's last remaining friends

---

an act would, in time, give Soviet Russia a convenient pretext for a military invasion.

The German Minister at Belgrade, von Heeren reported on February 23, 1937 that he was told by Stojadinović that the latter had been confidentially told by Foreign Minister Antonescu that Rumania had to protect itself in the first line against Soviet Russia - the Pact with Poland was not sufficient, with Germany Rumania was unable to afford to enter into a pact due to the exposed geographical position, so that only left France - which had a Pact with Russia. (Capt. Germ. Docs., Nat. Arch., Washington, D.C., Ser. No. 1895, Roll 1060. Neg.Fr.Nos 426688-691).

Foreign Minister Antonescu had also assured early in December 1937 the German Minister at Bucharest, Fabricius that the much debated question of a pact between "Rumania and the Little Entente on the one hand and France on the other" had definitely been put aside. French statesmen knew this for certain because at Antonescu's last visit in Paris, nobody even mentioned this to him. (Capt. Germ. Docs., Nat. Arch., Washington, D.C., Ser. No. 1895, Roll 1060, N.F. Nos 426833-834).

The Yugoslav Government feared and hated Soviet Russia no less than did Rumania but its reasons were different: it was not Russia with which it had no history of hostility or conflict of interests but its Bolshevism which presented a grave threat to the whole structure of the then existing Yugoslav social system. In Germany, however, Belgrade saw a Great Power destined eventually to destroy Bolshevism in a conflict with Soviet Russia, and which alone could, insofar as Yugoslavia was concerned, impose constraints on growing Italian expansionist ambitions in regard to its territory along the Adriatic coast. Interpreting political developments along these lines, Stojadinović and Prince Paul were unable to consider entering into any pact which was principally directed against Germany and which implied at least informal alliance with Soviet Russia.

The German Minister at Belgrade, von Heeren was thus able to report: (1) In his telegram 112 of December 1, 1936 that although France, Czechoslovakia, and even Rumania put pressure on Yugoslavia to build up a general Franco-Czechoslovak-Rumanian-Yugoslav defensive system, Stojadinović refused to participate in such efforts. (Capt. Germ. Docs., Nat. Arch., Wash., D.C. Ser. No 7184, Roll 3190, Neg.Fr.No E 527636); (2) In his telegram 56 of March 31, 1937 that he doubted, after having talked with Stojadinović, that Yugoslavia would agree, at the forthcoming Conference of the Little Entente which also would be attended by Dr Beneš, to the Franco-Czechoslovak plans to build up a General Pact of Four. (Ibid., Neg.Fr.No. E 527655); (3) In his telegram 59 of April 10, 1937 that the Yugoslav thesis at the Conference was that the purpose of the Little Entente was only the defense against the Hungarian revisionism and nothing else and not even Dr Beneš' visit was able to change it. The Franco-Czechoslovak Plans had thus been frustrated. (Ibid., Neg.Fr. No E 527659).

in the Little Entente after the dismissal of Foreign Minister Titulescu who with Beneš were the greatest exponents of pro-French policy - that he had to choose between the Soviet Union and the Little Entente.[269] It was also on this occasion that the Czechoslovak Agrarian Party made its famous seven demands in the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament, and "by attacking his henchman, Krofta, the Agrarian Party thus led a direct attack upon Dr Beneš' recent foreign policy; in the minds of the rank and file of middle-class village and country supporters of the Coalition persists an uneasy fear of Moscow which has undoubtedly been instrumental in giving Dr Beneš the first rebuff to his foreign and domestic policy that observers in Prague can call to memory".[270]

In his Dispatch 2592/37 of September 1, 1937, German Chargé d'Affaires at Bucharest, von Pockhanner described his talk with the Yugoslav commercial attaché. The latter said that discussions held recently in the Council of the Little Entente centered around the Czechoslovak-German relations. He said that Yugoslavia belonged to the Anti-Bolshevik Front and put a greater value on good relations with Germany. But Yugoslavia could not give up the Little Entente and it was therefore of growing interest that the Czechs had to be freed from the hands of Moscow. Von Pockhanner remarked that the main worry of Germany was certainly not the fate of the Sudetendeutsche but only the danger which Czechoslovakia poses to Germany as an outpost of Soviet Russia. (Capt. Germ. Docs., Nat. Arch., Wash., D.C., Ser. No. 1941 H., Roll 1077, Neg.Fr.Nos 434883-884).

269 Bentinck's Dispatch 224 from Prague of November 7, 1936 to Sir Anthony Eden (R 6716/70/12, FO 371/20376).

270 Ibid. These seven demands were for:
(1) an end to the recent secrecy and narrow control (by Dr Beneš) of foreign policy;
(2) formation of a block of peace-loving states from the Baltic to the Black Sea;
(3) friendlier relations with Poland;
(4) strict neutrality in the event of a war between Germany and Russia;

Until the tragedy of Munich, Beneš disregarded all attacks on his policies and having been convinced that his interpretation of European political developments compelled him to keep on following his traditional political course in order to preserve his state in its entirety, he chose to continue stubbornly in his Russian policy hoping that he would still somehow manage to iron out differences among him and the two other members of the Little Entente. He well understood that the effectiveness of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Pact depended to a great measure on the eventual realization of a Soviet-Rumanian Pact. During the reign of his best friend and ally in the Little Entente - Titulescu over the Rumanian foreign policy, there was at least some slim hope that such a pact, after extremely difficult negotiations in which Beneš himself would possibly be called upon to offer his good offices, and lengthy period of time, would ultimately be arrived at between the two traditionally hostile states. Furthermore Beneš had then Titulescu's assurance that in the case of need Rumania would permit transit across the northernmost strip of its territory dividing Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia to the Russian Army coming to the aid of threatened Czechoslovakia, on the basis of Article

---

(5) cessation of attacks in Czechoslovakia upon the parties opposed to a "dictatorship of the proletariat" and of insinuations that such parties must be "friendly to Hitlerian ideology";
(6) repression of the proletarian ideas which had permeated even the Social Democratic Party (which was part of the Coalition and supported Dr Beneš);
(7) cessation of attempts to form a "Popular Front" in Czechoslovakia and thus to drive the Agrarian Party out of the Coalition.

16 of the Charter of the Little Entente.[271] After Titulescu's dismissal this promise was no more valid, or at the best, it was so uncertain that no responsible politician could have taken it into account,[272] and any hopes as to the realization of a Soviet-Rumanian Pact had by then completely disappeared. After May 1, 1938, Dr Beneš was no more able

---

271 Kvaček, R., Nad Evropou zataženo, Praha, 1966, pp. 271-272; Teichman, M., "Titulescu a rumunská zahraniční politika 1933-36" in the ČSČH, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1966, p. 679; Deák, L., op.cit., p. 349.

272 The whole question of transit of Russian troops through Rumania became in the 1936-38 period a matter of discussions and speculations especially by diplomats accredited to Prague: (1) In his confidential letter to O'Malley of B.F.O. of December 2, 1936 from Prague Bentinck dealt with Capt. Wedgwood Benn's talk with Beneš and noted that while the latter stated that he was counting on receiving the Russian help in case of need, "he avoided any statement regarding prompt or automatic Rumanian co-operation in transporting Soviet troops bound for Czechoslovakia across the Rumanian territory. This accords with the prevailing belief that Rumania is too afraid of Russia to allow its troops to cross her borders even as friends, or friends of her friends. The League is left to compel Rumania to do so..." In a F.O. note Bramwell wrote: "I don't believe that President Beneš is any too sure himself in what form and how quickly Russian help would reach him... I don't fancy M. Beneš has any illusions about Rumanian help since M. Titulescu's disappearance..." (R 7381/1799/12, FO 371/20378).
(2) In his telegram 11 of February 15, 1937 from Prague, Hadow reports that the Rumanian Minister said that Yugoslavia objected strongly to the proposed Pact of Four and Rumania could not afford to allow passage of Soviet troops across her territory on their way to help Czechoslovakia and "must prevent it at all cost". Rumania and Yugoslavia felt that they would get nothing in return for what they were being asked to give at great risk to themselves. If Soviet Army tried to force its way across the Polish or Rumanian territory, both countries were pledged under recent Warsaw agreements or understandings to offer united resistance..." (R 1078/188/2, FO 371/21127).
(3) In his telegram 807 of May 21, 1938, the US Ambassador at Paris, Bullitt reported that Polish Ambassador Lukasiewicz told him that he was certain if Russian troops should attempt to cross Rumania en route to Czechoslovakia, the Rumanian Government would declare war at once on the Soviet Union and that Poland, in accordance with the Polish-Rumanian alliance would do likewise. If Soviet planes would attempt to cross Rumania, the Polish air force would send sufficient planes to assist the Rumanians in attacking the Russian planes en route to Czechoslovakia (USDS, 760F.62/277).

to entertain any hopes that Rumania would ever allow Soviet troops to cross its territory.[272a]

Beneš attacked passionately and judged harshly his Allies in the Little Entente about their guilt in bringing about the disintegration

---

(4) The US Ambassador at Moscow, Kirk reported in his telegram 270 of August 27, 1938 that some diplomats, especially the Czechoslovak representatives believed that "the Soviet Union at the beginning of a conflict might be able to bring sufficiently strong pressure to bear upon the Rumanian Government to force it to permit the passage of Russian troops through its territory". (USDS, 760F.62/610).

272a A high official of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry and a close aid to Beneš, Arnošt Heidrich had on that day a conversation with King Carol at Sinaia, asking him, on Beneš' instructions, the two questions which were of vital importance to Czechoslovakia. In answer to the question whether Rumania would allow a few Soviet pursuit fighter planes, Czechoslovakia had purchased in Moscow, to cross its territory, he said that the Rumanians were willing "to wink all three eyes" even if the Soviet fighters flew across without a stop, a condition on which the Soviet Government was insisting. When Heidrich submitted to King Carol Beneš' second question whether the Rumanian Government would be willing to allow Soviet troops to cross its territory in case of necessity "the King replied with a resolute negative. With a map in hand the King explained that there was only one route such troops could use, and that was a single-track railroad over which it would take at least a week to move one division. That would naturally make any rapid Soviet assistance illusory. The King also explained that a decisive factor in his negative attitude was the apprehension that the Soviets would insist on protecting communications and the rear of any troops operating in Czechoslovakia, and that Rumania could never persuade them to leave. As a matter of fact, Poland had the same fears ... and would never consent to the Red crossing her territory. He then explained at some length why the Soviets could not help us much even if they wished to, since their army was still far from the stage where it could match the Germans. The King concluded this part of our conversation with the remark that Czechoslovakia would consider herself lucky if the Soviets did not come to her aid, since she would never get them out again". (Heidrich, A., International Political Causes of the Czechoslovak Tragedies of 1938 and 1948, Washington, D.C., 1962, pp. 16-17.) This last King Carol's prophesy, so remarkable for its accuracy, has subsequently realized itself, insofar as Czechoslovakia was concerned, in its most disastrous form.

of this Alliance;[273] the fact remains, however, that it was his own Russian policy and the fateful Pact between that country and his own that marked the beginning of the tragic end of the Little Entente - all events that followed signified only reaction to his own arbitrary act and his stubborn adherence to a policy which was so evidently repulsive to the Rumanian and Yugoslav sentiments and presented to them a real threat to their own existence and which, in the end, brought even to his own country no benefit.

---

273 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 29-35.

(gg) Austria[274]

...We want to have in Austria a good neighbour...[275]

Masaryk's and Beneš' concept of peace and stability in post-war Central Europe envisaged the necessity of the existence of an independent, republican Austria which would be a friendly neighbouring state. The aim of Beneš' policy towards the new Austrian state was the maintenance of its independence by preventing the ever-possible Anschluss with Germany and of its republican form of Government by eliminating any possibility of a rightist or leftist coup d'état. In the early post-war period the two countries agreed upon a policy of mutual political and economic cooperation;[276] Czechoslovakia provided Austria with financial and economic help at the time when the latter was in the midst of a grave economic crisis when no other state was prepared to do so,[277]

---

274 For further information see:
1. Benedikt, H., ed., Geschichte der Republik Oesterreich, Vienna, 1954.
2. Goldinger, W., Geschichte der Republik Oesterreich, Vienna, 1962.
3. Kvaček, R., "Boj o Rakousko v letech 1933-38 a československá zahraniční politika", in the Sborník Historický, Vol, 12, Praha, 1964.
4. MacDonald, M., The Republic of Austria 1918-34, New York, 1946.
5. Schuschnigg, K., Requiem v červeno-bíle-červené, Praha, 1947.
6. Turok, V.M., Očerki istoriji Avstriji 1929-38, Moskva, 1962.

275 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 30.

276 Ibid., pp. 286-287, Beneš dealt here in detail about all the important developments in the Czechoslovak-Austrian relations during the first five years of the Czechoslovak foreign policy. He emphasized the Czechoslovak loan to Austria and his own decisive intervention on behalf of helping and preserving of Austria in the League of Nations and stated that his policy in this regard was based on good will towards the neighbour, effectuation of peace ideas and carrying out of the policy of reconstruction, recognition of the status-quo in Central Europe and future friendship.

277 See note 70 of Chapter I.

and Beneš was during the entire period of his Foreign Ministry preoccupied with maintaining, on the one hand, good relations with Vienna, and, with combatting, on the other hand, the German and Italian revisionist ambitions and influences which rapidly began to threaten directly the Austrian, and thus indirectly, the Czechoslovak, security and existence. The most successful of his efforts in this direction was his vigorous initiative and leadership in preventing a German-Austrian Customs Union in 1931.[278]

In his last speech as Foreign Minister before his election to the Presidency, Beneš stated that the Czechoslovak relations with Austria "continued to be friendly and all the negotiations for the Danubian Pact showed once more how closely united our interests are; ...these negotiations proceed in the spirit of a policy of good neighbourliness and friendship".[279] It was at that time that Beneš' policy towards Austria appeared to have undergone some modification insofar as its earlier insistance of Prague's predominance towards Vienna was concerned.[280] Nazi Germany had by that

---

278 See Notes 83 and 84 of Chapter I - In his "Memoirs" Beneš wrote that during his first post-war visit to Berlin in May 1928 he had told State Secretary von Schubert and Minister Stresemann that if Austria were annexed by Germany, whether by violence or not, they could expect with certainty that within six months there would be a great European crisis out of which would come a new European war. Beneš stated that Stresemann who made written comments on this talk, sent subsequently warning to the various leading officials of his Ministry against such a step (pp. 36-37).

279 Beneš, E., The Struggle For the Collective Security in Europe, pp. 42-43.

280 Beneš was not prepared, from the very beginnings of the post-war Czechoslovak-Austrian relations, either to allow Vienna to play a predominant role which would have reminded the Czechs the spirit of the pre-war era, or to conduct any policy which implied a possibility of the renewal

time presented the real threat to Czechoslovakia while the danger of either the restoration of the Habsburg Monarchy or the renewal of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire greatly diminished. After Prime Minister Hodža's "Plan For the Organization of Central Europe"[281] proved to be a failure, mainly because of the Italian and the Hungarian opposition, Beneš' policies in this direction, while finding in Vienna favourable reaction have been consistently thwarted by Hitler's and Mussolini's interventions in the Austrian internal affairs.[282] Without the help of

---

of the old Empire. Thus when, as the result of the Allied Powers' pressure, Beneš held a meeting with Dr Renner, it was decided that the Austrian delegation would come early in 1920 to Prague as "a prestige concession to Czechoslovakia" (Gajanová, A., op.cit., p. 61). In his conversation with the Czechoslovak Charge d'Affaires Košťka of Bogota aboard the "Ile de France", the American Ambassador at Paris Bullitt stated on May 25, 1938 (therefore after the annexation of Austria by Germany) that "it was unfortunate for Czechoslovakia that it realized too late that it should conduct friendly 'politik' with Vienna". He said that he often brought up this question with Beneš at Geneva but was always told by him that the leading factor in Central Europe had to be Prague. (Germ. For. Min: Pol.Dept. II, Czechoslovak Docs. (Secret), Ser. No 1809H, Roll 1040, Frame Nos 412777-78, Capt. Germ. Docs., Nat. Archives, Wash., DC).

281 Dr Hodža's "Plan For the Organization of Central Europe", which its author had tried to put into effect in the period immediately following Beneš' election to the Presidency, and had, for this purpose, personally taken over the Foreign Ministry portfolio, was based on the solution of the most important economic problem of Central Europe - the matter of agricultural surpluses. According to Dr Hodža, these surpluses were to be sent to the Western European markets generally, and to England particularly. When fully operational, this Plan envisaged a close co-operation between the states of the Little Entente and of the Roman Protocols. Ultimately, as Dr Hodža stated, his Plan would ensure that "in Central Europe which should belong to its inhabitants, there would be neutralized the influences of Berlin and Moscow". (The organ of his Agrarian Party, the Venkov, of August 6, 1935). However, the Plan was dependent upon the support of Italy -

the Western democracies, Beneš was in no position to effectively counter in Vienna Rome's and Berlin's pressures. He nevertheless kept on maintaining closest possible relations with Vienna on personal basis mainly through the Austrian Minister at Prague, Dr Marek.[283] He believed, or professed to believe that in December, 1937 "Nazis in Austria were weakening and forces opposed to an "Anschluss" would gain in strength so that Austria would not lose its independence".[284] Even early in 1938, a short time before Hitler's invasion of Austria, Beneš thought that the Chancellor Schuschnigg's internal position in Austria was strong and that Hitler's attitude was a bluff.[285]

---

without it, the failure was inevitable.

282 Thus on September 11, 1936, Counselor of the American Embassy at Berlin, F.L. Mayer reported in Dispatch 3030 that "Political circles close to the Government called to the attention extraordinary efforts of the Czechoslovak Government to avoid anything which might bring to the centre of diplomatic activity the current initiative of the Czech Government to revive the problem of the Danube area... Almost unnoticed by the public, the Czech Government has in utmost secrecy made inquiries, cloaked under the announced intention of prpvoking a discussion over the attitude towards the reform of the League of Nations, as to whether there exists the possibility of calling together a conference of the Middle European and the Balkan states. It is well known here that with the exception of Hungary, in general there exists a mood for such a conference..." (USDS, 760F.00/43). (About Hitler's and Mussolini's interventions see Kvaček, R., op.cit,, pp. 264-275).

Speaking on July 25, 1936 about the recent Austro-German Accord, Beneš expressed his belief that this Accord would not necessarily bring Austria under the domination of Germany. He was convinced that Schuschnigg was resolved to maintain Austria's political and economic independence and Beneš thought that he would be successful. (USDS, Dispatch 511 from the US Chargé d'Affaires at Prague J. Webb Benton of July 25, 1936, 840.00/442 - 760F.62/41).

283 Von Papen, who was then Germany's Minister Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Vienna reported that he was told by the Austrian State Secretary Dr Schmidt on December 1, 1937 that "Dr Beneš had always been

When Hitler marched into Austria, Beneš decided to follow the course taken by the Western Powers and do nothing. His lack of action is open to the most severe criticism.[286] This inactivity is inexcusable

---

speaking frequently with the Austrian Minister at Prague Dr Marek whom he had considered to be a half-Czech"...(Tgb. Nr. A 7605, R 43 II/1496 a fol 1, S 57-59, 374290-374292, Bundesarchiv Koblenz).

284 Newton's Telegram 115 of December 20, 1937 about his talk with Dr Beneš at a reception in honour of the French Foreign Minister Delbos at the French Legation at Prague. (BFO, N 8587/154/12, FO 371/21126).

285 Newton's Telegram 2 of January 24, 1938 about his talk with Dr Beneš of the same day. (BFO, R 718/718/12, FO 371/22339).

286 This author was intrigued by the almost total lack of any criticism of Beneš' stand taken in this regard. Most of the historians and Beneš' biographers were quite satisfied with a statement that Hitler's Anschluss was a further blow to Czechoslovakia's security, but made no direct comments on Beneš' "hands-off" policy. They emphasized the fact that the lack of interest in the West to help Austria (France was at the time without a government and England's attitude appears in the British Cabinet Papers, Cab 24/275, of March 13, 1938, Item 67 in Halifax' Summary "British Attitude Towards Austria and Czechoslovakia - and League - Aspects of Recent Events" - "...we had no commitments to take action vis-à-vis Austria and we have no such commitments vis-à-vis Czechoslovakia, other than the general obligations of the Covenant...") as well as the attitude of other European states ranging from tacit approval to apprehensive observation coupled with a determination not to get involved, isolated Czechoslovakia to such an extent that "it did not even dare to lodge a diplomatic protest at Berlin (Gajanová, A., op.cit., p. 364). The Goering's assurances to Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin Mastný because of the German fear that Czechoslovakia would mobilize are well known to be described here (See Republique Française: Ministère des Affaires Etrangères Le livre jaune Français, Documents diplomatiques, 1938-39, Paris, 1939, pp. 2-4; Henderson, Sir N., Failure of a Mission, New York, 1940, pp. 125-126 and Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich, Prologue to Tragedy, New York, 1964, pp. 23-27 (the last author made this comment which implies some criticism of Beneš: ..."The attitude of Czechoslovakia had been a definite source of anxiety to the planners of the Rape of Austria and, in their dealings with Italy, they had proposed to use the possibility of Austria becoming "a branch of the Czechoslovak Republic" as one of the excuses for annexation. But the Prague Government had taken the whole thing very quietly and had naively accepted the German assurances of good faith..." (p.27).

both on theoretical and practical grounds. In regard to the former, the supreme goal of Beneš of the preservation of the entire Czechoslovak state was based on the concept of indivisibility of peace, collective security, and mutual help to any victim of aggression, and his speeches and statements on this subject were legion.[287] Hitler's annexation of Austria was not a question of any legalistic formula and interpretation but that of presenting to Czechoslovakia, on practical grounds, a mortal threat by almost totally completing its encirclement by hostile states and by exposing it to a German attack from the South where its frontiers were not sufficiently fortified.[288] Czechoslovakia, having been the sole country most immediately and intimately affected by Hitler's conquest of Austria, which ipso facto meant that it would be the next victim of Nazi Germany's aggression, should have therefore been the first,

---

287 See e.g. Beneš' 1936 and 1937 Christmas Messages and his exposés and statements made to Parliament at Prague: (listed in Note 210 of this chapter).

288 This point was quickly recognized by the Western Powers and used in the pre-Munich period as one of their arguments of hopelessness of the Czechoslovak position and of impossibility by the West to render an effective and sufficiently quick help to save Czechoslovakia in time, and of the necessity to coming into an agreement with Germany on the Sudeten-German question. (See e.g. British Cabinet Papers, Cab 24/276 of March 23, 1938, Items 75 and 76, Secret Cabinet Memorandum "The Situation in Europe -Czechoslovakia", prepared by Halifax for the information of the French Government, stating, i.e. that Czechoslovakia's military position after the annexation of Austria had been seriously weakened, the absence of fortifications on the Austrian border left Czechoslovakia open to German attack and there was little hope that France and the Soviet Union could effectively provide help in time to prevent the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. His Majesty's Government was therefore of the opinion that "every possible step should be taken both by the French and the English Government to help remove the cause of friction or even of conflict by using their good offices with the Government of Czechoslovakia to bring about the settlement of question affecting the position of German minority..."

even if it meant the only country to take an immediate counter-action. Furthermore, there were in Austria powerful anti-Nazi, anti-Anschluss forces led by Schuschnigg who, having desperately attempted to weather Berlin's pressures and threats, to pursue to a great extent his own way by continuing in maintaining friendly relations with the Little Entente, especially Czechoslovakia, went as far as to state that after Communism, national socialism was the greatest enemy of Austria.[289] These high-ranking Austrian representatives were convinced that it was of an imperative Czechoslovakia's self-interest not only to call mobilization, as was feared and thought to be a quite logical step for Prague to do, by the German General Staff,[290] but would itself take military action if Hitler crossed the Austrian borders.[291] Had Beneš acted in this logical way as

---

American Ambassador at Paris Bullitt reported in Strictly Confidential Telegram 739 of May 9, 1938 that he was told by Daladier that "he had considered the position of Czechoslovakia entirely hopeless since the annexation of Austria by Germany."(USDS, 851.50/164 - 760F.62/258).

289 Speech given by Schuschnigg in Zell am See on November 21, 1936, in the Zahraniční politika, 1936, p.778.

290 Dealing with the situation immediately preceding the German invasion of Austria, General Keitel stated on August 4, 1945 before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg: "I had brought to the attention of the Fuehrer the reality that if Czechoslovakia were to mobilize we were not prepared to cope with such a contingency and we would be unable to occupy Austria". (Czechoslovak Ministry of Information, Československo a norimberský proces, Praha, 1946, p. 80).

291 In an interview with the Central European correspondent of "The Times" Reed, the Austrian Minister of the Interior Dr von Glaise-Horstenau explained on August 5, 1937 that "he thought it feasible and likely that if Germany were to seize Austria, Czechoslovakia would, as a last bid for self-preservation, take that as the casus belli and march into the easternmost part of Austria to be in a better strategic position to fight. He added: 'What else could Czechoslovakia do?'" (BFO, N 4642/303/3, FO 371/21115).

correctly understood and expected both by the Austrians and the Germans, instead of procrastinating and leaving the initiative completely to Paris and London, he would have, by acting swiftly and decisively in the only realm Hitler really understood - military power, turned Hitler's "Anschluss" into a fiasco from which he might have never recovered because of the immensely strengthened power of anti-Nazi elements in Germany and of the Anti-Hitler German General Staff which was well aware of the military unpreparedness of Germany at that time.[292]

Regardless of the many and seemingly plausible reasons for not coming to the aid of his immediate neighbouring country[293] in the hour of her distress when Austria tried so desperately to preserve its independence that it even considered to defend itself with its meagre force and had

---

292 There are many reports about the then unsatisfactory performance of German military equipment: e.g. in a strictly confidential Dispatch 544 for the President and the Secretary, US Ambassador at Warsaw, Biddle reported on June 11, 1938 i.a. that the German General Staff told Hitler that experience in Spain had shown that German aviation motors were inferior to those of the Russians, that list of casualties in German daily practice flying was alarmingly high when compared to flying conditions prevailing in air forces of other countries, and that they were greatly disappointed over the poor showing of German motorized equipment during the march into Austria and held the inferior condition of motors mainly responsible. (USDS, 760F.62/441).

In strictly confidential telegram 148 from Warsaw of August 17, 1938 Biddle reported that "observers of the present Nazi manoeuvres noted they were distinctly elementary in character and as a whole characterized them as resembling a patchwork machine..." (USDS, 760F.62/574).

The American Consul-General at Vienna J.C. Wiley reported in Str. Conf. Dispatch 345 of July 26, 1938 that "the quality of the mechanized equipment used in the invasion of Austria was distinctly inferior. The mechanical casualties in the invasion of Austria greatly exceeded what might normally have been expected". (USDS, 760F.62/577).

293 Beneš himself did not provide any such plausible reasons: In his Memoirs he only stated that "At the time of the Austrian crisis I was

looked in vain for some signs of support from Prague with its magnificent Armed forces second to none in Europe at that time, President Beneš had committed, for the first time, a flagrant breach of the most fundamental and sacred ideological and moral basis of his great teacher and predecessor's philosophy of humanity and of his doctrine of defence against violence, tyranny, aggression - to always fight against evil and injustice.[294] By his lack of action to aid to him adjacent state, and it is immaterial whether or not was because of his fear of a war, of being involved in violence, or because of his tactical speculations and inability to act without the blessing of Quai d'Orsay, Beneš presented France and England, which were from him separated by hundreds of miles, with an example they would follow six months later when it was his country's turn on the list of Hitler's expansionist plans - in March 1938 he had forfeited his own right to be helped in September of the same year.[295] The tragic aspect of this drama lies in the fact that

---

waiting to see what the Great Powers, France and Great Britain, were going to do, and whether Austria or some other country would turn to the League of Nations..." (p. 37).

294 T.G. Masaryk dealt with this subject in his "Czech Question", and concluded with an extremely vital prognostication: "Every man can encounter a situation when he has to defend himself against violence by iron, not only by work and intellect. The Czech nation would also do so if somebody threatened its very existence". (Quoted by the Zahraniční politika, 1935, p. 581, which commented that "this moral basis was the greatest power of our revolution because nothing provided it with greater reputation than the consistent implementation of Masaryk's principle "We are not begging for our own independence, we are building it with our own strength...").

295 This author is convinced that had T.G. Masaryk been in the Spring of 1938 President of his country, Czechoslovakia would have

Beneš was in theory well conversant with the contemporary political development since only two weeks before the Anschluss took place he had correctly diagnosed, in his talk with the American Minister at Prague, the existing political situation in Central Europe; having emphasized the fact that "the only sound position to take is to stand, as Czechoslovakia has stood, upon principle and show courage and resist"... he assured Carr that "Czechoslovakia would continue to maintain her position... because it was the only... sound course to take for her own self-preservation.[296] However, when this sound theory was urgently needed to be put into practice, Dr Beneš "was waiting to see what the Great Powers, France and Great Britain, were going to do, and whether Austria or some other country would turn to the League of Nations".[297] Instead of having

---

taken, as a matter of principle, and without waiting to see what other states would do, a decisive military action to aid Austria in preventing the Anschluss. Masaryk had always and without hesitation fought evil, violence and injustice even against seemingly overwhelming odds, regardless of the consequences because he was truly an optimist who believed that the truth and justice would always, in the end, prevail. Dr Beneš, while having continuously employed his exaggerated optimism in his statements and speeches, did not, however, apply this optimism into practice during the Austrian Anschluss.

296 Dispatch 93 from Prague of March 2, 1938 from Wilbur J. Carr about his talk with Beneš held on February 28, 1938. Beneš had also at that time told Carr that "the wisdom of this (Czechoslovakia's stand - note by author) has been shown just recently in the case of Austria. Hitler made a vehement speech which caused great nervousness throughout the world and expectation of some aggressive act. Schuschnigg, on the other hand, had the courage to stand for definite principles and to declare for the independence of Austria, and no further move by Germany has been made..." (USDS, 762.63/541; 760F.6111/30; 760F.62/161).

297 See Note 293 of this Chapter.

followed the very fundamentals of Masaryk's philosophy of humanity and his own sound theoretical aspects of the particular situation, Beneš gave preference, whether because of his fears or miscalculations, to doubtful expediency rather than to vital essentials and the truth: in this lies the harshest criticism of his political behaviour and the whole key to the understanding of his country's and his own subsequent tragedies.

Beneš had later considerable difficulty in describing the Anschluss, and in an attempt to place all the blame on others, he had harshly criticized their conduct, subsequent feelings, search for excuses and relief that "Hitler is said to have it in Austria not easy..."[298] Yet the last line was exactly the one he told himself, immediately after the Anschluss, to a British visitor.[299] As in previous and subsequent cases of similar nature, Beneš was just not prepared to take any, even if only a partial, blame, especially in a matter of this significance which affected the very fundamentals of his great teacher's political philosophy and practice, and which brought about the subsequent disasters to his country.

---

298 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968, p. 25. (For more details, see ibid., pp. 25-80).

299 In Dispatch 75 from Newton from Prague of March 22, 1938 there is transmitted a record of Beneš' conversation with Leo Kennedy held on March 16, 1938. Beneš had then, inter alia, stated that "...the Austrians themselves might a little later become distinctly troublesome to the Nazi Reich..." (BFO, C 2117/1941/18, FO 371/21713).

(hh) Hungary[300]

> ...We want the policy of peace even with Hungary in spite of the fact that in Hungary they do not want to comprehend it. They have to know, of course, that we shall not be weak towards anyone. This is our answer to the various bellicose declarations of Hungarian politicians...[301]

Of all its immediate hostile neighbours, Hungary presented to Czechoslovakia during the entire era of the First Republic the most consistent threat and violently hostile attitude. Regardless whether Budapest was ruled by a dictatorial regime of a Bolshevik or Fascist variety, it never accepted the conditions of the Treaty of Trianon as final.[302] During the period surrounding the signing of this Treaty, the most serious discords between Beneš on the one side and the British and the Italian representatives on the other side were in regard to Hungary.[303] While London and Rome disagreed, having seen in Bolshevism

---

300 For further information see:

1. Adamová, M., "Maďarsko a Malá Dohoda v období před druhou Světovou válkou" in the ČSČH, Vol. XI, No 6, 1963, pp. 742-758.
2. Deák, F., Hungary at the Paris Peace Conference, New York, 1942.
3. Depuis, R., Le problème hongrois, Paris, 1931.
4. Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Allianz Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini, Documents on the Hungarian Foreign Policy, Budapest, 1966. (In German) (Subsequently shown as Allianz).
5. Jaszi, O., Revolution and Counterrevolution in Hungary 1917-23, London, 1924.
6. Mackartney, C.A., Hungary and her successors, London, 1937.
7. Sauvageot, A., Découverte de la Hongrie, Paris, 1937.

301 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 56.

302 Perman, D., op.cit., p. 263.

303 Gajanová, A., op.cit., p. 66.

the greatest danger, Beneš held the position that there was a great danger of restoration of the Habsburg Monarchy in Hungary which would result in the intensification of Hungary's violent revisionist policy aimed at the regaining of large parts of its lost territories; insofar as Czechoslovakia was concerned, Hungary demanded vast regions of Slovakia, including its capital of Bratislava and its second largest city of Košice, and the entire territory of Ruthenia.[304] Hungary's ambitions were, however, effectively thwarted by the creation of the Little Entente which was in this regard, under the acknowledged leadership of Beneš, very effective, and remained operational even until Munich.[305]

Beneš was unable to overcome between the two World Wars the vast chasm separating Prague and Budapest on the question of their frontiers. Besides wanting to recover its lost territories, Hungary wanted even more to regain its traditional common frontier with Poland and, by depriving Czechoslovakia of a common frontier with its only friendly neighbouring state - Rumania, to break up the territorial contiguity of the Little Entente and to further isolate the already dangerously isolated Czechoslovak state. Since Beneš was unable to agree to these Hungarian territorial demands and Hungary was unwilling to settle for less, there just did not exist any common basis on which he would have been able to make an approach towards Budapest aiming at the reconciliation of the relations

---

304 Perman, D., op.cit., p. 260.

305 See (ff) - The Little Entente - of this Chapter.

between these two neighbouring states, and their policies towards each other were in their essence mutually exclusive.

Beneš' election to the Presidency of his Republic "brought forth polite but cool comments in the Hungarian press".[306] The general tone was that an improvement of the Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations depended entirely upon Prague. Having been in agreement with this Budapest's contention that the initiative should come from Prague, Beneš submitted to Hungary on a number of occasions his proposals regarding an agreement between them on the normalization of their relations but his "proposals for arriving at the mutual approach did not meet in Budapest with understanding".[307] Any further attempts by Beneš would have equally been fruitless - Hungary had by then embarked upon a policy of close co-operation with Italy and Germany which, as it was convinced, was bound to result in its successful recovery, from Czechoslovakia, of its former territories. For this purpose it prevented, in harmony with the policies of Hitler and Mussolini, the formation of any sort of federation or organization of the Danubian states, such as envisaged and planned to put into effect

---

306 Dispatch 328 from US Minister at Budapest John F. Montgomery of January 7, 1936; he also reported that there was considerable speculation amongst Hungarians regarding what Beneš had promised and what the Hungarian minority expected to receive for their support in the election, that there was some difference of opinion in Hungary as to Beneš keeping any promise, and that official circles expressed a complete lack of confidence in Beneš. (USDS, 760F.64/64). For an interesting exception to the tone of these comments, see Note 27 of Chapter II of this study.

307 Adamová, M., op. cit., p. 753.

by Prime Minister Hodža.[308] Mussolini's hostility towards Beneš had played here the decisive role.[309] It remains an irony that for Budapest, Rome and Berlin "the destruction of Czechoslovakia actually was between them the strongest connecting link, the sole aim about which there was no dispute".[310]

Hungary had also played an important role in exerting on Schuschnigg, in concert with Germany and Italy, sharp pressure against his attempts to maintain and increase his contacts with Czechoslovakia. On a visit to Budapest in March, 1936 Schuschnigg emphasized the fact that Austria was trying to strengthen its contacts with Prague through Dr Hodža rather than Dr Beneš.[311] Hungarian Foreign Minister Kánya harshly rejected this stand by declaring that "with Czechoslovakia, any political agreement is out of the question".[312] Having understood the complete hopelessness of any success, through his own endeavours, towards reaching an agreement with Hungary, Beneš envisaged the conclusion of a

---

308 See Note 281 of this Chapter.

309 See (ee) - Italy - of this Chapter.

310 Gajanová, A., "Review of the book Allianz Hitler, Horthy, Mussolini" in the ČSČH, Vol XV, 1967, p. 237. For other relevant details see ibid., pp. 236-240.

311 Schuschnigg stated at the meeting with Hungarian political leaders in Budapest on March 14, 1936, trying to explain the friendly reception of Dr Hodža at Vienna that "Hodža is much more honest and flexible than Beneš who is rigidly clinging to the concluded treaties". (Allianz, Document No 9, p. 120).

312 Ibid., Document No 9, p. 121.

firm agreement between England and Italy, which would place Italy in the Anglo-French orbit, as being the only way by which Hungary, Yugoslavia and other countries would also enter this orbit.[313] He was also aware that the Hungarian Government was not in a position to stir up discontent among the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia along the lines done by Nazi Germany among the German minority and that Budapest was well aware of this reality.[314] Ultimately, even if Germany were to attack Czechoslovakia, Beneš was not perturbed about what action might Budapest take at that time since he relied "absolutely on Yugoslavia and Rumania to deal with Hungary".[315] In this prognostication Beneš was quite correct and when the opportunity for which Hungary was so impatiently waiting for two decades, finally came, it was unable to attack Czechoslovakia in a similar fashion as did Poland, because of its

---

313 Newton's Telegram 33 of March 17, 1938 from Prague, and Newton's Dispatch 75 of March 22, 1938 from Prague, both dealing with Beneš' talk with Leo Kennedy of The Times held on March 16, 1938. (BFO, R 2859/62/2, FO 371/22338 and BFO C 2117/1941/18, FO 371/21713 respectively). Besides dealing with the possibility of the conclusion of a pact between Italy and England, Beneš dealt with the question of minorities stating that he could not admit the right of Germany to protect the Sudeten-Germans since this would give Germany the right of continual interference. He was violently attacked for his stand in the Hungarian press. (Dispatch 1011 from Montgomery from Budapest of March 25, 1938 - USDS, 760F,62/200).

314 In telegram 2 of January 24, 1938 Newton reported from Prague that Beneš told him that he had learned from Schuschnigg that Kánya told Ciano that the Hungarian Government had no complaints to make of treatment of their minority in Czechoslovakia. (BFO, R 718/718/12, FO 371/22339).

315 Beneš made this statement in his conversation with General E.L. Spears held on March 14, 1938 (BFO, C 3225/1941/18, FO 371/21716).

fear of an immediate invasion of its territory by the two other states of the Little Entente. Regardless of all its other numerous weaknesses, towards Hungarian expansionism the Little Entente proved to be a powerful and successful deterrent even to the very end of the First Czechoslovak Republic.

(jj) Poland[316]

> ...I hope that our relations with Poland will soon leave the phase of emotional excitement and unnecessary quarrels... Between us and Poland there are not and there need not to be troubles in essentials, these troubles are rather of a temporary and transitory nature... Myself I do not doubt that ultimately we shall nevertheless reach an agreement on peaceful cooperation even with Poland...[317]

The violently hostile attitude displayed in the pro-Government Polish press towards Beneš at the time of his election to the Presidency of his Republic which reached at Warsaw the greatest intensity of all Czechoslovakia's neighbours,[318] reflected the feelings both of the majority of Poles in general and of Colonel Beck in particular - there was a strong personal antipathy between these two political leaders.[319] The individual events which brought about and strengthened

---

316 For further information see:

1. Beck, J., Dernier Rapport: Politique polonaise 1926-1939, Neuchatel, 1951.
2. Gromada, T.V., "Pilsudski and the Slovak Autonomists" in the Slavic Review, Vol 28, No 3, 1969, pp. 445-62.
3. Jedrzejewicz, W., ed., Diplomat in Paris, 1936-39: Papers and Memoirs of Juliusz Lukasiewicz, Ambassador of Poland, New York, 1970.
4. Machray, R., Poland of Pilsudski: 1914-1936, London, 1936.
5. Roberts, H.L., "The Diplomacy of Colonel Beck", in Craig, G.A. and Gilbert F., eds., The Diplomats 1919-1939, Princeton, 1953, pp. 579-615.
6. Rose, W.J., "Czechs and Poles as Neighbours" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol XI, 1951, pp. 153-171.
7. Szembek, J., Journal, 1933-1939, Paris, 1952.
8. Seton-Watson, H., Eastern Europe Between the Wars, 1918-1941, Cambridge, 1946.
9. Wandycz, P.S., Czechoslovak-Polish Federation, Bloomington, Indiana, 1956.
10. Wandycz, P.S., "Poland in International Politics" in the Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol XIV, No 3, 1972, pp. 401-419.

317 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 268 and p. 290.

318 See Note 25 of Chapter II of this study.

319 Beck described Czechoslovakia as a "police state" and remarked that Beneš "insisted on privileged position of Czechoslovakia in Eastern

this violent hostility between the two Slavic nations interrupted only by a few brief periods of futile attempts at arriving at some form of mutual understanding, are matters of historical studies: having been greatly influenced by "emotional excitement"[320] and passionate nationalism reaching during the climax of various disputes, such as the Těšín dispute, all the characteristics of chauvinism,[321] these events were ultimately products of the personalities and concepts of T.G. Masaryk and Beneš on the one hand, and of Marshal Pilsudski and Colonel Beck on the other hand. Thus while the former felt no enmity towards Russia, and there existed, among the Czechs a strong pan-Slavist and pro-Russian attitude,[322] the latter viewed Russia, regardless of its regime, as a

---

Europe which necessarily made him jealous of Poland" (Beck, J., op.cit., p. 52). Beneš made frequent derogatory and harsh comments in regard to the Beck's policies, e.g. "Poland's ill-considered, arrogant mark of defiance, the German-Polish Treaty..." (Memoirs, p. 10), "Beck's Poland hinted with cynical and malicious glee..." (Ibid., p. 13), spoke about "cynical remarks by Pilsudski and Beck about Czechoslovakia" (Ibid., p. 20- meaning the partition of Czechoslovakia - note by author) and wrote, after the end of World War II that "The Beck ideology... was not very far removed from the political doctrine of Nazi Germany... The Beck regime brutally overstepped the bounds with regard to Czechoslovakia in 1938. It was as bad as, if not worse than, the aggression against us by the Hitler regime at that time..." ("Postwar Czechoslovakia" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol 24, No 3, April 1946, p. 402).

320 See Note 317 of this Chapter.

321 The continuous barrage of attacks carried out on Beneš by his own chauvinist countrymen for having lost for Czechoslovakia the Těšín territory which went as far as branding him a traitor of his own country, confirm this fact. (See Note 48 of Chapter I of this study.).

322 There existed among them, however, sharp controversies about the form of government which would be the most suitable for Russia.

threat to its security in a similar way as it had always been in the past. In regard to Hungary, the roles of the Poles and the Czechs reversed to those in regard to Russia: while Poland felt no enmity towards Hungary - Warsaw had never ratified the Treaty of Trianon and wanted to re-establish the former common frontier with Hungary, Prague saw in Budapest a bitter and determined enemy state bent on recovering its lost territories.

Beneš expressed on many occasions his conviction that he would, in the end, reach an agreement on peaceful co-operation with Poland, yet there were too many factors which affected the whole field of Czechoslovak-Polish relations over which he had no control and on which no agreement was possible.[323] While it is true that the very roots of the Těšín dispute can be traced to the Beneš-Pichon Pact by which Beneš secured the French recognition of the historical boundaries of Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia, which ipso facto meant the French recognition of the Czech-Polish frontiers in Silesia based on the Czech historic rights, and not on the principle of nationality,[324] it is equally true that the initiative

---

323 Beneš was for example unable to prevent the occurrence of Beck's hostility and jealousy because of his own great personal prestige and successes in the League of Nations which Beck, having been at Geneva relatively unpopular, interpreted as "signs of Western partiality to Czechoslovakia and belittling of Poland"...(Wandycz, P.S., Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation, p. 5).

324 In his exposé to the Permanent Council of the Czechoslovak House of Commons of August 4, 1920, devoted entirely to the Těšín problem, Beneš dealt in detail with its whole history, defending himself, at the same time, against the sharp criticism conducted by the nationalists from the Right-Wing Czech political parties. Dealing with the Beneš-Pichon Pact of September 28, 1918, he stated: "I must loyally admit that at that

for the subsequent events in Těšín passed completely out of his hands.[325]

While Beneš' policy towards Poland was governed by an optimistic expectation that Poland would eventually realize that it was in its vital interest to come to an understanding with Czechoslovakia and an agreement between Prague and Warsaw would then be reached, Beck's policy towards Czechoslovakia was based on a concept given to him in 1921 by Pilsudski. Beck had at that time been warned against "forming vital relations either with Czechoslovakia or Austria for Pilsudski considered the bases of both states false and consequently he felt the existence of both would not endure. Either or both might conceivably drag into their inevitable troubles

---

time no one on the French side had thought of the Těšín boundary and a dispute with the Poles. France was above all interested in stating its position in regard to the frontiers with Germany. Had I then come with the problem of the frontiers with Poland, this pact would have never been signed in that form..." (Problémy, p. 62).

325 In the same exposé (see Note 324 above) Beneš dealt with the Czechoslovak military occupation of January, 1919, of part of Těšín held by the Poles, which "was carried out by employing improper means"; and described the consequences which were for him very unpleasant: "I had to sustain reprimands so harsh and unpleasant, that in the interest of the state, I have until now preferred not to talk about them. Above all, the unjustified employment of the Allied officers agitated all to the highest degree against us and had a priori placed them right from the very beginnings in the Těšín matter against us..." (Problémy, p. 56). After having described all the four phases of the lengthy and complex struggle for Těšín, Beneš remarked: "I very much regret that the conflict with Poland took place at all; it took place completely without my endeavours at the time when I was abroad and when I was not responsible for the foreign policy at home. Poland did not need the territory which for 600 years belonged without interruption to us. Poland is a great state and the question of Těšín... is for them a secondary question and cannot be of any importance. Poland has more than a sufficient quantity of coal. For Czechoslovakia the question of coal and of the railway was almost the vital matter..." (Ibid., pp. 80-81).

those states too closely connected.[326] Viewed from this plane no action taken by Beneš, short of a complete reversal in his Russian policy which he was not prepared to do, or of an abandonment of the Těšín territory which would have meant, ipso facto, his political suicide at home, could have reversed Beck's animosity towards Prague which was so ably executed by his henchmen of Lukasiewicz' type.[327] Yet Beneš was incorrect in stating that between Prague and Warsaw "there are not and there need not to be troubles in essentials..."[328] There were, unfortunately, troubles in essentials which appeared in the later years quite distinctly on the one hand in the conclusion of the German-Polish Treaty of 1934 which

---

326 Biddle's strictly confidential telegram 187 for the President and the Secretary from Warsaw of September 16, 1938; Biddle made this following observation: "This revelation is interesting in that Beck might be considered Pilsudski's ghost in terms of Polish foreign policy"... (USDS, 760F.62/864).

327 Juliusz Lukasiewicz was the Polish Ambassador to France during the 1936-1939 period. He was "one of the closest collaborators of Foreign Minister Jozef Beck". (Gasiorowski, Z.J., Review of the book "Diplomat in Paris" (See No 3 of Note 316) in the Slavic Review, Vol 30, No 2, June 1971, p. 411) Lukasiewicz' viewed the Czechoslovak crisis before Munich as "a tremor in which are disappearing the remnants of the Austrian monarchy and Moscow Pan-Slavism" and he stated that the Poles considered Czechoslovakia "to be an artificial creation and a source of irritation". Having believed that Hitler was genuinely interested only in Sudeten Germans, he told Bonnet on September 13, 1938 that he "saw nothing tangible to make one think that Hitler would march on Prague..." Another reviewer of this book noted that "it is depressing to discover from the memoirs of Lukasiewicz how the deep-seated, even if justified, animosity towards the Czechs blinded Polish leaders and prompted them to overlook the fatal consequences of their own policy for the very existence of Poland..." (Chrypinski, V.C. in the Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol XIII, No 4, Winter, 1971, pp. 429-431).

328 See Note 317 of this chapter - this statement was made on October 30, 1923.

brought about sharp rebukes by Beneš[329] and his frequent remarks to the effect that by the signing of this Treaty, "Poland has placed herself in a false position, was exposed to German domination and nobody trusted her..."[330] On the other hand, the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1935 had received in Warsaw rebukes and attacks along the similar lines.

During his Presidency before Munich Beneš had become increasingly pessimistic, and this had constituted an exception to his generally optimistic attitude towards even the most difficult political problems, in his evaluation of the Czechoslovak-Polish relations and future developments.[331] He believed, however, that "Czechoslovakia was in a strong position; Germany did not wish and could not afford to attack her. Germany's objectives, now that she was once more playing the part of a Great Power, were Poland, Russia and her lost colonies..."[332] He had also

---

329 Beneš dealt in detail and in a very critical manner with the background of this Treaty, his warnings against it and the consequences arising out of it. (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 10-11, 13-14, 20, 24, 34, 35).

330 Newton's Dispatch 334 to Sir A. Eden of November 10, 1937 from Prague, (BFO, R 7865/188/12, FO 371/21132).

331 He stated to British Minister at Prague Bentinck that "relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland were no good and there was now no solution - there was a continual jealousy and as long as Beck remained in power no remedy could be found".. (Bentinck's Dispatch 235 from Prague of November 12, 1936 about his conversation with Beneš of November 10, 1936, BFO, R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375).
The hostility of Beck towards Czechoslovakia did not cause worries and unfavourable reaction only among the Czechs in general and among their political leaders, with Beneš on the top in particular: even the Under-secretary of State at Warsaw, Count Szembek expressed his perturbation about Beck's anti-Czech policy: "I realized that the scope of our conflict with the Czechs worried me greatly and I could not very well understand where all this was going to lead us"..(Szembek, J., op.cit., p. 119).

332 Hadow's Telegram 12 from Prague of February 12, 1937 (BFO, R 1131/188/12, FO 371/21127).

hoped to be able to keep out of quarrels between Poland and Germany on the one hand and Poland and Russia on the other hand.[333]

Beneš' greatest mistake in regard to Poland was his belief, that notwithstanding all the animosities of the Beck Government, Poland would never attack Czechoslovakia in the event of the German attack on the latter country.[334] When this event was about to take place, however, "Poland was playing the part of a vulture"[335] and Warsaw's role resulted in Beneš' comment that "... the incredible, hostile and on the future completely unthinking move of Beck's Poland provoked in Prague not only disgust and contempt but also the conviction that it was already better for the future not to defend ourselves against the Polish violence..."[336]

---

333 Bentinck's Dispatch 235 from Prague of November 12, 1936 - Bramwell of the Foreign Office remarked thereon on December 1, 1936: "...We should agree with Dr Beneš re: the state of Czechoslovak-Polish relations regrettable but not very serious... Dr Beneš hopes to be able to keep out of quarrels between Poland and Germany, and Poland and Russia, optimistic as that may appear..." (BFO, R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375).

334 Notes of conversation between Beneš and General Spears of March 14, 1938 (BFO, C 3225/1941/18, FO 371/21716). Furthermore, all the Czechoslovak military strategy in the event of German attack was based on the political directive, prepared by Beneš, that Poland would not also attack at the same time. (See the next Chapter - Disaster of Munich).

335 These are the words used by French Premier Daladier to American Ambassador to France Bullitt on September 26, 1938 when describing Polish attitude towards Prague. When Bullitt referred to the demands of Poland for a common undertaking with Hungary, "Daladier said that so long as he was Prime Minister he would never assent to such dismemberment of Czechoslovakia, and finally, with a twinkle in his eye said that he hoped to live long enough to pay Poland for her cormorant attitude in the present crisis by proposing a new partition of Poland to Czechoslovakia." (Bullitt's Secr. and Str. Conf. Telegram 1602 from Paris of September 26, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/1124).

336 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968, p. 309.

(kk) Germany[337]

> ...to everybody who carefully watched Germany after 1920, it must have been clear that a long period of struggle over the peace treaties was beginning and that its result would be either a certain balance and co-operation between victors and vanquished, or another great war... I was personally well aware of the inevitable alternatives... I wanted our State... to be firmly anchored at the moment when there would be either an agreement or a conflict, to be prepared and to emerge successfully either from diplomatic negotiations, or even from a war...[338]

Beneš had aptly described, in the above quotation, the very essence of his policy towards Germany which formed for him a permanent basis on which he constructed his other policies, and which was in reality subordinated only to his self-imposed sacred mission of the preservation of the entire Czechoslovak state. He had followed Masaryk's

---

337 For further information see:

1. Beneš, E., Democracy Today and Tomorrow, New York, 1939.
2. Beneš, E., Germany and Czechoslovakia, Praha, 1937, 2 Vols.
3. Beneš, E., Memoirs, London, 1954.
4. Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, London, 1958 (Second edition).
5. Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968.
6. Berber, F., Europaeische Politik 1933-1938 im Spiegel der Prager Akten, Essen, 1942.
7. Bittner, K., Deutsche und Tschechen, Leipzig, 1936.
8. Bruegel, J.W., Tschechen und Deutsche: 1918-1938, Munich, 1967.
9. Chmelař, J., The German Problem in Czechoslovakia, Praha, 1936.
10. Grant-Duff, S., German and Czech, London, 1937.
11. Kořalka, J., "Vznik ČSR roku 1918 v oficiální politice německé Říše", in the ČSČH, Vol XVI, 1968, pp. 819-847.
12. Krofta, K., The Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic, Praha, 1937.
13. Krofta, K., Z dob naší první republiky, Praha, 1939.
14. Lades, H., Die Tschechen und die deutsche Frage, Erlangen, 1938.
15. Luža, R., The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans, A Study of Czech-German Relations 1933-1962, London, 1964.
16. Olivová, V., "Československo a Německo ve třicátých letech" in the ČSČH, Vol. XVI, 1968, pp. 881-891.
17. Šnejdárek, A., "Tajné rozhovory Beneše s Německem v letech 1936/37" in the ČSČH, Vol XI, 1961, pp. 112-116.
18. Weinberg, G.L., "Secret Hitler-Beneš Negotiations in 1936-37" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XIX, No 4, January 1960, pp. 366-274.

concept of the importance of Czechoslovak relation with Germany[339] based on the recognition that regardless of the circumstances, Germany would always remain a Great Power and Czechoslovakia a smaller state.[340] Masaryk and Beneš had also hoped that the gradual democratization of Germany, effected by the democratic-republican regime of Weimar, and mutual interests of the two Republics would overcome the traditional German-Czech animosity and distrust and would result in their respect for each other and friendly co-operation. This belief was further supported by the fact that at the Paris Peace Conference Germany made it amply evident that it had no territorial claims against Czechoslovakia[341] and by the actual cases of such co-operation which subsequently developed between Beneš and the German representatives of the Weimar Republic.[342]

---

19. Wiskeman, E., Czechs and Germans, London, 1938.

338 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 3-5.

339 See Note 67 of Chapter I of this study.

340 See Note 68 of Chapter I of this study, and the relevant text.

341 See Note 116 of Chapter III of this study.

342 See Notes 119 and 120 of Chapter III of this study and the relevant text - Besides the similarities of the internal political structures of the Weimar and the Czechoslovak Republics, Masaryk had re-established his numerous pre-war contacts with German leading scientific, cultural and educational personalities some of whom exercised a profound influence in the political life of new Germany. (Olivová mentions that Masaryk's correspondence and the documents of his presidential office indicate the vastness of these contacts; Olivová, V., op.cit., p. 882).

The two countries were in the early 1920's vigorously opposing the re-appearing reactionary monarchist-militarist movements which, centered in Hungary and after Kapp's coup d'état in Munich, threatened the democratic regimes of Weimar and Prague, and in the case of the latter, even the existence of its newly-won state. An example of this drama will

The gradual disintegration of the Weimar Republic and Hitler's rise to power had completely prevented any further truly friendly co-operation between Germany and Czechoslovakia. While he had immediately understood the meaning and aims of Nazi Germany,[343] Beneš had still attempted to arrive at some meaningful agreement with Berlin.[344] On the one hand he was not prepared to enter into a bilateral agreement with Hitler of the Polish or Austrian type since this would have meant, ipso facto, the end of Czechoslovak independence and the loss of the Franco-Russian support in the forthcoming conflict.[345] On the other hand, the

---

suffice for the purpose of this study: German Minister to Switzerland, Mueller urged in September 1921 his Foreign Ministry to make personal contacts with Beneš and stated: "...The German policy will advance in close co-operation with Czechoslovakia. German reaction works with the Hungarians and the Habsburgs. Munich is the centre. The reaction counts upon the Habsburgs in Hungary and the Wittelsbachs in Germany. But these are the dreams which have to be frustrated..." (Ibid., p. 882). Czechoslovakia had also used its good relations with France in helping Germany to overcome the Franco-German difficulties and disagreements such as took place in their conflict of 1921 and during the Ruhr crisis of 1923.

343 See Note 198 of Chapter III of this study.

344 See e.g. German Minister at Prague, Eisenlohr's Dispatch A. III.1. allg. of October 17, 1936 dealing with his conversation with Beneš held on October 16, 1936 which lasted several hours and wherein Beneš explained his eagerness to convince the Germans of his desire for good relations and for the conclusion of a meaningful treaty. (Capt. German Documents, POL IV 3783, Serial No 1941 H, Roll 1077, Neg. Fr. Nos 434773-434786).

See also Weinberg, G.L., op.cit., pp. 369-373; Beneš E., Memoirs, pp. 14-20; Šnejdárek, A., op.cit., pp. 114-116 - these three monographs deal with the unsuccessful negotiations between Beneš and the two Hitler's emissaries Count Trauttmannsdorff and Dr Haushofer, and especially with Beneš' stand on this issue. (For Beneš' record of the key negotiations held with them in his office on December 18, 1936, see: Gajan, K., ed., Německý imperialismus proti ČSR (1918-1939), Praha, 1962, Doc. No 262, pp. 525-530).

345 Beneš had consistently emphasized during his Presidency before Munich that Czechoslovakia could not, and would not sign such a

type of a multilateral treaty with Germany which he had so eagerly sought and which would have involved at least French participation, and better still, both French and British participation, Hitler had completely ruled out.[346]

The Czechoslovak-German relations in the 1933-1938 period which were de facto Beneš-Hitler relations, were governed by their two mutually exclusive political concepts and aims - Beneš was determined to ensure, at all costs, the preservation of the entire independent Czechoslovak state[347] and Hitler was equally determined to carry out his expansionist plans and to be able to do so he had to eliminate first Austria and Czechoslovakia.[348] Viewed from this plane, all the various

---

bilateral agreement with Germany not only because it would have placed Prague at Berlin's mercy but because it would have also constituted a dishonourable act, offending, and rightly so, all of its friends. (See Bentinck's Dispatch 251 of December 5, 1936, BFO R 7445/32/12, FO 371/20375; Bentinck's Dispatch 13 of January 20, 1937 - BFO R 685/188/12, FO 371/21127, and especially Newton's Dispatch 334 of November 10, 1937 - BFO R 7865/188/12, FO 371/21132).

346 The main reason was that by 1937 Hitler felt already more confident and Germany's growing strength did not compel him to conceal completely some of his aggressive plans.

347 This author regards all the accusations of Beneš that he was prepared to hand over the border territories of the Czech Historic Provinces to the SDP which would have meant, de facto, their eventual incorporation into Germany (See e.g. Šnejdárek, A., op.cit., p. 115) as demonstrations of the accusers that they had completely failed to grasp the spirit of the situation and, above all, of Beneš' efforts to achieve exactly the opposite - in harmony with his self-imposed sacred mission, not to give up an inch of the Historic Provinces which constituted post World-War I Czechoslovakia. To do otherwise was unthinkable for Beneš not only because of his personality trait of not allowing himself to be pushed into a position where he would have lost the control of the situation but mainly because he would have betrayed the trust placed in him by T.G. Masaryk and his nation. (See the next Chapter - Disaster Of Munich).

348 At the conference of November 5, 1937 held secretly in Berlin

events and happenings in the whole sphere of the Czechoslovak-German relations during this entire period were, individually taken, quite unimportant because they were only manifestations and expressions of this great drama of the struggle for the ultimate supremacy of one of the two concepts and thus succeeding at accomplishing its aims. The artificially created problems of the Sudeten-Germans, of accusations that Czechoslovakia was being a base of Bolshevism in Central Europe and of steady barrage of attacks on Beneš and his policies were just tactical manoeuvres employed by Berlin towards weakening of the Czechoslovak state in the same manner as Beneš' tactics called for the prevention

---

and the purpose of which was to put forward Nazi Germany's new imperialist policy Hitler declared that Austria and Czechoslovakia must be subjugated as a preliminary to wider conquest. (Akten zur deutschen auswaertigen Politik 1918-1945 (ADAP), Serie D, Vol 1, No 19). It is extremely important to note that even before November 5, 1937, when "this revelation of policy by Hitler came as a surprise to his hearers (Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich - Prologue to Tragedy, London, 1948, p. 13), Beneš had clearly foreseen this policy (see Hadow's Dispatch 243 from Prague of August 24, 1937 - BFO R 5854/188/12, FO 371/21130), explained it to Newton on November 8, 1937 (Newton's Dispatch 334 of November 10, 1937 - only three days after Hitler's revelation of this policy in a most secret fashion - BFO, R 7865/188/12, FO 371/21132) and dealt with it at great length in his conversation with Leo Kennedy on March 16, 1938 which had received the already mentioned rebuff of Lord Perth in his letter from Rome to Cadogan of May 14, 1938 (Newton's Dispatch 75 of March 22, 1938 attaching a record of conversation between Beneš and Leo Kennedy and Lord Perth's letter appended subsequently thereto, BFO, C 2117/1941/18, FO 371/21713).

Beneš was so astonishingly correct in his prognostication of Hitler's policy that one cannot help but to get an impression that he could not have made it any better had he been present at the now famous Berlin meeting of November 5, 1937. Here lies the key to the understanding of Hitler's vicious attacks on Beneš who, as he had felt, penetrated his own deepest and most secret thoughts. (See the next Chapter).

of a Russo-German Pact by bringing about the entry of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations and the conclusion of a Pact between Moscow and Paris on the one hand, and Moscow and Prague on the other hand as well as his efforts to make France and England realize that no appeasement towards Hitler was possible; elimination of the various problems created by these tactics would have in no way brought about the cessation of this supreme struggle. Eisenlohr's statements that "he was satisfied that genuine efforts were being made from above (by Beneš - note by author) to improve the Sudeten-German situation..."[349] and his reports that he considered Beneš' statements to be true, had resulted only in complaints having been lodged against him with Ribbentrop[350] but did not influence Hitler, bent on the destruction of Czechoslovakia at the earliest suitable moment.

Beneš who had never personally met Hitler and refused to do so, made him furious by his ability to clearly predict all his moves against

---

349 Newton's Dispatch from Prague of April 28, 1937 (BFO, R 2993/188/12, FO 371/21128).

350 On April 1, 1938 Head of the Auslandsorganization at Berlin, Bohle lodged a complaint with Ribbentrop that the German Minister at Prague Eisenlohr "was too much under the influence of the Czech leaders, notably Dr Beneš, to represent German interests properly". He underlined especially Eisenlohr's report of November 11, 1937 on his talk with Beneš (Pol IV 5884) and emphasized Eisenlohr's sentence: "I consider, however, his statements (Beneš' statements - note by author) to be really true, for the simple reason that a politician of his experience must long since have realized..." He then attacked this Eisenlohr's concept and concluded that Eisenlohr was long time in Czechoslovakia to know better. (Capt. German Documents, GFM - Bureau of Head of the Auslandsorganization - Czechoslovakia, Ser. 269, Roll 239, Neg. Fr. Nos 175126 - 131, Nat. Archives, Washington, D.C.)

Czechoslovakia and became one of his most frequent and favourite targets; yet, by irony, it was Hitler who at the time, when Beneš was being attacked from all the sides especially by his "friends" in France and England, paid him the greatest compliment by unintentionally stating, amid hurling at him various charges, the truth that "Beneš was infinitely more clever than Chamberlain, Daladier or Bonnet".[351]

---

351 Bullitt's strictly Conf. Telegram 1619 from Paris of September 27, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/1171).

(11) Soviet Russia[352]

...In Russian affairs our foreign policy will follow the same policy which it had been following until now; it will be neutral towards the Russian internal problems, and in agreement with our Allies it will be establishing contacts with economic factors of the individual parts of Russia...353

---

352 For further information see:

1. Alexandrov, V., The Tukhachevsky Affair, London, 1963.
2. Brach, R., "Ruský problém v československé zahraniční politice na počátku roku 1924" in the ČSČH, Vol XVI, 1968, pp. 1-28.
3. Král, V., O Masarykově a Benešově kontrarevoluční protisovětské politice, Praha, 1953.
4. Kramář, K., Naše Slovanství a uznání Sovětů, Praha, 1926.
5. Kvaček, K., "K francouzsko - sovětsko-československým vztahům po květnu 1935" in Fiala, Z., and Nový, R., eds., Z českých dějin, Praha, 1966, pp. 269-287.
6. Litvinov, M., Note For a Journal, New York, 1955.
7. Loeffler, A., Beneš, Stalin and Co., Berlin, 1938.
8. Lukeš, F., "Poznámky k čs.-sovětským vztahům v září 1938" in the ČSČH, Vol XVI, 1968, pp. 703-729.
9. Masaryk, T.G., The Spirit of Russia, London, 1955 (Second edition) 2 vols.
10. Nečásek, F., and Pachta, J., eds., Dokumenty o protisovětských piklech československé reakce, Praha, 1954.
11. Olivová, V., Československo-sovětské vztahy v letech 1918-1922, Praha, 1957.
12. Olivová, V., "Postoj čs. buržoasie k Sovětskému svazu v době jednání o prozatimní smlouvu z roku 1922" in the ČSČH, Vol 1, 1953, pp. 294-323.
13. Olivová, V., "Československo - Sovětská smlouva o vzájemné pomoci z roku 1935" in the ČSČH, Vol. XIII, 1965, No 4, pp. 477-499.
14. Pachta, J., "Dokumenty o protilidové a protinárodní politice T.G. Masaryka" in the ČSČH, Vol 1, 1953, pp. 45-60.
15. Prasolov, S.I., "Československo-Sovětská smlouva o vzájemné pomoci z roku 1935" in Axamitová, J., ed., Studie z dějin československo-sovětských vztahů 1917-1938, Praha, 1967, pp. 79-125
16. Prasolov, S.I. and Rezonob, P.I., eds., Sovětsko-čechoslovackije otnošenija meždu dvujma vojnami 1918-1939, Moskva, 1968.

353 Dr Beneš' statement to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Revolutionary National Assembly in Prague on January 31, 1920 in Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 52.

The appearance and establishment of Soviet Russia was destined to be the most disastrous single event for the entire Beneš' political career, the political factor which contributed so greatly to the disaster of Munich and which alone staged the February tragedy of 1948. Without realizing it at the time immediately following the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, T.G. Masaryk and especially Beneš fell prey, in regard to Russia, to their interpretation of the meanings of World War I[354] and the events which took place in Russia.[355] As a result, Beneš, while having vigorously denounced Bolshevism and its methods and even talked about the necessity of fighting against such a type of anarchy,[356] he was always opposed to any form of military intervention against Soviet Russia on the grounds that to do so would have meant to carry out "concept of the old regime which does not understand the significance of the world war and

---

354 See Notes 193-195 of this Chapter and the relevant text.

355 Beneš explained on January 31, 1920 that "Russia had collapsed because it was a medieval, non-democratic state which had no idea about the meaning of democratic work for the people, of modern politics, administration, and organization..." (Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 45-46).

356 On the same occasion (see Notes 353 and 355) Beneš stated: "...it is self-evident that we are against Bolshevik terror and against every anarchy. It is also self-evident that we have to fight against this anarchy; the question is how and by what means..." (Ibid., p. 48). - In his exposé to the Foreign Committees of the House of Commons and the Senate on February 6, 1924, Beneš dealt with the first five years of the Czechoslovak foreign policy. In regard to Soviet Russia, he, inter alia, stated:"...we were, and we are, opposed to the methods of Bolshevism, we do not agree with its foreign propaganda, and efforts to stir up world revolution which could not have been successful and which cost so many victims... We did not agree with the methods of the Government of Soviet Russia..." (Ibid., pp. 292-293).

of today's social movement..."[357] He was even more opposed to the intervention of the Czechoslovak Legion in Soviet Russia because of his concept of Slavdom:[358] "...the principle of our policy in Russia from the very beginnings of the Revolution did not allow any case of a Slavic nation, being on the territory of Russia, to become involved in bloody struggles with a part of the Russian nation. The only correct policy of the Czechoslovak Army in Russia was not to get involved in its internal affairs..."[359]

Beneš' Russian policy was based on false premises because even if its philosophico-political aspects were fundamentally correct,[360] and it was generally sound during the early post-war period when there remained a possibility of the collapse of the Soviet Regime in Russia and when Czechoslovakia had not yet entered, with the exception of the economic field, into any relations of consequence with the Bolshevik regime, it did not only fail to take into consideration the element of time which would have to elapse before the extremist leftist tyranny of Bolshevism would begin its expected moderating trend which would

---

357 Ibid., p. 49.

358 About Beneš' concept of Slavdom see Úvahy o Slovanství, passim.

359 Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 49.

360 For details on the two "Great Ideological Revolutions" conceived by World War I, see 2.(b)(i) Fight For the Preservation of the Post World War I Order of this Chapter.

ultimately bring it half-way towards liberal democracy[361] but also the law of history and international politics that it was the very nature of every tyranny, after having succeeded in taking over a country, to employ all the means at its disposal to strengthen its position and to remain in power as long as either internal or external forces would cause its downfall or modification. The particular qualities of the Russian people who, completely ignorant of democratic institutions, were traditionally extremely chauvinistic and willing to undergo any sacrifices for the extension of the power of "Holy Mother" Russia,[362] caused that any effective internal forces willing to bring about the collapse of Bolshevism, were totally lacking, certainly as long as they saw in Bolshevism an instrument capable of further extending the might of Russia. This situation had ispo facto meant that only a form of sufficiently powerful and determined outside intervention, attack or pressure could have eliminated, during the period between the two World Wars, the threat of Bolshevism.[363]

---

361 Dr Táborský had brought up this very point while dealing with Beneš' post World War II concept of East-West rapprochement and co-operation, stating that history might prove that it "was more wishful in timing than substance". (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No 4, July 1958, p. 684). Yet this point is valid from the very beginnings of Beneš' policy towards Soviet Russia.

362 For a detailed study of this field see Rimek, G.V., The Idea of Russian Imperialism, Ottawa, 1961, (M.A. Thesis, Political Science Faculty, University of Ottawa.).

363 This reality was understood by those in the West who were looking, in latter 1930's, towards Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia.

In the same fashion as his concepts of development in other dictatorial states, Beneš' concept of developments in Soviet Russia was also permeated with elements of undue optimism and wishful thinking which expressed themselves in the early post-World War I period in his frequent statements that he doubted the viability of the Bolshevik regime[364] and that the sole presence of missions from states of "civilized world" in Russia would ipso facto cause its collapse,[365] and, in the latter period, that there were major moderations in the Soviet policies and communism was fast disappearing.[366]

---

364 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 49-50-.

365 On December 14, 1921 Beneš told the Foreign Affairs Committee that "This whole Russian problem would have already been solved long ago, ... if there had been sent to Russia missions, because the Soviet regime could not simply have resisted, and it cannot resist, the presence of the civilized world. It is clear today even to the Soviet Regime itself that it is impossible to maintain by any means this system for long..." (Archive of the National Assembly of the Czechoslovak Republic, Stenographic Record of the meeting of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons of December 14, 1921, p. 37).

366 During his conversation with Sir. J. Addison of June 24, 1935, Beneš, dealing with his Russian visit, "spoke of the successes of the Soviet Government; he felt that this success was due to the fact that the Soviet Government did not hesitate, whenever and wherever necessary, to sacrifice the pure tenets of communism to the exigencies of the moment. Indeed, communism was fast disappearing... Beneš also stated that the Soviet Government had recognized the futility of encouraging communist propaganda abroad and would abandon all such efforts..." - Addison's dispatch to Sir Samuel Hoare of June 24, 1935 which drew, inter alia, the following comment by Dodds of B.F.O. of July 1, 1935 that Beneš' "Conclusions are rather unduly favourable. It is e.g. premature to assert that Communism is fast disappearing; nor can we agree, unfortunately, that the Soviet Government are going to abandon efforts at encouraging communist propaganda abroad..." (BFO, N 3240/160/38, FO 371/19461).

During the 1920's Beneš talked about the necessity of co-operation with Russia, and "of introducing again at the earliest moment Russia as a political factor into the European politics because without Russia there will be no peace in Europe,"[367] but he did not specify the type of Russia he had in mind. Having been convinced that the historical development had to inevitably lead towards political democracy, economic liberalism, social reconstruction and national confederation either by a complete transformation of Bolshevism or by its collapse and by the consequent installation of a democratic regime, he kept contacts with both the Soviet Government and the representatives of the Russian exiles.[368] At the same time he was careful not to commit himself either to the Soviet Government by granting it a de iure

---

367 Beneš, E., Problémy, pp. 293-294.

368 In an interview given during his visit to Belgrade Beneš explained his position on this matter: "...We Czechs have attempted already from the past to maintain a strict neutrality towards the political situation in Russia. In our opinion it is not necessary for us to take up a rightist or a leftist standpoint. Aurea medi linia est. We Czechs are careful not to provide a motive for an interference with the Russian internal affairs. While we were helping the Russian refugees we sent to, and established in, Moscow our mission..." (The Epocha of June 10, 1922).

At the plenary session of the House of Commons on October 30, 1923, Beneš stated: "...All that we are doing with today's Russia and with its emigration is in reality work for the future. Regardless of the criticism of this our policy from the right and from the left we believe that it is a good preparation which will once enable us to take a similar step in Russia which we were just now able to take while staying at Paris. Even towards Russia we will continue in this policy to be able to establish with it the same relation which we are now establishing with France. Our today's relation with the other Great Powers, England and Italy, will remain through these efforts unchanged and the system of the Little Entente will through them be only strengthened". (Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 276).

recognition[369] or to the Russian exiles by granting them official support in their political activities. Even after Great Britain, Italy and a number of other European States granted the Soviet Government their de iure recognition,[370] Beneš was not prepared to follow the suit because he had to deal at home with extremely powerful opposition to such a step, had to take it into the consideration the stand of his other two Allies of the Little Entente and wanted to see the consequent development following the mentioned recognition. "...The decisive fact will not be the recognition of Russia but the developments which will take place after this recognition..."[371] Because of this careful policy towards Russia at this particular time, Beneš became a target of the Bolshevik rulers, including Stalin.[372]

---

369 Beneš mainly considered the question of the de iure recognition of Soviet Russia to be a matter of tactics: for further details see Brach, R., op.cit., pp. 5-12.

370 During 1924, Soviet Russia received the de iure recognition from the following countries: England - February 2; Italy - February 7; Norway - February 15; Austria - February 25; Greece - March 8; Sweden - March 15; Denmark - June 18; Mexico - August 1 and Hungary - September 18.

371 Beneš' exposé to the Foreign Affairs Committee of the House of Commons and of the Senate on February 6, 1924 in Beneš, E., Problémy, p. 304.

372 In its Annual Report submitted to the Second Congress of the Soviets of the USSR, the Peoples Commissariat for Foreign Affairs of the USSR cynically remarked about Beneš: "...In the person of its permanant Minister of Foreign Affairs Beneš, Czechoslovakia attempts on the one side to maintain outwards with us proper relations, on the other side we have in Czechoslovakia a faithful ally of the esers and other emigration - this in the case that there would appear a third "democratic" Russia. (Quoted by Brach, R., op.cit., p. 9).

In his report about the results of the Thirteenth Congress of the KSR (Communist Party of Russia), Stalin made a vicious attack on Beneš: "...The capitalist states reckoned with the collapse of Soviet power in our country.

During the latter period of his Foreign Ministry and the entire era of his Presidency when it became quite evident that the Bolshevik regime in Russia would not collapse on its own without an outside interference, it would have still been possible for Beneš to keep his state away from granting the de iure recognition to, and entering into any agreement with, Soviet Russia. By following this course he would not have estranged from himself and his country the two Allies of the Little Entente as well as many of his and Czechoslovakia's friends in England, France and even in the United States. However, the emergence of Hitler's Germany resulted in Beneš' almost pathological fear of a possible Russo-German Alliance and subsequent participation on the same side in a future conflict,[373] and his stubborn determination to prevent such event at all costs, even at the cost of the betrayal of democratic ideals and an association with a tyranny - Soviet Russia. The costs for his consequent actions were to be staggering ones, destined to bring to

---

The psalmist says that God sometimes reveals the truth through mouths of offsprings. Should Western imperialism be the God, then it is natural that it cannot be without its offspring. And so there appeared even its offspring in the person of not at all unknown Beneš, Foreign Minister of Czechoslovakia, through whose mouth imperialism stated that there was no reason why to hurry with the recognition of the Union of Republics because the Soviet might was not a firm one and because the Soviet regime would soon be replaced by a new bourgeois-democratic government it would be therefore better to abstain in the meantime from entering into the normal relations with the Soviet Union..." (Stalin, J.V., Spisy, Praha, 1951, Vol. 6, p. 225).

373 See B.(b)(iii) Conclusion of Chapter I of this study. Among the numerous documentary evidence of this fear of Beneš, some of which had already been presented in this study, one of the clearest Beneš' statements is contained in Dispatch 93 of the American Minister at Prague, Carr of March 2, 1938 (USDS, 760F.6111/30; 762.63/541).

his country two disasters within a decade. His phobia of an alliance between the two dictatorships had also revealed his pessimism in the very fundamentals of democracy and his employment of democracy only as a means for the preservation of his state.[374]

On theoretical grounds Beneš' explanation that "German armament had so altered the balance of power in Central Europe that it would be necessary for Czechoslovakia to establish the most intimate possible relations with the Soviet Union..." and that "the kernel of his entire policy was... to produce a balance of power between the Soviet Union, Germany and Italy;"[375] cannot be accepted. Czechoslovakia, having been threatened by one ruthless dictatorship, Nazi Germany, aiming at its conquest, had never given Beneš the ideological basis and justification for establishing "the most intimate possible relations" with another, not less ruthless dictatorship, Soviet Russia, although it might have seemed to be at that time, because it was then advantageous to Stalin,[376] less threatening and willing temporarily to co-operate with democratic states. In fundamentals,

---

374 If he were an optimist and a true believer in democracy, its institutions and its ideals he would have been certain that in any future conflict, democracy representing the truth and justice would ultimately have to win, even if Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia were to unite; on the contrary, he would have welcomed such an alliance since the two totalitarian regimes in those countries could have been destroyed at such a conflict together.

375 Beneš' statement to the then US Ambassador at Moscow Bullitt during his visit to Moscow on the occasion of the signing of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty made on June 14, 1935 (Bullitt's Str. Conf. Telegram 236 from Moscow on June 14, 1935, USDS, 760F.6111/10).

376 Stalin himself described earlier his own understanding of the conduct of foreign relations: "Words must have no relations to actions - otherwise what kind of diplomacy is it? Words are one thing, actions another.

in principles of political philosophy, no compromise, appeasement or association with evil are possible. This fundamental law of conduct of political affairs having been broken by Beneš had to inevitably result in disaster both for him and his country. Even at the time when Beneš was preoccupied with establishing relations with Moscow, Bolshevism has never ceased to present a grave threat to Czechoslovak democracy and independence. It is an irony that Dr Kramář - the Czechoslovak statesman whose Russian policies were so widely accused of romanticism and who was a bitter opponent of Beneš in Russian affairs from the very beginnings of the Czechoslovak Republic, was the sole Czechoslovak statesman who clearly foresaw the tragedy of the Czechoslovak nation in the making and who had the courage to say so on the occasion of the first step in Beneš' policy of building up such "intimate" relations with Soviet Russia - the granting to the Soviet regime the Czechoslovak de iure recognition, amid the approval and applause from the majority of the population. Having first stated that "the betrayal of the Slavs has finally taken place", Dr Kramář prophesied with astonishing accuracy that "the Czechoslovak nation will dearly pay for their recognition of the Bolsheviks".[377]

Good words are a mask for concealment of bad deeds. Sincere diplomacy is no more possible than dry water or wooden iron"... (Quoted by Dallin, D.J., Russia and Postwar Europe, New Haven, 1943, p. 91).

377 Quoted by the US Chargé d'Affaires at Prague, J. Webb Benton in his dispatch 210 of June 14, 1934 from the Národní Listy, the official organ of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party of Dr Kramář. Benton also wrote that with the exception of the Národní Listy, "the leading Prague newspapers comment extensively and enthusiastically upon the

The conclusion of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty[378] which followed the French-Soviet Treaty was ostensibly governed by Beneš' principle explained by him to the Austrian Foreign Minister Berger-Waldenegg who asked him how far did Czechoslovakia intend to go with Russia: "I will not go further than France and I will always go in this matter along with France. Our policy is, and always will be, the policy with Western Europe".[379] Beneš had also been at great pains of dissipating any suspicion of, and hostility to, this Treaty. He told the British Minister at Prague that during the Czechoslovak-Soviet negotiations leading to this Treaty he had successfully "resisted all the attempts which had been made by Russia to commit Czechoslovakia further than France".[380] He then

---

normalization of diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia". (USDS, 760F.61/50).

In his earlier dispatch of the same date, No 209, Benton reported that the recognition of Soviet Russia by Czechoslovakia through an exchange of notes at Geneva on June 9, 1934 between Beneš and Litvinov "is considered a political act of the utmost importance and has been unanimously approved by the Czechoslovak Government, the coalition parties and the vast majority of the population, irrespective of race or political affiliations... the only real opposition from the internal political point of view to the recognition of Soviet Russia came from the National Democrats, based solely on the personal objection of their leader, Dr Karel Kramář".. (USDS, 760F.61/49).

378 The three works listed in Note 352 which deal with the developments surrounding this Treaty, Nos. 5, 13 and 15 should be read with a great deal of caution, especially No 15, since they are lacking in many aspects that objectivity which is taken in the free world for granted.

379 Record of conversation between Dr Beneš and Dr Berger-Waldenegg held at Geneva on April 16, 1935 quoted in Prasolov, S.J., op.cit., (Note 352, No 15) p. 85. These were but words (see Stalin's description of diplomacy, Note 376 of this Chapter) and Beneš described later that "his words had no relations to actions" when he described the intimate relations then existing between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union, his own role played in the unsuccessful intervention in France, on behalf of the Kremlin, to "give active help in equipping the Soviet Navy with some special weapons.

emphasized the fact that Czechoslovak action or inaction would depend entirely upon whether France were compelled to take action or entitled to remain passive and concluded by giving an assurance that Czechoslovakia, in spite of her Slav affinities, was a Western country, of Western culture, and had to, therefore, turn to, and rely upon, the Western Powers.[381]

Viewed solely from the point of view of tactical considerations, Beneš' performance in regard to this Treaty has demonstrated his vast diplomatic skills, that he indeed was "the Grand Master of Compromise",[382]

I intervened. I repeated my request, I stressed the importance of this help but I had no success whatsoever. I was forced to conclude that those in power in France clearly did not want to help..." He also stated that he agreed to deliver to Soviet Russia considerable quantities of certain special weapons from the Czechoslovak armament factories which the Soviet Army especially needed and could not get from France or anywhere else. (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 41 - for further details see ibid., pp. 40-43.).

These actions were certainly not in accord with his statement to the Austrian Foreign Minister, and his repeated interventions in France on behalf of Stalin could not but cause irreparable damage to the vital Czechoslovak interests since he had subsequently been considered privately by many in France, what Polish Ambassador at Paris Lukasiewicz said of him openly - "Beneš had acted as he had because he was an agent of Moscow". (American Ambassador at Paris, Bullitt's telegram 1580 of September 25, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/1064).

380 Providing further details Beneš said that "the Soviet Government had been extremely anxious to involve Czechoslovakia in something further with regard to Poland, and the point led to much negotiating; but he had made it quite clear that he would have nothing of the kind and, succeeded in committing his country to nothing which was not innocuous, or at any rate inevitable, since it was obvious that if France were properly and legitimately involved in a dispute, Czechoslovakia would have to be on her side". A F.O. Official made the following remark: "The pact was signed on May 16th. According to the press, the first 3 Articles are identical with those of the Franco-Russian pact. Dr Beneš has resisted successfully all attempts to commit his country further than France and the Treaty stipulates that the pact shall be effective only if the victim of aggression is assisted by France". (Sir J. Addison's letter from Prague to the Rt. Hon.

but all his efforts in this direction could not fail but to give an objective observer an impression of futility, emptiness, distortion of values, and since they had no solid philosophical basis, of having been unreal, hanging in the air; they were attempting to accomplish the unaccomplishable, their moral value was at least questionable if not outrightly condemnable[383] and Beneš' demonstrated enthusiasm and optimism about Soviet Russia during and after his visit to Moscow were completely uncalled for and inexcusable.[384] The whole dilemma of this

---

Sir John Simon of May 13, 1935 - BFO, N 2476/160/38, FO 371/19461).

381 Ibid.

382 This excellent description of Beneš' political personality has originated with Dr Táborský who was Beneš' personal secretary during the entire period of World War II (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No 4, July 1958, p. 669).

383 This specific subject was discussed by the author with Msgr. Bezdíček at Rome on September 9, 1971; Msgr. Bezdíček was convinced that Beneš' disregard of moral laws and values of his nation in his Russian policy was the beginning of the end of his country. Presenting convincing arguments and examples from the past political experiences he explained that none of those political leaders who associated themselves with forces representing evil in order to accomplish good, was able to succeed and had always met, in the end, with disaster. This was so because in all cases of such alliances, the forces of evil overcame those originally representing the good; furthermore, any good after having associated itself with evil, had immediately become itself a part of that evil. He concluded by reminding the author of an old Czech proverb particularly fitting Beneš' relationship with Stalin: "Do good to the devil and he will reward you with the hell!" That was precisely Stalin's reward to Beneš in 1948.

384 In this aspect Beneš left himself wide open to the most devastating criticism. By "describing in the most favourable terms his Russian visit, spoke of successes of the Soviet Government..."" his enthusiasm for the country from which communism springs...", and having Addison remarked that "Dr Beneš' enthusiasm rose to lyrical heights when he was describing his reception (by Stalin - note by author) which was 'marvellous'..." (Sir J. Addison's letter of June 24, 1935, BFO, N 3240/160/38, FO 371/19461),

problem rested in the incompatibility of the philosophico-political principles represented by each of the two "partners" which governed the whole field of their relations. Instead of having reached its, by Beneš desired, objective of providing Czechoslovakia with greater security against the German threat, this Treaty had considerably weakened its position in the West while not strengthening it in the East. On the one hand, the sole act of signing this Treaty with a totalitarian, imperialist Great Power threatening the very existence of other states as well as their social order, and causing fear and abhorrence among so many leading and influential personalities in Western Democracies and the Little Entente, coupled with Beneš' proclamation during his Russian

---

Dr Beneš had confirmed Addison in his anti-Beneš, anti-Czechoslovak views, incurred F.O. hostile remarks (Ibid) and had done a great damage to the Czechoslovak cause in the quarters where it was most devastating.

American Minister at Prague, Wright, dealt with this particular subject to some detail and described some unfavourable reaction to Beneš at home: "...A number of Czechs - and these include not a few officials - have told me privately that they are much annoyed over the publicity that has been accorded Dr Beneš' Russian trip. They point out that, while the Franco-Russian Mutual Assistance Pact made the conclusion of a Czechoslovak-Russian one a political necessity, Czechoslovakia has greatly cheapened herself by making such a fuss over a country which, to say the least, is still regarded by many countries with 'evident suspicion'. I gain the distinct impression that many thinking people in this country are against too intimate relations with Soviet Russia, and that they feel less confident in the ultimate benefits that Czechoslovakia may derive from the recently concluded Pact of Mutual Assistance than does apparently M. Beneš..." (Wright's dispatch 201 from Prague of June 19, 1935 - USDS, 760F.6111/12).

Insofar as Beneš' "marvellous" reception by Stalin was concerned, American Ambassador at Moscow, Bullitt wrote that he understood "authoritatively that Beneš' conversation with Stalin was of no importance. Beneš has been treated as the little Slav brother with great but condescending cordiality"... (Bullitt's Tel. 236 of June 14, 1935, USDS, 760F.6111/10).

(For details about Beneš' Russian visit including his own and Litvinov's speeches at the dinner held in Moscow on June 8, 1935, and the communiqué about his talks with Stalin, Litvinov and Molotov held on June 10, 1935, see the Zahraniční Politika, Vol. 1935, pp. 331-335).

visit that "...between our states there are no conflicts and common interests of our mutual policy are really very close, and... our states are truly and completely inspired with endeavours for a sincere policy of peace, true, lasting, European and world peace...",[385] as well as with the general knowledge of the important role Beneš was playing at bringing the Soviet Union into the League of Nations and in attempts to bringing it into the Western camp, had cast on Beneš and Czechoslovakia a shadow of suspicion and hostility in the West and the Little Entente which was subsequently so effectively exploited by Nazi propaganda. On the other hand, Beneš having considered this Treaty to be mainly, if not only, a tactical manoeuvre designed to weaken the German threat by averting the possible conclusion of a Russo-German Pact[386] and having

---

385 This was not only a very highly irresponsible statement for Beneš to make but it was at the same time a completely erroneous one; while it was undoubtedly meant for the Kremlin's consumption, it caused Czechoslovakia some irreparable damage in the West by placing it in the same category as Bolshevik Russia whose imperialist goals were well known and feared. Furthermore, even in this speech Beneš intermingled his proverbial optimism with his wishful thinking when he stated: "...Yes, in our foreign policy (that of Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia - note by author) there are no conflicts between the interests of our states and I am convinced that there will also be none in the future. The purpose of my trip is to emphasize and demonstrate this fact to all our contemporaries and descendants..." (Beneš' speech at the dinner held in his honour at Moscow on June 8, 1935; in the Izvěstija of June 9, 1935 - quoted by the Zahraniční Politika, Vol. 1935, pp. 333-334).

386 On May 13, 1935 Beneš told the British Minister at Prague that "The Czechoslovak Agreement with Russia was of no great significance for it did not, in fact, change anything in the existing order of things. But both it and its French counterpart were of positive value in that they reassured public opinion as to the extent of the front against German designs. Above all, they possessed the merit of drawing Russia away from Germany. If and when, the German system were to give way to a more purely military form of government, military circles in Germany had often flirted

totally been determined to leave all the initiative to France which he was prepared to implicitly follow, left the Kremlin in no doubts about having been assigned a place of secondary importance in Beneš' foreign policy and in the circumstances the value of such an alliance in the time of need has from the very beginnings been, at the best, extremely doubtful and unreliable.[387] With the exception of the National Democrats, the Agrarians and rightist extremists, the Czechoslovak public opinion and the press had actually seen in the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty the strengthening of their country's position.[388] Tragedy of this entire

---

with the idea of a Russo-German military combination. It was all-important to guard against such a contingency, however remote, and anything which furthered this end was therefore to the good. No higher significance should be attached to the two instruments..." (Sir. J. Addison's letter to the Rt. Hon. John Simon from Prague of May 13, 1935, BFO, N 2476/160/38, FO 371/19461).

387 That the Russian Communists did not fail to grasp this reality which resulted in their generally hostile attitude towards Beneš, see Prasolov, S.I., op.cit., (Note 352, No 15) and Prasolov, S.I. and Rezonob, P.I., eds., op.cit., (Note 352, No 16). The most vigorous attacks by Russian Communists were waged by Prasolov in his earlier work (Československo v době ohrožení fašismem a Hitlerovou agresí 1933-1937, Praha, 1956). Among numerous charges he stated that Beneš' speeches to the Czechoslovak Army "...demonstrated again and again the hostility of the Czechoslovak bourgeoisie towards the Soviet Union which in no way changed even after the conclusion of the Treaty of mutual help between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. In the same way as the Agrarians, so Dr Beneš and the entire bourgeoisie, the reactionary and the so-called democratic, did not want any widening and deepening of the allied relations with the Soviet Union..." (pp. 178-179).

388 An outstanding example of the naive position taken by the majority of the Czechoslovak press and political revues at that time can be found in the Přítomnost of December 11, 1935 (Vol. 12, No 49) where in an editorial "An Epilog to the Old Polemics" its editor Peroutka, after having described past struggles with the Communists, explained that Russia, threatened by Hitler "promises Czechoslovakia to come to its aid if it were attacked by Germany" and then wrote that "some fools - our nationalists give the impression that this newest development - this defensive association

drama has not yet been understood by most of the objective and serious students of this particular epoch: it was based on Beneš' failure to understand that Bolshevism as such was to remain in Russia for some decades to come, to cease to entertain vain hopes about Russia's early or even already then progressing move towards democracy, and to draw from this reality logical conclusions: since it was impossible to enter into any truly meaningful co-operation with Stalin, Beneš should have, by keeping Czechoslovakia as far away as possible from the ruthless tyrant at the Kremlin, not to undermine the Czechoslovak position in the West.[389]

---

with one of mightiest armies of the world, was to them highly unpleasant. They certainly think, by doing so, of other things than the one of which a nationalist is above all obliged to think: the defence of the country. They think of this and of that but not of that what is precisely from the nationalist point of view the most important. P. Cot wrote recently in France: 'If we were to lose the Soviet Union as our Ally, ask our General Staff what that means. Ask also our Navy which is using only the Soviet oil!' This is a wise speech, so wise that even every patriot has to approve of it. Because we, as the nation, do not want to lie down in a grave, let us admit, that we have to reflect on matters in a nationalist fashion. And if some our nationalist were to begin to incite against the military association with Russia, let us tell him as P. Cot: 'Ask our General Staff what it means. And after he had completed this informative discussion, only then let us talk with him further!" (Mr. Peroutka who had written such drivel in 1935, is now being considered to be one of the foremost Czechoslovak political commentators in the exile and has been writing in the past years numerous anti-Communist commentaries in the Czechoslovak democratic newspapers abroad - note by author).

389 Cernicek's thesis on the "Czechoslovak-Russian Relations 1914-48 in the Foreign Policy of Dr Beneš" presents a typical example of such misunderstanding: after having completely disregarded Beneš' failure to take into account the reality of Bolshevism which presented such a grave threat to the existence of democratic Czechoslovakia and ignored the actual damage which Beneš had inflicted upon himself and his country by his statements made during the period surrounding the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1935, Cernicek considered instead Beneš' Russian policy as "the recognition of the existing reality. For him it was necessary to take the inescapable Russian problem as it was rather than that Czechoslovakia would wish it were.

During his Presidency, Beneš, having realized the seriousness which the West was attaching to the Czechoslovak association with the Soviet Union and the impressions and successes Nazi Germany was achieving there with its anti-Czechoslovak propaganda branding Czechoslovakia a base of Communism in Central Europe endangering the European peace, tried desperately to minimize the Czechoslovak-Soviet association and to demonstrate that there was no danger of Communism in his country.[390] Yet

---

Once it was realized that Bolshevik Russia was an irreversible reality with which a realistic foreign policy had to count, it was necessary to size up the situation and try to find some kind of modus vivendi, first economic and then gradually political with this existing Russia..." Cernicek then dealt entirely with Beneš' wishful thinking about Soviet Russia's evolution towards democracy, mistaking it for, and considering it, the true reality. (Cernicek, A.D., Czechoslovak-Russian Relations 1914-48 in the Foreign Policy of Dr Beneš, MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Chicago, 1952, pp. 72-74 (unpublished).

390 In an interview given to Henri Bordeaux of the French Academy which appeared in the "Echo de Paris" of June 2, 1936, Beneš stated that "Communism was not to be feared in Czechoslovakia..." This article was sent to London by British Ambassador at Paris, Sir G. Clerk on the same date. (BFO, R 3218/32/12, FO 371/20374).

On November 10, 1936, Beneš told British Minister at Prague, Bentinck that "due to agrarian laws which had broken up large estates to a certain extent, there was no danger from Communism in Czechoslovakia..." (Bentinck's Dispatch 235 of November 12, 1936 - BFO, R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375).

During his visit to Belgrade from April 5-7, 1937, Beneš told Prince Paul that "the Czechoslovak Pact with the Soviets was precisely the same as the Franco-Soviet Pact and would come to an end when the latter did - if either party denounced or repudiated the Franco-Soviet Pact, the Czechoslovak-Soviet Pact would automatically lapse . Beneš said he gave this information to Prince Paul in the strictest confidence as it was not generally known. He said he had restrained Blum from concluding a military agreement with the Soviets... Communism no longer existed! (Marginal note by BFO: Good Lord!)" ...(Sir R. Campbell's confidential letter from Belgrade of April 26, 1937 to Sir R. Vansittart, BFO, R 3066/2594/12, FO 371/21134).

On July 2, 1938 Beneš told former US Military Attaché at Prague, Major Winslow that Soviet Russia "as recently as three years ago, advocated and worked for world revolution. Now the revolution is not mentioned as Russia saw the world turned against it..." (Carr's dispatch 203 from Prague of July 5, 1938, USDS, 860F.00/541).

he was unable, on the one hand, to overcome the suspicions aroused by his Russian policy in the West and in the Little Entente in general, and in England, where it counted the most, in particular.[391] On the other hand, by his attempts to minimize the importance of the Czechoslovak-Soviet associations he further kept on antagonizing Soviet Russia.[392] The British Foreign Office observed that "as regards Russia, the Czechs are making the worst of both worlds yet no one would presumably want Dr Beneš to dabble any deeper in Communism than hitherto and tie himself more closely to Moscow,

---

391 British Diplomatic and Foreign Office documents abound with inferences of this suspicion such as:
1. Friction and irritation between Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia being due to the alleged organization of Communist propaganda in Yugoslavia by cells directed from Czechoslovakia which Beneš was unwilling to eradicate "for fear of offending Russia" while the Czechoslovak Army wished to accede to the Yugoslav demands. (Hadow's dispatch 22 from Prague of January 31, 1936, BFO R 675/32/12, FO 371/20373).
2. "Czechoslovakia as a Base for Comintern Activity" - a memorandum prepared by the British Legation at Prague and sent by Hadow to London on October 8, 1936. It alleged that Comintern selected Czechoslovakia as its base of operations for German, Polish, Rumanian, Yugoslav and Hungarian Communists and that the Czechoslovak Government tolerated these activities on its territory provided they did not damage Czechoslovak interests. (BFO, R 6060/32/12, FO 371/20375).
3. "Bolshevization of Czechoslovakia" a Foreign Office memorandum of December 4, 1936 prepared by Bramwell, dealing with Communist danger to Czechoslovakia which drew a FO note by WRC Green of December 9, 1936, catching partly the spirit of Beneš' dilemma caused by his Russian policy during his Presidency before Munich - see the following Note 392.

392 FO Note by Green (see item 3 of the above Note 391) stated that clearly "...the foolish Czechs have not done enough in the way of cooperation with Moscow to benefit themselves very greatly but they have done more than enough to add a lot to the already more than dangerous hostility of Germany". An amendment is necessary to present the true situation in which Beneš found himself at that period, since Germany's hostility was immaterial - it would have existed regardless of his association with Moscow; this note should be amended by deleting the last three words, and adding these words: "Suspicion and hostility of the anti-Bolshevik circles in the West and in the Little Entente". (note by author).

even if he could; rather the reverse".[393] They regarded the basis of Beneš' dilemma this growing isolation occuring at the same time both from the West and the East, and expressed fears that Beneš might "become increasingly dependent on Russia who we may be certain will become more and more exacting and overbearing, in spite of M. Beneš' protest, in proportion as the isolation of Czechoslovakia becomes more marked".[394] While the British agreed that Czechoslovakia was not a Communist country they kept on insisting that it was Beneš' policy towards Russia which had instigated all the German and other attacks against Czechoslovakia[395] and interpreted any Czech denial of secret Czechoslovak-Soviet arrangements as an indication that "the Czechs are a bit afraid of having gone too far along the road to Moscow".[396] When Nazi Germany through Goering unleashed

---

393 F.O. Bramwell's note of December 10, 1936 written as a commentary to Bentinck's letter from Prague of November 28, 1936 to Sir A. Eden about his conversation with Dr Krofta in connection with the campaign of violent attacks waged by German press against Czechoslovakia which, as it was claimed, became a base of Communism, of Russian airports and planes. (BFO, R 7382/32/12, FO 371/20375.).

394 F.O. note by Sargent of December 14, 1936, to Bentinck's letter of November 28, 1936 - see the above Note 393.

395 Commenting on an article in the Manchester Guardian of November 26, 1936 about Czechoslovakia which stated that to call Czechoslovakia Communist was "violating every canon of common sense", Bramwell of the F.O. noted on December 9, 1936 that "this is a very well informed article except for the suggestion that the Czechs are quite blameless in the matter of having truck with Communism. They are not in fact blameless and are thereby very foolishly playing straight into Germany's hands"(BFO, R 7198/1162/12, FO 371/20377).

396 F.O. remarks by Bramwell of December 1, 1936 on Bentinck's telegram 30 of November 27, 1936 informing that Dr Krofta had denied that the Soviet Union had given fresh assurances to Czechoslovakia in the event of German attack as claimed by the Daily Telegraph of November 25, 1936. Bramwell also added: "I don't know whether M. Krofta's denial is reliable

the most violent attacks on Czechoslovakia alleging that it was a "mutterschiff" for Soviet Russia,[397] neither Beneš' frequent and emphatic denials[398] nor his offers, even to the Germans, to inspect the Czechoslovak airports made any impression on the British who saw in the latter move of Beneš only an indication that "he has lost his nerve or is losing it".[399] Amidst all of his denials of the existence of Russian

---

any more than M. Beneš' would be in similar circumstances... even if assurances have been given by the Soviet Union, Prague in her present mood would deny them as like as not." (BFO, R 7242/1162/12, FO 371/20377).

397 In his telegram 62 of March 8, 1936, British Ambassador at Berlin Sir Eric Phipps reported that Goering has spoken in so threatening a manner to Czechoslovak Minister Mastný that the latter has gone to Prague to inform his Government. Goering said that "if the Czechoslovak Government allowed their country to be a "muttershiff" for Soviet Russia, it would be so much the worse for them. If the war broke out today, Germany quite realized that all would be against her and that she might be beaten, but Czechoslovakia would be completely wiped out of existence..." A member of the F.O. staff (signature illegible) remarked that "this sort of talk is presumably Goering's private attempt to frighten Czechoslovakia to such an extent that the Czechoslovak Government will refuse any Russian demand for promise of facilities at Czech military aerodromes. Such threats will certainly give the Czechs something to think about..." (BFO, R 1371/1162/12, FO 371/20376),

398 Cases of such denials are too numerous to be listed here: a typical one took place during Beneš' talk with Bentinck on November 10, 1936. As the latter reported in his dispatch 235 of November 12, 1936, "...Dr Beneš emphatically denied reports that Czechoslovakia was an outpost of Communism and had Russian airports and instructors..." (BFO, R 7125/32/12, FO 371/20375).

399 On December 1, 1936 Phipps wrote from Berlin to Sir A. Eden that German military attaches had been invited for inspection of Czechoslovak aerodromes but that this offer was declined. Bramwell of the F.O. made the following observation: "The German War Office are right that this offer proves nothing. Our information is that all work on aerodromes where Soviet experts have assisted is suspended but the Russian officers are still believed to be at Košice and Užhorod. This is all part of Dr Beneš' new efforts to clear his good name vis-à-vis Germany for the reason that he has lost his nerve or is losing it".. (BFO, R 7325/1162/12, FO 371/20377).

airports, or airports prepared for the Russians, in Czechoslovakia, of his statements that "he was counting on the Russian help in case of need",[400] and of the lingering British suspicions and diagnoses of Beneš' Russian policy,[401] Beneš' "lapsus linguae" during his conversation with General E.L. Spears of March 14, 1938[402] was immediately, and with obvious satisfaction, noted by the F.O. as confirming their suspicions of Beneš' Soviet association; it also further discredited his already poor standing of credibility at London at the most crucial time as well as it gave, in turn, the German propaganda a certain amount of credibility.[403]

Early in 1937 Beneš got involved in the highly controversial Tukhachevský affair.[404] His involvement was caused, according to his

---

400 In his confidential letter to O'Malley of the F.O. Bentinck reported on December 2, 1936 this Beneš' expectation and commented that both Beneš and Dr Krofta "seem to be looking to Russia for their salvation although I see even the French now realize that Russia is a broken reed to trust to..." (BFO, R 7381/1799/12, FO 371/20378).

401 In September and early October, 1936 (no precise dates are given), Hadow of the F.O. prepared three memoranda on the Czechoslovak foreign policy and internal situation and came to the conclusion that "all the difficulties were caused by the pro-Soviet policy of Dr Beneš" (BFO, R 6032/1799/12, FO 371/20378).

402 While describing the "relatively good military situation" of his country, Dr Beneš remarked that "he had been given a day before a promise of an absolute minimum of 1,000 Russian planes for which aerodromes etc. are prepared..." (BFO, C 3225/1941/18, FO 371/21716).

403 Ibid - in a marginal note a F.O. official remarked in regard to this Beneš' revelation: "as the Germans always said!"

404 Because of Beneš' involvement in this affair, the author conducted extensive documentary search and studies at the National Archives (Captured German Documents Department) Washington, DC. the Bundesarchiv Reichskanzlei, Koblenz, Ost-Europa Institut, Munich, Institut fuer die Zeitgeschichte, Munich, Johann Gottfried Herder Institut, Marburg an der Lahn, Institut fuer Osteuropaeische Geschichte und Suedostforschung,

own explanation, by a lapsus linguae of Count Trauttmannsdorff who was at that time one of the two Hitler's emissaries to Beneš attempting to negotiate an agreement between Czechoslovakia and Germany, to Czechoslovak Minister at Berlin Mastný that "Hitler was now engaged in other negotiatons which, if successful, would probably also affect us considerably, and that the resumption of our talks (German-Czechoslovak talks - note by

---

Vienna and the Archives and Library of Radio Free Europe, Munich; he also held interviews with prominent experts and scholars of German politics of that period, associated with the above institutions.

There have been, and are even at the present time, three schools of thought on Marshal Tukhachevský: the first one, to which belonged Beneš and Churchill, holds that Tukhachevský had indeed planned to overthrow Stalin with German help and then to reach an agreement with the Nazis in general and the German General Staff in particular; the second one claims that all the evidence against Tukhachevský was manufactured by the Germans, in co-operation with anti-Red Russian exiles, under the direction of Heydrich (he was then chief of the Sicherheitsdienst, having the rank of SS Gruppenfuehrer), and that Beneš was selected by them to be used because he was bound to believe such material and to become, in his frame of mind, sufficiently alarmed to inform about it Stalin, and was at the same time, the last person who would arouse Stalin's suspicions as to the credibility of such information (see e.g. Alexandrov, V., The Tukhachevský Affair, London, 1963); finally the last school believes that this entire drama was staged by Stalin and his agents to dispose of his extremely able potential political opponent who had been showing too great personal ambitions for Stalin's comfort, and Beneš was chosen by Stalin as the most suitable political personality who having vast connections in the West would not arouse their suspicions (see e.g. British Ambassador Sir N. Henderson's dispatch 48 of May 21, 1937 from Berlin, BFO, N 2785/46/38, FO 371/21095).

Having found nowhere any documentary evidence supporting either the first or the second schools of thought on Marshal Tukhachevský, and having been assured by experts, such as Dr Rudolf Wolfe (Chief of the Captured German Documents Department, National Archives, Washington, DC in an interview held on October 14, 1970) that it would have just been physically impossible to totally eliminate all the relevant German pieces of evidence which would have come into being if either of the courses claimed by the two schools of thought had actually taken place, the author came to the conclusion that the third school is most likely correct (certainty cannot be achieved in this case because all the documentation is inaccessible). The proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union of

author) must therefore be postponed till later".[405] Beneš who feared nothing more than a conclusion of a Russo-German pact, came to the conclusion, after having gathered together other bits and pieces of information from other sources that these negotiations were with the "anti-Stalin clique in the USSR, Marshal Tukhachevský, Rykov and others".[406] He believed that Hitler, having expected these negotiations to be successful, was not any more interested in concluding an agreement with Prague. Having been greatly alarmed by this situation,[407] and not knowing the true nature of this Stalin-conspired drama, Beneš informed Soviet Minister at Prague, Alexandrovsky at once, and saw with satisfaction that Stalin "prevented" any Russo-German agreement by ruthlessly eliminating Tukhachevský, his associates and a great number of high-ranking Soviet officers.[408] While the Tukhachevský affair resulted in greatly strengthened

---

October 27, 1961 further support the view of this school since Marshal Tukhachevský and his associates were posthumously cleared of any guilt; (Alexandrov, V., op.cit., p. 188).

405 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 19-20.

406 Ibid., p. 47n.

407 He stated that "if the attempt to disrupt the Soviet Union had succeeded, the whole situation in Europe would have been transformed." (Ibid., p. 47n).

408 Beneš told about his role in this affair to Churchill at Marrakesh in January 1944 (see: Churchill, W.S., The Second World War, Boston, 1948, Vol. 1, pp. 288-289). Dr Beneš had also discussed this matter with Churchill on April 19, 1941 (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 150-151).
Beneš' suspicions of Marshal Tukhachevský's plans with Germany must have been further confirmed when the latter, early in March, 1936, shortly before his arrest and still holding his position of Assistant Commissar for Defence, had stated that "under the then existing conditions, the Soviet Union would be unable to bring any military aid to Czechoslovakia in case of

Stalin's position since all of his most dangerous potential personal opponents and competitors disappeared for ever, it further undermined Beneš' and Czechoslovakia's standing in the West, especially in France and its General Staff where such whole-scale purges and executions of Russian military leaders were found most repugnant and were very much resented.[409] This affair had also further confirmed contention held by some of the highest-ranking French military personnel such as General Giraud that the Franco-Soviet Pact should be dropped because "no reliance whatever could be placed on Russian military assistance"; his astonishingly correct politico-military prognostication made to Churchill in September, 1936 was to be entirely fulfilled a few years later.[410]

German attack". (American Ambassador at Moscow, Bullitt's telegram 79 of March 7, 1936, USDS, 760F.61/59)

For Beneš, who, as it has been amply documented, never failed to express his conviction that he would receive Russian aid in the hour of Czechoslovakia's need and that he was counting on it, such a statement meant a treasonable act, reflecting its author's wish to co-operate with Germany rather than to fight it in the defence of Czechoslovakia.

409 Shortly after these executions took place, Lord Chilston reported from the British Embassy at Moscow in a letter to L. Collier of the Foreign Office (no precise date given) that the reaction of the French General Staff to the Red Army executions was that "either the Red Army was thoroughly corrupt and the secrets were in German hands or the Soviet Union was ruled by a madman who shot their generals without reason". (BFO, N 3932/45/48, FO 371/21095)

410 To his dispatch 1212 of September 22, 1936 British Ambassador at Paris attached two records of his Military Attaché's conversations he had at the French Army manoeuvres in which he was accompanied by Churchill as a guest of the French Government:

General Giraud, "one of the foremost French Commanders who spent time chasing Russian officers back to Denikin's Army, had considerable dislike for Slavs generally and for Russians in particular; the fact that Denikin and Kolchak who according to him should have quite easily defeated the Red

Had Beneš understood the truth surrounding the Tukchachevsky affair, he might yet have decided that it was in the best interest of his state to break off all his ties with Bolshevik Russia and thus to be able to effectively repair all the damage which his association with Moscow had so far caused him and his country in the West and in the Little Entente; instead, he had embarked on defending the necessity and ruthlessness of Stalin's mass executions which could not but damage even further his country's, and his own, reputations in countries whose political traditions had by necessity led to their abhorrence of open acts of such cruelty, savagery and barbarity and to their hostility towards, or at least mistrust in, those who as Beneš defended and justified

---

Army, and had been so signally unsuccessful, seemed to convince him that no reliance whatever could be placed on Russian military assistance. He was most emphatic in his condemnation of the Russo-French Pact which he declared conferred no benefit at all on France and whose political repercussions were most unfortunate. So far as he and the great bulk of the French Command and Staff were concerned, it would be a very good thing if the Franco-Soviet Pact could be dropped.

The really crucial point for France, in his opinion, was support of the Little Entente and in particular Czechoslovakia. If Germany attacked or threatened Czechoslovakia, France ought to give all the assistance of which she was capable. In support of his contention he referred to the French failure to help Austria in 1866 which was followed four years later by the French disaster of 1870. He was convinced that a similar failure to help Czechoslovakia in her hour of need would be followed within a measurable time by a repetition of 1870.

Churchill remarked more than once that it would scarcely be possible for the Little Entente to survive if the Franco-Russian Pact became null and void, but General Giraud was convinced that the Little Entente could exist through its own efforts and the resolute support of France. He also stated that the only possible hope of a peaceful solution to the present European situation was an alliance, and not entente, with England; the combined military, naval and financial power of England and France would be sufficient to deter any nation, even Germany"..,(BFO, C 6616/172/17, FO 371/19871).

this Stalin's action.[411] The tragic aspects of this stand taken by Beneš was its ideological illogicality and inconsistency - while he defended and rationalized "barbarism and savagery" of Bolshevism of Soviet Russia, he attacked, at the same time, Nazism of Germany as being "pure barbarism and savagery";[412] yet the only differences between the two ideologies of these imperialist dictatorial regimes was that the former was to Beneš an ally against Hitler and by abolishing Communism, progressing on its way towards democracy while the latter personified to him a grave threat to the existence of his state.[413] All the subsequent developments in the

---

411 In dispatch 273 of September 23, 1937 British Minister at Prague Newton reported that Beneš "believed that Russia had been less weakened by the recent executions than was often thought..." (BFO, R 6526/5959/12, FO 371/21135).

In telegram 30 of March 19, 1938 Newton reported that on March 17, 1938 Beneš had told Sir R.B. Lockhart that "recent purges in Russia had been very necessary as conspiracy of Red Generals and Right Opposition, with basic plan of opening frontiers to Germany, had been widespread. From a military point of view Russia was now far stronger than if purge had been less ruthless. Czech information was that new generations of Russians had a good belief in themselves and considerable determination to defend their country..." (BFO, N 1622/26/38, FO 371/22286).

412 Notes of conversation between Beneš and General E.L. Spears of March 14, 1938 (BFO, C 3225/1941/18, FO 371/21716).

413 Majority of the Czechs did not, however, share Dr Beneš' optimism in Soviet Russia. American Minister at Prague, Wright, illustrated this point in his dispatch 595 of November 23, 1936. After remarking that the Soviet Minister could hardly be said to be popular even in Czech society, he made the following observation: "...there seems to be continually present an element of distrust or uncertainty as to what their mission really is, and even the ardent supporters of Pan-Slavism and the Czech officials of the various Slavic societies evince no marked enthusiasm when conversation turns upon the intimacy and value of political association with the Soviet Government..." (USDS, 760F.00/48).

whole field of Czechoslovak foreign relations were governed by this dilemma of Beneš' Russian policy which was bound to end in a disaster for himself and his country. This disaster crystallized itself in the form of Munich.

CHAPTER IV

Disaster of Munich[1]

> Remember well what I am now telling you: Yes, it is terrible what both of these countries (England and France - note by author) have perpetrated on us. That what is now coming is, however, only the beginning of a great European tragedy. A war - a great European war - will come, great upheavals and revolutions will take place. They do not want to fight jointly with us and under better circumstances; they will have to fight hard, and for us, when we shall be unable to fight any more. They all will get a heavy reward. I myself have to proceed in such a manner as to save the state, at least until the nearest war. Get ready for it, we shall still play our role in it[2].

These Dr Beneš' prophetic, bitter words given to the highest representatives of the Czechoslovak Army in an emotionally explosive, and almost unbearable, atmosphere when they urged him not to give in to German threats and Franco-British pressures but to fully employ the mobilized Czechoslovak Army, already dug in along the Country's borders, for the defence of the Czechoslovak territory[3], emphasize the

---

1 The term "Munich" in this study represents the "Munich Agreement" between Hitler, Mussolini, Daladier and Chamberlain of September 29-30, 1938.

2 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, London, 1955, pp. 116-117; Prague, 1968, p. 342.

3 These Czechoslovak Generals were not the only ones who implored Dr Beneš to employ all the means at his disposal for the defence of his country. Among the most eloquent document is a record of Dr Beneš' conversation with the

utter disaster of Munich which had forever destroyed the free democratic Czechoslovak state as it was constituted after World War I. Munich has also become, immediately after its signature, one of the most frequently dealt with comparatively recent single political event, providing an opportunity to a vast number of historians, politicians, scholars, protagonists and propagandists of every political movement ranging from the extreme Left to the extreme Right, to present their views, beliefs, theses and party lines[4]. Besides dealing

---

leading representatives of the main political parties which took place in Dr Beneš' office on September 30, 1938 (Král, V., Politické strany a Mnichov, Praha, 1961, Document No 83, pp. 160-164). Dr Beneš who attacked bitterly the betrayal of his country by the Western Powers, defended his stand to accept, under protest, the Munich Dictate because to do otherwise would have meant "the massacre of the nation" (Ibid. p. 162). The feelings and ideas of those who were against the capitulation were best expressed by the then redactor of the Foreign News section of the "Lidové Noviny" Ripka who wrote on September 20, 1938 to Dr Beneš: "Mr President, it is now only upon you if we shall capitulate or if we shall fight. I am well aware of the risk of the resistance: we may be defeated. Such defeat would not, however, destroy moral forces in the nation - and these would recover themselves at the first opportunity. On the other hand, capitulation represents a moral and political derangement for whole generations... We prefer the most terrible risk of war before a disgraceful capitulation which will to us destroy all that is clean, strong and resolute. After all, it would be for the first time in our history that we would be capitulating without a fight. We must never allow such a destructive shame to take place. Besides, if we should capitulate, we would be unable to prevent the terrible internal struggles but these would be in vain and would only increase our chaos and decline"... (Quoted by Křen, J., Do emigrace, Praha, 1967, Second edition, pp. 59-60).

4 It is beyond the capacity of anyone, including this author (unless he were to devote his entire study to works

with the disaster of Munich for Czechoslovakia as they saw or understood it, all of them described its devastating

---

written on Munich), to present a meaningful relevant comprehensive analysis. Although this study deals with political behaviour of Dr. Beneš, all of the writers on Munich had to devote some portion of their works to the role played during this drama by Dr Beneš. Attacked vigorously by some (e.g. Polák, F., Mnichovská tragedie, New York, 1966), defended by others (e.g. Hajšman, J., Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1946), Dr Beneš' role has become one of the most controversial issues of the subsequent Czechoslovak political life, and remains so even today.

This author maintains that it was predominantly the threat presented by Soviet Russia to the Western Powers accentuated by Dr Beneš' Russian policy which made Munich not only a possibility but an inevitability (thus American Minister at Prague, Carr, who had on so many occasions displayed his friendliness towards Czechoslovakia and his objectiveness towards Dr Beneš, reported after the Munich disaster and Dr Beneš' resignation that he had felt that the tragedy of Dr Beneš' position was more emphasized by the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty and elucidated further this point: "...This relationship with Russia furnished a plausible basis for constant attacks by Germany and for the allegations made by its press and propaganda agencies of widespread communist activities in Czechoslovakia... It is believed here in many responsible quarters that Chamberlain's personal attitude towards Soviet Russia, and the possible part it might play in any world conflict, was largely responsible for England's unwillingness to take a stand against Hitler in regard to Czechoslovakia..." (Carr's dispatch 269 from Prague of October 6, 1938, USDS, 860F.001/101).

While Munich had on Dr Beneš' personality a devastating effect, it had provided him, at the same time, with an opportunity of eventually destroying it - the fact which had completely remained hidden from others at that time. Viewed by Dr Beneš, whose sacred mission of the preservation of the Czechoslovak state in its entirety was the very basis of all his endeavours, Munich in the form as it had happened, presented to him also a disguised blessing because it subsequently provided him with an opportunity of developing the "Continuity Theory" which he gradually effected after the German seizure of the remnants of the Czech Historic Provinces and during World War II: Since Czechoslovakia was not even invited to actively participate at the Munich Conference and was forced unconstitutionally, without the necessary Parliamentary approval, to

effect on Dr Beneš' personality regardless whether they attacked or defended his policies until, and his stand during, that drama; he stated so himself in his own incomplete work on this disaster which is de facto an apologia for his political activities until and during that period[5].

---

accept Munich under the duress of overwhelming force of the four participating Great Powers as well as of the most adverse and unreasonable time-table, Munich was ab initio invalid and void in the light of international law and neither pre-Munich Czechoslovakia nor his own Presidency of such Czechoslovakia ceased to exist, although temporarily the former was occupied by its three neighbouring hostile states, and the latter was forced by Hitler's threats to step down from his presidential office and to carry on his presidential duties in exile. (See Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, London, 1944, pp. 1-29; also Chapters V and VI of this study).

5 Dr Beneš' "Mnichovské dny" was published twice in Czech in London (in 1955 and in 1958) and once in Prague in 1968; the latter edition has also included an introductory Chapter dealing with the problems of the Czechoslovak internal politics before Munich as seen and understood by Dr Beneš. He completed the first draft of his "Mnichovské dny" during the busy years of 1943-1944 in England, on the basis of his memories and very insufficient documentary material. (For further details see the Introduction to the Second Edition of this work published at London in 1959 which was written by President Beneš' Chancellor Dr Smutný). Even after the end of World War II most of the documents dealing with Munich had remained unobtainable to Dr Beneš, and he realized that he would be unable to complete soon the final version of his own account of Munich. Furthermore, having it considered to be much more important to elucidate his nation as quickly as possible about his own activities abroad during World War II, he concentrated his efforts towards this goal and wrote his "Memoirs" which were published in Prague in Czech in 1947 (and in London in English in 1954) - this was actually intended to be Volume II of his trilogy of

Munich was the climax of the pre-World War II drama of the life and death struggle waged between Dr Beneš and Hitler each of whom had personified his own state[6], and in which the former, having appeared to have been utterly defeated and rejected by his foes and friends alike, seemed to have been sentenced to political oblivion by having to step down from the Presidency and to go into exile, while the latter, having successfully reached by Munich most of his goals towards Czechoslovakia, was enabled by it to reach them all by occupying the remnants of the Czech Historic Provinces less than six months later. The full intensity of this drama had however begun, soon after the German military invasion and annexation of Austria, by threatening movements of German military forces towards Czechoslovakia which brought about an order issued by the Czechoslovak Government acting on instructions of Dr Beneš, recalling on May 20, 1938, one class of reservists plus technicians and specialists[7]. This was the only logical step for Dr Beneš to

---

his political memoirs dealing with Munich, World War II and the immediate post-war period. The ever increasing load of work and responsibility of his Presidency coupled with his continuous fear about the internal Czechoslovak political developments in the post-war period and his rapidly worsening illness resulted in his premature death soon after the Communist coup d'état; he was therefore neither able to complete the first Volume nor to begin the last Volume of his planned trilogy.

6 See e.g. Drtina I., Hitler Contra Beneš, London, 1942 (Second edition), passim.

7 The events of May 20, 1938 and during the following

take[8] in view of the fact that all to him available information confirmed movements and concentrations of great military forces along the Czech borders in Saxony and Bavaria[9]. The historical account of the subsequent crisis

---

week as well as Dr Beneš' role in them have immediately become a matter of bitter controversies among the opposing parties, and they continue to constitute, even at the present time, serious disagreements among historians: on the one hand there are those such as Taylor who claim that Dr Beneš had played a prominent role in the staging of this crisis since his action was undertaken "to discredit appeasement and to show that Hitler would retreat before a show of force" and that "no German troops had been moved, no preparation for action had been made..." (Taylor, A.J.P., The Origins of the Second World War, London, 1961, p. 165); on the other hand there are those who either are convinced that the Germans had actually intented to quickly overrun at that time the German-speaking frontier districts of the Czech Historic Provinces (Seton-Watson, R.W., A History of the Czechs and Slovaks, London, 1943, p. 358), or who claim that the most important fact was not whether or not Hitler planned to invade Czechoslovakia at that time but that Dr Beneš and "Europe at large seriously believed that they (the Germans- note by author) harboured such an intention." (Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich-Prologue to Tragedy, New York, 1963 (Sec. edition, p. 60).

Dr Beneš was firmly convinced that Hitler intended to invade his country at that time, and described at length his own role in Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968, pp. 80-103.

8 This author would like to underline the fact that in 1938, certainly during and since the May crisis, Beneš' predominant personality trait of getting involved in all the main problems affecting his state, working out their solutions, putting them into effect and taking for them full responsibility, appeared itself in its most extreme form; he was then the decisive political personality in Czechoslovakia and his stand was for all the practical purposes the stand of the Czechoslovak Government. He took charge of all, and responsibility for all, the major political decisions during this entire period. (See Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, pp. 22-24; Kren, J., Do emigrace, Praha, 1963, n. 72, p. 63).

9 Studying this subject thoroughly, this author is

which "brought the greatest flurry of European diplomatic activity since the First World War"[10] as well as in the long run, for Dr Beneš, its tragic consequences, are well known. An author had ably summarized Beneš' subsequent position when he stated: "It is ironic that Beneš, who had ventured nothing, made a loss. True, he had a temporary gain in internal order and international repute. But rumors which accused him of starting the crisis never died down... many people wished to keep them alive..."[11] Dr Beneš realized only too well the dilemma of his position and attempted almost desperately to combat the flood of what British Minister at Prague, Newton called in his reports as "extremely mischievous tendentious propaganda"[12]. In articles published abroad such as in the Paris "Ordre" of June 1,

---

convinced in the correctness of the information given by the Yugoslav Military Attaché to the American Minister at Prague on June 1, 1938 that "he had no doubt whatever that German troops in formidable number were on Czech North-Western frontiers on May 21st and if Czechoslovak troops had not moved, would have advanced into Sudeten area..." (Carr's telegram 113 of June 1, 1938, USDS 760F.62/380). The Czechoslovak General Staff was even able to provide the American Minister with the numbers of the units of German Army involved: all or parts of the 13th, 14th, 17th, 19th, 23rd, 24th, 29th and 31st divisions. (Carr's telegram 97 from Prague of May 25, 1938, USDS 760F.62/337).

10 Braddick, H.P., Germany, Czechoslovakia and The "Grand Alliance" in the May Crisis, 1938, Monograph Series in World Affairs, University of Denver, Vol 6, No 2, 1968-69, p. 1.

11 Wallace, W.V., "The Making of the May Crisis of 1938", in The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol XLI, No 97, June 1963, p. 390.

1938, he emphasized that the Czechoslovak nation was "resolved to introduce in a calm manner all necessary measures in order to secure internal and external peace", that it consented "to a fulfillment of all justified and reasonable demands ... but would neither cede an inch of the State's territory nor tolerate that any part of the country would be placed under foreign influence or subjected to a foreign government without putting up a courageous fight", and concluded with a warning that Czechoslovakia had an efficient army and that the nation was "brave and courageous"[13]. In interviews with foreign diplomats and prominent personalities the tenor of his argument was that "had it not been for the action of the Czechoslovak Government on May 21st in moving to defend itself, Czechoslovakia would now be at war", that while he was "at heart a pacifist" he was at the same time a realist and believed that under the then existing conditions "the only way to be free was to be strong which was also the only way how to keep the peace": above all he emphasized that the 'fait accompli' technique was ended and the move of May 21st helped to end it - "the next effort at a 'fait accompli' meant war"[14].

---

12 Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Third Series, London, 1949, Vol 1, Nos. 306, 327 and 349.

This type of propaganda about the May 1938 events was actually started by German Minister at Prague, Eisenlohr, who had reported to his Government that while Beneš was making a "silly" speech at Tábor, the Army had taken control of the Government, that there was no civil Government in Prague

While the policy of the "Grand Alliance" named so by Churchill[15] or the "Beneš" policy as the Germans called it[16], temporarily stopped Hitler, it intensified the crisis and Hitler, having "unquestionably suffered a blow in prestige"[17] in connection with the Czech mobilization of May 21st was determined to speedily recover it by the conquest of Czechoslovakia and the elimination of his arch-enemy, Dr Beneš, to whom the same event brought home" in no small measure increased or improved popularity"[18]. During the few months separating

---

where there prevailed chaos and that there was but one way of remedying the situation and that was by arresting the military leaders and shooting the Chief of Staff... American Minister Carr then vehemently denied these charges and noted that there was not the slightest sign of chaos at Prague or lack of complete control by the Government. (Carr's dispatch 184 of June 14, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/445).

13 Report 760 from US Military Attaché at Prague, Major Riley of June 3, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/470).

14 Carr's dispatch 203 of July 5, 1938, (USDS, 860F.00/541).

15 Feiling, K., The Life of Neville Chamberlain, London, 1946, p. 347.

16 Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series D, Vol IV, pp. 494-497.

17 Among numerous documentary evidence to this effect, see e.g. Biddle's Strictly confidential telegram from Warsaw of June 15, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/427).

18 Carr reported this fact in his dispatch 165 from Prague of May 26, 1938, adding that until his action of May 21st, Beneš had frequently been the subject of criticism from the Czechs because of his conciliatory methods (see Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, pp. 22-23) and concluding by quoting an official of the Czechoslovak Foreign Office: "At last we have caught up with German psychology which only understands the show and use of force. We have now shown

the May crisis from Munich, the Western Powers, after having realized how close they came to becoming involved in a war with Germany which they were desperately attempting to prevent at any cost, became eagerly a prey to skilfully conducted German propaganda which was anti-Beneš rather than anti-Czech in character[19]. Beneš himself described the intensity of these attacks against his personality which were for him especially painful[20]; the most devastating to him were those which originated in the country which he so much loved and admired, and to which he had always remained absolutely faithful - France; these French attacks undermined the very basis of his political being, his sacred task of the

---

our strength and determination and the Germans are filled with consternation". (USDS, 760F.62/425).

19 Insinuations and attacks against Dr Beneš by England, France and the United States during the period in question were legion and cannot be even summarized within the scope of this note. Suffice it to state that most of these had originated with U.S. Ambassador at Paris, Bullitt whose consistently anti-Beneš, anti-Czechoslovak reports undermined to a great extent Dr Beneš' position in the West. The reason for this was Beneš' Russian policy and Bullitt's hatred and fear of communism (he was later mainly instrumental for the expulsion, from the League of Nations, of Soviet Russia during the Soviet-Finnish war). His attacks on Beneš had begun immediately after May 21st - "Beneš can throw the Continent into war" -"Beneš prefers war to real concessions" (Bullitt's telegram 811 from Paris of May 22, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/281). London and Paris did not, however, stay far behind Bullitt in their attacks on Beneš: the former's most prominent representative was its Ambassador at Berlin, Henderson (he e.g. suggested in his telegram 207 of May 22, 1938 that he was convinced Hitler desired peaceful solution but Dr Beneš might prefer a crisis - BFO C 4667/1941/18, FO 371/21720); the latter's was its Ambassador also at Berlin, Francois Poncet about whom British Ambassador at Paris, Phipps

preservation of the Czechoslovak state[21]. The main reason for the Western hostile attitude towards Beneš was not their fear of Germany per se but their dislike of Beneš' close association with Soviet Russia and the suspicion, implanted in their minds by German propaganda, that he might "throw the continent into war"[22] on instigation of the Kremlin. Having believed that in the event of a general conflict in Europe, the Soviet Union was the only country which was "in a position to derive the maximum profit with the minimum risk",[23]

wrote: "... unlike permanent officials at Quai d'Orsay he does not trust M. Beneš nor does he believe Beneš intends to make any offer likely to satisfy Germans..." (Phipps' tel. 177 from Paris of June 2, 1938, DFO C5531/1941/18, FO 371/21723).

20 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 23.

21 Thus Bonnet who kept on pressuring Beneš for granting more and more concessions to the Sudeten Germans and who admitted to Bullitt that "German Ambassador at Paris kept informing him daily that Beneš intended to make proposals which would be ridiculously inadequate from the point of view of the Sudeten and Germany", (Bullitt's str. conf. tel. 1107 of July 13, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/476) threatened Beneš by saying "that he hoped Beneš realized fully that the one country which could gain nothing from general European war at the present time was Czechoslovakia since whichever side might win, no statesman would ever again be so idiotic as to put together a state even faintly resembling Czechoslovakia in its present form". (Bullitt's str. conf. tel. 1125 of July 18, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/482).

22 See note 19 of this Chapter.

23 Evaluation of the situation made on August 29, 1938 by US Ambassador at Moscow, Kirk. He also doubted the real intention of the Soviet Union to get involved in war because it would gain more by being a passive rather than active participant in a war. On the other hand the internal strain

they were afraid of the war itself. Chamberlain described this fear in his statement that "a war is the end of this present civilization - communism or something worse is liable to follow"[24]. Their suspicion that the Soviet Union was not prepared to take part in war on their side but would instead wait in the background ready to instigate social revolutions and chaos in war-torn countries were confirmed by Moscow's behaviour during the May crisis and remarks made by Soviet diplomats[25]. There was furthermore their hope that if Hitler

---

on the countries involved in war would prepare the way for a social upheaval within those countries which the Soviet Union would then be able to fully exploit. (Kirk's tel. 271 of August 29, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/614).

24 US Ambassador at London, Kennedy's strictly conf. telegram 983 of September 21, 1938, (USDS, 760F.62/973).

25 Moscow's stand during the May crisis of 1938 and its intentions in regard to participating in a possible anti-Hitler war were matters of greatest interest to the Western Powers: In his dispatch 1309 of May 28, 1938 US Ambassador at Moscow Kirk noted that during the first few days of the May crisis "the Soviet press refrained generally from any editorial or comment which might have indicated the Soviet Government policy in the event of a war between Czechoslovakia and Germany". (USDS, 760F.62/421). On August 17, 1938, Kennedy reported that Soviet Ambassador at London Maisky "astonished" him by saying he was not sure if Hitler did attempt to attack Czechoslovakia, France would fight. "If France lived up to her commitments, Russia would move at once..." Maisky gave the most curious impression of self-confidence - "he felt that Great Britain and France were the ones in real danger and that Russia could take care of herself". (Tel 797 of August 17, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/575). For further details see also Kirk's telegrams from Moscow: No 277 of September 4, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/655); No 289 of September 13, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/771); No 309 of September 26, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/1026) and No 310 of September 26, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/1100).

were left alone by the West he would eventually turn against Soviet Russia and by destroying the Bolshevik regime, he would dispose of the greatest threat to their security.

The dilemma facing both Beneš and the West in 1938 was that while they both claimed to have been interested, above all, in the preservation of democracy and peace, their true motives were completely governed by their own self-interests which unfortunately made them to disregard each other's fears and sentiments and prevented them from adopting a united front against their two common enemies: Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia. On the one hand Beneš' willingness to enter into an Alliance with one evil-Bolshevism, and to continue in maintaining these relations even after the political situation in France radically changed, in order to utilize Soviet Russia as a deterrent or as an Ally against another evil - Nazism, which threatened the very existence of Czechoslovakia, demonstrated only too clearly, notwithstanding all his claims that Russian Communism had rapidly been changing into a Democracy, that his principal aim was the preservation of his state even at great risks to its democratic institutions; on the other hand the Western Powers who saw in Bolshevism the greatest threat to their existence, were willing to accommodate Hitler instead of fighting him, and were even prepared to join him in some form of an uneasy alliance in the hope of utilizing him as an instrument destined to destroy Communism. Both Beneš and the West had disregarded

the fact that by aligning themselves with an evil - and they were even unable to agree as to which of the two evils to choose - each of them would himself become a part of that particular evil and would run a great risk of being ultimately engulfed by it. It therefore follows that while in the long run Beneš' and the West's interests and ultimate goals coincided, in the short run their interests and methods in the period prior to, and at, Munich, were mutually exclusive as well as morally unjustifiable. It was inevitable that both of them would have to pay dearly for this folly, and in accordance with one of the fundamental laws of international politics, Beneš, representing a small state, was destined to pay first, and most.

There were in the West at that time also those political leaders and prominent personalities who agreed with Beneš that Hitler presented the greatest threat to the security of Europe and who wanted to oppose his further expansion even if it meant a new European war. They were vigorously attacked for their stand by those who also attacked Beneš: British Ambassador at Paris, Phipps thus stated to Bullitt on September 22, 1938 that Churchill, who was then visiting Paris in an attempt to build up a strong Anglo-French anti-Hitler "Grand Alliance" determined to fight for the defence of Czechoslovakia, was "a fool and his present activities criminal".[26]

---

26 Bullitt's telegram 1546 from Paris of September

In the light of the available documentary material dealing with this entire period it is not surprising that Munich took place - the astonishing development is that on a couple of occasions Beneš' policy of the Grand Alliance almost succeeded and was in reality averted only by the slimmest of margins. Beneš' position of ultimate and supreme authority in his country during this disaster is well-known, having amply been acknowledged by Beneš himself and described in the evidence presented by the witnesses of this drama.[27] His ultimate decision to accept the Franco-British ultimatum as well as the Munich dictate has become ever since a subject of the most violent and explosive controversies which are raging even at the present time.[28] While it is true that most of Beneš' decisions

---

22, 1938, (USDS, 760F.62/998). Churchill himself considered this two-day visit of Paris to be "painful", (Churchill, W.S., The Gathering Storm, Boston, 1948, pp. 302-303).

27 Beneš dealt with his authority and responsibility for the Czechoslovak steps during the Munich disaster in Mnichovské dny, passim, and Memoirs, (Chapter 1), and there was not subsequently a single monograph or speech of his in which he would not at least touch Munich; among the most important are Democracy Today and Tomorrow, New York, 1939, Šest let exilu a druhé světové války, London, 1945; Czechoslovakia's Struggle for Freedom, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1941 and Úvahy o Slovanství, London, 1945.

Among the best written and most objectively presented evidence by the witnesses are: Ripka, H., Munich: Before and After, London, 1939; Moravec, E., V úloze mouřenína, Praha, 1940; Peroutka, F., Byl Edvard Beneš vinen?, Paris, 1949; Polák, F., Mnichovská tragedie, New York, 1966; Lisický, K., Československá cesta do Mnichova, 5 Vols., London, 1954-1958.

28 Because Munich has been overshadowing all the subsequent political developments in Czechoslovakia which

were approved by the Czechoslovak Government, and in many instances also by the leaders of the main Czechoslovak political parties, these were nevertheless Beneš' decisions since there just was not at that time in Prague any Czechoslovak political leader in a position of having been able or willing to take upon himself the almost unbearable weight of having the responsibility for the ultimate decisions on behalf of his country at this critical stage of its history; this statement is certainly valid until after Beneš' unconstitutional acceptance of Munich.[29]

---

were either brought to life as a result of, or were at least immensely affected by, this Czechoslovak national disaster, the surrounding violent controversies have not been confined into the academic realm of writing books or of convening politico-historical conferences on this subject: they have become the most prominent part of the Czechoslovak political life ever since 1938, and have also considerably affected political life elsewhere such as in Germany, Western Democracies and even in the Soviet Union.

During his travels when this author interviewed and spoke to a great number of people who were in the position of helping him to find the truth about the subject of his thesis - Beneš, either because of their scientific involvement in this field, or because of their active participation in politics during the period of Beneš' Presidency, he was forced to almost consistently face their frequent emotional outbursts of denunciation of Munich for which some of them held Beneš responsible, others blamed the West, yet none of them failed to immediately discuss the disaster of Munich when asked any question concerning Beneš. These witnesses whose testimonies had greatly contributed to making this thesis possible, ranged in their ranks from the former Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia Dr Zenkl to a humble, honest Czechoslovak citizen who had to flee his enslaved native country to preserve his life and freedom. To all of them alike Munich is still very much alive, it is to them the root of all the evil which has beset their native country ever since.

Without a thorough examination of the entire drama of Munich no meaningful thesis on the political behaviour of Beneš would have been possible. Numerous and quite often contradictory explanations as to the reasons and factors which were responsible for Munich were given by those who attempted to do so: few of such explanations are able to meet close examination, none to provide satisfactory answers to all the relevant questions. Known historical events and data as well as generally accepted already expounded suppositions on Munich are not of concern to this study: as it has already become evident from its tenor, its task is to critically and objectively scrutinize Beneš' role in the entire period of Munich. Having done so, it has come to the conclusion that Beneš' Russian policy[30] was ultimately the most powerful and decisive factor making Munich a reality[31]

---

29 During the period immediately following Beneš' acceptance of Munich, and ending by his resignation from the Presidency of Czechoslovakia on October 5, 1938, there took place a few half-hearted attempts by some of the high-ranking members of the Czechoslovak General Staff and other groups at a military coup and either the resignation or the arrest of Beneš. (For details see Křen, J., op.cit., pp. 82-90.).

30 Beneš' Russian policy encompasses not only his efforts at concluding a Pact with Moscow but also at a Franco-Russian Pact, at bringing Soviet Russia into the League of Nations, and granting a de iure recognition to the Bolshevik regime by his own country, but his entire attitude towards the Kremlin as exemplified by his statements during and after his 1935 Moscow's visit and other similar pronouncements which caused his country such an irreparable damage in the West and provided Hitler with an effective anti-Beneš, anti-Czechoslovak theme.

31 See Note 4 of this Chapter.

and profoundly affecting Beneš to reach his decision of not fighting Hitler regardless whether he would do so alone or with Soviet Russia on his side.[32] The controversial question

---

32 To fight alone was for Beneš unthinkable especially after it had become clear that Poland would join Germany in the attack on Czechoslovakia. (He stated to the delegation representing the main Czechoslovak political parties on September 30, 1938 after its members had tried to persuade him to give an order to militarily defend their country: "We are alone and furthermore encircled from all the sides. It would mean to massacre the nation. And the nation must live and survive the present times...") -Král, V., op.cit., Doc. No 88, p. 161.

He also rejected the idea of fighting Hitler only with the help of the Soviet Union because he foresaw an eventual Hitler's crusade against Bolshevism in which, as he had stated, "I did not exclude even the possibility that in the end the reactionary circles of Western democracy would be prevailed upon to directly help Germany against Russia. Even to only consider what would eventually be under such circumstances our state and national fate, was truly terrible. I told myself resolutely: We must not contribute to this eventuality. We have no right, and we must not bring the Soviet Union and ourselves into such danger..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 320).

Dr Táborský clarified further these Beneš' fears by pointing out that when the latter "talked about these matters to me in the years of his London exile he always argued that, as the situation was in 1938, to go to war with the support of no one other than Soviet Russia would have been to play into the hands of Nazi propaganda which described Czechoslovakia as an outpost of Bolshevism. It might have converted the Nazi war into an anti-Bolshevist crusade, a crusade in which Czechoslovakia would have been the greatest loser. He also feared that Czechoslovakia might become another Spain, ravaged and bled white by foreign intervention and a foreign-instigated civil war..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 672).

Describing his first talk with President Roosevelt on May 28, 1939, Beneš emphasized the point that Roosevelt "stressed especially that we (meaning the Czechoslovaks - note by author) had done well not to let ourselves be provoked into war with Hitler in the circumstances which existed in 1938. He considered that we would have suffered dreadfully. Western Europe did not want to help and America could not have done so. If the Soviet Union had intervened alone, he was not at all

of the real Soviet intentions in regard to providing Czechoslovakia quickly and effectively with a sufficient military help during Munich[33] is quite immaterial for the purpose of the

---

sure in the political conditions of those times how the whole affair would have ended. Neither Western Europe nor America were in any sense prepared for the conflict either morally or materially. Indeed, Hitler would perhaps have attained his final goal more easily and sooner - at least temporarily.[17]" (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 76-77).

"Soon after my return to England an identical point of view was formulated by the Labour Party leaders, Arthur Greenwood and Arthur Henderson Jr., who at that time were not sure whether the situation in 1938 might not in the end have led to a European war directed only against the Soviet Union. However that may be, England, in their opinion, was not yet ready or sufficiently united internally to undertake war against Hitlerite Germany." (Ibid, p. 99).

33 In accordance with their party line, both Czech and Russian Communists maintain that the Soviet Union was ready to provide Czechoslovakia with an effective military aid and blame Dr Beneš and his "reactionary circles" for their capitulationist policy towards Hitler (see e.g. Král, V., "Československo a Mnichov" in the ČSČH, Vol VII, No 1, 1959, pp. 25-48; Hájek, J.S., Mnichov, Praha, 1958; Poljakov, V.G., Anglija i mjunchenskij sgovor, Moskva, 1960).

On the other hand, objective scholars and witnesses either state that "The real intentions of the Soviets, however, remain unknown" (Luža, R., op.cit., n. 169, p. 146) or present evidence that "the Soviet play with us in the 1938 crisis was not an honest one" (Lisický, K., op.cit., Vol. III, p. 46) and that "The whole truth about the Soviet Union's readiness to help Beneš against Hitler in 1938 is that the Soviet promise was riddled with such 'ifs' that it was practically worthless..." (Táborský, E., "Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No 4, July 1958, pp. 671-672; see also Táborský, E., "Beneš and the Soviets" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 27, No 2, January 1949, pp. 304-305.) There is also an excellent study on this subject which lists in the Conclusion five major reasons why it would appear that the Soviet Union would have abandoned the Czechs in case of a Czechoslovak-German war - (Foster, C.R., Soviet Policy and the Munich Crisis, Washington, 1951, p. 77).

In view of the subsequent evidence that the Soviets failed to provide help in cases of similar nature (the Warsaw

study of Beneš' role during this period as such, since even if Soviet Russia had openly and beyond any doubt demonstrated that it was prepared to immediately render to Prague an all-out military help even without the French participation, it would have not effected a change in Beneš' decision to accept the Munich Dictate.[34]

The desperately tragic situation of Czechoslovakia during the period of Munich was best described by Beneš himself in a single sentence: "In September, 1938, therefore, we were left in military, as well as in political, isolation with the Soviet Union to prepare our defence against a Nazi attack".[35] It is an irony that no historian has so far fully

---

Uprising or the Slovak National Uprising of 1944) and the post-war Stalin's treacherous policy towards Beneš culminating by "the cold-blooded murder of Czechoslovak democracy" (Táborský, E., "Beneš and the Soviets", op.cit., p. 302), in 1948 and the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia two decades later, there cannot be entertained any doubt that the Soviets had no intention of helping Czechoslovakia in 1938. This statement is further confirmed by the fact that "Dr Beneš, and those around him who knew the whole truth, consistently shrank from talking or writing about it in the early postwar years for fear of making Czechoslovakia's relations with Russia even more difficult. That was also why Beneš refrained from releasing the extensive Munich report..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 671) and this silence is by far more eloquent than all Beneš' claims made during the War that he believed that Soviet Russia would have helped him even alone. (Beneš' reasons for these claims will be discussed in Chapters V and VI).

34 This question becomes, however, very much relevant in the period of President Beneš' exile because of his claims that Moscow alone had been at the time of Munich ready to come to his help. (See Chapters V and VI).

35 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 42.

comprehended the meaning of this single sentence: it constituted an indirect, and certainly unintentional, admission of Beneš that by his Russian policy he brought his nation, which was one of the most democratic and culturally advanced nations in Europe, into the isolation with the company of a backward and traditionally undemocratic Empire, suffering itself under the foreign-made vicious regime of Bolshevism which made out of Russia an outcast of the European family of nations, feared and despised by them all alike. This reality was not, however, a matter of primary concern to Beneš who was entirely preoccupied with his supreme goal of preserving his state[36] in the situation in which most of the enemies of Soviet Russia's Bolshevism were led to believe by the consistent and effective Nazi propaganda, or who, because of their fear of war, and hopes in a Hitler-Stalin conflict, wanted to believe that Beneš was an agent of Moscow and his country its Central European outpost threatening the European peace.[37]

On the one hand, Beneš had understood that he would have been unable to achieve his supreme objective by rejecting the Anglo-French ultimatum first, and Munich later, and by fighting Hitler against their will either alone or with the sole help of Soviet Russia since both of these courses

---

36 Beneš' statement to the Czechoslovak generals in Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 342.

37 See Note 32 of this Chapter.

constituted a mortal danger to the very existence of his state which was further accentuated by the treacherous act of Poland;[38] he feared above all that he would have been branded by the West as the one who was guilty of starting a new war either on behalf of Soviet Russia - the only state which was in their opinion bound to make gains from it, or on behalf of Czech imperialism not willing to accommodate the "just" demands of the three and a half millions of "enslaved" Sudeten Germans.

On the other hand Beneš was the only political personality who grasped the truth that only through the employment of one of the two extremes he could have preserved his state in the conditions existing in 1938: either an all-out anti-Hitler war in which Czechoslovakia would be joined by all of its Allies or a complete capitulation which would be made under duress and in an unconstitutional manner so that he would be able to disclaim later at a suitable time any validity of any changes incurred by such capitulation.[39]

---

38 Beneš was extremely bitter about Poland and its acts of "stabbing mortally wounded adversary with a dagger in the back" (see Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, pp. 303-310).

39 This is an important point which had never been raised before: it provides a further understanding of Beneš' decision not to employ his Armed Forces after Munich. It had been brought up by the author during his discussion with the former Deputy Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia Dr Zenkl at Washington, D.C. on November 5, 1970: the latter admitted that he had never thought about it before but agreed that Beneš who never mentioned it himself, might have indeed

Having been frustrated by the West in effecting the former extreme, he had chosen the latter. While he and his nation were for the former both spiritually and materially fully prepared, the latter course was an utter disaster for the entire nation. Beneš himself had immediately felt the almost unbearable weight brought about by all the relevant implications of this capitulation: the utter spiritual demoralization and despair, coupled with cynicism, of his nation, and its rebuke of his policies and his own personality.[40]

---

been greatly influenced by such consideration which having been placed, as he had defined it, "at the back of his mind was unseen there yet it kept on exercising a continuous and considerable influence on all the ideas appearing in the forefront of his mind".

If neither of the two extremes were effected Beneš foresaw the unavoidable development which would ultimately result in the repetition of the tragedy of 1742 when the Czech Historic Provinces lost to Prussia vast regions of Silesia including their all-important Kladsko: this time the loss would have been fatal - they would have lost their entire borderland regions with their protective mountains without which Czechoslovakia would have ipso facto ceased to exist. (For an excellent explanation of Czech national tradition and vivid consciousness of the absolute necessity of being in possession of their mountainous borderlands for the national preservation because the Czechs have from their mountains nowhere to retreat without being destroyed, see Kŕen, J., op.cit., pp. 112-114).

40 Dr Beneš, describing his own position during and subsequent Munich declared that he had known that he would be held personally responsible for all the events which had taken and were subsequently to take place and that he would become the main target of attacks but he was, above all, preoccupied with the preservation of the unity of the nation: "...I had gladly taken all this on myself so that all the party-struggles would concentrate after our ill-success on one single person, and the nation itself would not become internally deranged ... It was for this reason that I was until today silent about these things and did

This mental burden was further accentuated by his own heavy doubts as to the wisdom of his decision to capitulate[41] and he became both exceedingly troubled in his mind as well as virtually overwhelmed by an impulsive need to almost continuously deal in all his subsequent statements, articles, interviews and monographs with Munich and to justify his own role played in it; his behaviour kept on emphasizing the enormity of his mental and physical suffering.[42] His

---

not defend myself against rebukes and attacks regardless of from what side they came..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 24).

41 Beneš wrote that after having concluded the emotionally-filled audience with his Generals (described at the beginning of this Chapter) "... the Generals were leaving me dissatisfied, bitter and in a desperate mood. And I asked myself again the question: Did I make in this entire crisis a correct decision? The events which will come - will they not condemn me? These questions kept on subsequently returning to me on a regular basis at every further great event of the entire European and world crisis..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 342).

One of Beneš' closest collaborators during the entire post-Munich period, his Chancellor Smutný stated that for Beneš "the post-Munich years formed a period of constant reflections on the correctness of the political decisions made at the time of Munich..." (Smutný, J., "Edvard Beneš a československý odboj za druhé světové války" in the Svědectví, Vol. VI, No. 21, p. 51).

42 Explaining that he had to deal personally with all the proposals until his resignation from the Presidency, Beneš said that he had experienced "the entire crisis in the most intensive and painful manner of all the participants. It was a terrible work and highest suffering..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 24).

Dr Ripka who was closely associated with Beneš during the period of World War II wrote in December 1942:"... Of all the Czechoslovaks, President Beneš lived through the hell of Munich in the most burning and painful fashion. He therefore reacted upon everything which was in any way connected with Munich with greater emotions and resolution than did others. There is

consistent obsession with the merits of his decision demonstrated ipso facto Beneš' feeling of inner insecurity, doubts and, at times, even of guilt[43] as well as his psychological need to continuously attempt, by persuading others, to persuade above all himself that he had acted in the best possible way in the interest of his state. While Dr Táborský had described in an excellent manner Chamberlain's "Munich Complex",[44]

---

not perhaps a single speech of substance in which he would not have referred to the Munich tragedy. At the same time he kept on reminding that it was not only our catastrophy but that its consequences exerted influence upon the whole world. And he consistently kept on fighting for a complete political and moral annulment of Munich, trying to gain from this terrible suffering to which we were without our fault subjected, a spring of new strength and creative élan as well as to form a mighty weapon for the restoration of our rights from the responsibility and guilt of the others. The result of this several-years' struggle, filled with many disappointments and desperate overcomings of external and internal difficulties, was the formal liquidation of Munich by the British Government on August 5, 1942. Only he who had the opportunity of closely following this truly superhuman Beneš' endeavour, can fully understand the extent and depth of his confession which he had made in a broadcast of August 8, 1942: 'The undoing of Munich and its consequences became to me during the past four years perhaps the sole objective of life'..." (Foreword by Dr Ripka to Beneš, E., Šest let exilu a druhé světové války, London, 1945, pp. 8-9.

43 After having observed that the Munich problem followed Beneš until his death in 1948, and forced him continuously to keep on returning to it, a Czech historian added: "...This continuous and impulsive returning to Munich was in reality the sole Beneš' public 'peccavi' (I had sinned) ..." (Křen, J., op.cit., p. 93).

44 On November 2, 1938, Dr Táborský had entered in his diary this observation: "...In his speeches, Chamberlain keeps on returning again and again to Munich. Regardless of the great approval given to his policy in the House of Commons, he evidently feels some inner need to continuously give reasons and justifications for his action. It is a typical stand of a man who is not sure of his affairs, who

it was Beneš himself who "became its most outstanding representative - literally its personification."[45] Having had to bear the supreme responsibility for the capitulation, Munich became the overriding trait of his political personality aiming at the complete annulment of its Dictate and the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic: "... From September, 1938, sleeping and walking, I was continuously thinking of this objective - living for it, suffering on its account and working for it in every one of my political actions. In fact, it was already my only aim in life..."[46]

While never openly admitting that most, if not all, of his extreme anxieties about his decision of not employing the Czechoslovak Armed Forces for the defence of his country stemmed from his realization that ideologically it ran contrary to, and meant, de facto, the negation of, Palacký's, Masaryk's and his own interpretation of the history of his nation, this event had in theory constituted for Czechoslovakia

---

himself is engulfed in doubts and who is therefore forced to keep on persuading again and again others that he had acted correctly, and by doing so, to modify and chase away the persistent voice of his own doubting consciousness..." (Táborský, E., Pravda zvítězila, Praha, 1947, p. 22). With the exception of the remark about the approval of his policy by the House of Commons which Beneš had never received at the time of Munich, Dr Táborský's description of Chamberlain is even more fitting when applied to Beneš.

45 Křen, J., op.cit., p. 91.

46 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 197.

the most serious consequence of Beneš' stand at the time of Munich: it destroyed the philosophical basis on which rested Masaryk's Czechoslovak Republic.[47] There were three questions which caused Beneš acute form of mental anguish and continuous suffering: 1. Did he betray Masaryk's faith placed in him so consistently during his entire political career?
2. Did he break his promise to remain faithful to Masaryk's legacy which he had so solemnly given before the whole nation at Masaryk's funeral a year earlier?
3. Did he fail in carrying out his sacred mission of preserving his entire state by misjudging the true political situation and arriving at a wrong decision for which he would be condemned by the history and his nation?

Having been unable to arrive at convincing satisfactory answers which would provide him with inner peace and tranquility, he put into feverish motion, with utterly desperate determination, all of his mental and physical faculties towards the absolute annihilation of the Munich Dictate and all of its consequences, as well as the restoration of his state in the form in which it was handed to him by Masaryk at the time of his own election to the Presidency.

---

47 For an interesting but not an entirely objective discussion about the impact of Beneš' decision at the time of Munich on Palacký's and Masaryk's interpretation of the Czech history (which has to be read with a great deal of care because of its pro-Communist orientation) see Kŕen, J., op.cit., pp. 98-102.

CHAPTER V

From Munich to The War

A. Era of the Second Czechoslovak Republic

1. At Home

> ... I was elected President under entirely different circumstances and substantially different terms and today cannot afford to overlook this fact. The whole situation has changed to an extent that my person as a political person might eventually be an obstacle in the further development to which our new state now must adjust itself... I consider it essential to draw the consequences out of the new situation and resign from my office...[1]

Having to carry alone the burden of supreme responsibility for the ultimate decision to capitulate to the Munich Dictate, President Beneš' health rapidly deteriorated[2];

---

1 President Beneš' letter of resignation from his office to Prime Minister, General Syrový, of October 5, 1938, quoted by American Minister at Prague, Carr in his Dispatch 269 of October 6, 1938 (USDS, 860F.001/101).

2 President Beneš' state of physical and mental health constituted an important topic in reports of all those who had seen, and spoken to him, during and immediately after Munich:

Arnošt Heidrich who was appointed on September 30, 1938 by President Beneš to represent at Berlin with Ambassador Mastný the Prague Government in the Ambassadors' Commission established to carry out the Munich decision, wrote about his meeting with Beneš on October 5, 1938: "Dr Beneš looked poorly beyond imagination, and ... told me that he had not slept for a week, felt so ill that he could not and did not wish to continue his official burden very long..." (Heidrich, A., International Political Causes of the Czechoslovak Tragedies of 1938 and 1948, Washington, 1962, p.25).

Ladislav Feierabend who visited President Beneš on October 4, 1938 wrote about the latter's appearance: "Frankly,

he did not intend, however, to resign immediately but felt that "he should hold on a few more weeks until he could bring the case to a close".[3] He frantically attempted in the meantime to salvage all he could of the ruins of his state after the Munich disaster but was in these efforts signally unsuccessful because of German hostility and British, French and Italian apathy to, and impatience with, any Czech territorial claims.[4] Due to violent German pressures and threats[5] coupled with animosity towards his

---

I was shocked by Dr Beneš' appearance. He looked awfully bad. In the face, especially in the eyes, there was quite apparent exhaustion and burden of the events of the last days. It was no wonder! It was by far too much for a man. It seemed to me that the President altered himself in all his behaviour ... President spoke very excitedly. It was visible on him that he was upset..." (Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládách Druhé republiky, New York, 1961, p. 35).

Beneš himself described his own physical and mental condition at the time of his resignation that he was "wholly exhausted mentally and physically, with indescribable feelings in my heart and with heavy thoughts of the terrible political and moral upheaval which was convulsing Europe and would perhaps disrupt it completely..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 51).

3 Heidrich, A., op.cit., pp. 25-26.

4 See Sychrava, L., "Z úvah o přípravě Mnichovské dohody r. 1938" in the ČSČH, Vol XVII, 1969, pp. 598-618.

5 Following the most vicious possible attack on President Beneš by Hitler in his speech in the Berlin Sports Palace of September 26, 1938, all the German official and unofficial indications and declarations were unanimous in their tenor that if President Beneš did not resign immediately, "Germany, in carrying out the Munich Agreement, would proceed against Czechoslovakia with the utmost ruthlessness". (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 50 - see ibid for further details).

personality inside his country, displayed mainly by the Czechoslovak high-ranking military leaders[6], President Beneš was forced to resign less than a week after Munich. While publicly emphasizing at that time in his "Farewell Address to the Czechoslovak Nation" on resigning on October 5, 1938 that he had reached his decision "of his own free will and in accordance with his personal conviction after consultations with political and constitutional circles and with a number of other leading persons" and had originally intended "to take this step immediately after Munich" but postponed it "in order to secure first a stronger and more lasting Government"[7], he did so only to effect some calming impression on his despairing listeners in the same traditionally overly optimistic manner as he had done on so many

---

State Secretary of the German Foreign Office told this fact clearly to the Czechoslovak representative in the Ambassadors' Commission at Berlin: "As you have observed, the work of the Commission is halting and there is no hope of making progress. If Czechoslovakia is interested in having Germany take a more favourable attitude to its problems, President Beneš must resign. You well know what a vehement personal antipathy Hitler has toward Dr Beneš, and since all decisions rest with the Chancellor, the psychological block of Beneš' personality must be removed". (Heidrich, A., op.cit., p. 23).

6 Heidrich noted, while visiting President Beneš on October 5, 1938 just before his resignation later that day that "although General Syrový treated the President with his usual friendly respect, the other generals (Krejčí and Husárek - note by author) took an attitude tinged with animosity". (Heidrich, A., op.cit., p. 25).

7 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 292.

occasions before.[8] The true reasons for his resignation were, however, as Beneš conceded later, German pressures which forced him to take this step "in the best interests of the state"[9], and following the German occupation of the remnants of Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939 he consistently employed this argument in effecting his "Continuity Theory".[10]

---

8 Because of his persistently unwarranted overly-optimistic and generally misleading statements to his countrymen conducted during his Presidency in the same manner as he had been doing during his Foreign Ministry, minimizing the truly dangerous, if not desperate situation of his state, and never even for a moment admitting the possibility of abandonment of Czechoslovakia in the case of a conflict with Nazi Germany by the West in general and France in particular, his trusting Czechoslovak audience was incomparably less prepared for Munich than it would otherwise had been - in this reality lies a very grave accusation against President Beneš. (For an excellent exposure of this phenomenon see Lisický, K., op.cit., Vols II and III, passim).

9 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 50: as other reasons Beneš stated his wish to employ his resignation as a means of expressing his "personal opinion about the newly-created situation and of making an unmistakable protest against the Western European circles which had brought about the Munich "appeasement", and because he had already then sensed "a change of mood at home". (Ibid).

10 President Beneš' statement in his "Farewell Address" that he was resigning "of his free will" caused him later considerable difficulties abroad when he was seeking to obtain the British and American recognition of his "Continuity Theory" and thus of his Government-in-Exile because they took that statement of October 5, 1938 at its face value and emphasized to him this point in the same way as did British Minister at Prague Newton in his Dispatch 343 of October 7, 1938 (BFO, C 12026/2475/12, FO 371/21579), and American Minister at Prague Carr in his telegram 282 of October 5, 1938 (USDS, 860F.001/94); in the similar fashion his political

Taking into consideration President Beneš' political behaviour in general, and his personality traits in particular,[11] as well as the testimony of reliable witnesses,[12] nc other objective conclusion can be reached than that President Beneš did not resign at that particular time[13] "of his own free will" as he had himself in his traditionally over-optimistically misleading statement proclaimed but was forced to do so by factors which came into play within his country after Munich, over which he

---

adversaries and some of the German political theorists employed this argument later in their attacks on Beneš. See e.g. Korkisch who after having explained President Beneš' "Continuity Theory" which was to him "one of the most important theses" by which Beneš preserved the Czechoslovak status quo ante September 1938, attacked it by stressing up the point that Beneš "of his own free will and lawfully" ("freiwillig und rechtsgueltig") stepped down from his Presidency on October 5, 1938 (Korkisch, F., "Die tschechoslowakische Kontinuitaetstheorie" in the Bohemia, Munich, Vol. 4, 1963, pp. 275-299).

11 His personality trait of doing all things by himself, arriving at the decisions alone and taking for them full responsibility which grew under the circumstances existing in Czechoslovakia during his Presidency into enormous proportions, and his supreme life-task of carrying out successfully his self-imposed sacred mission of preserving his state bequeathed to him by Masaryk, coupled with his growing doubts about the correctness of his decision to capitulate to the Munich Dictate and the almost unbearable sole ultimate responsibility for it would just not allow him to decide to resign at that time without the existence of overwhelming Nazi pressures and threats directed not only at his own person but also at his crucified state.

12 See e.g. note 3 of this Chapter and the relevant text.

13 The timing of his resignation is extremely important

had no control, the most important of which was the German brutal interference in Czechoslovak internal affairs. This conclusion is further confirmed by the fact that even President Beneš' forced resignation from his office alone had not sufficed to the jubilant Nazis bent on further humiliation of their arch-adversary -- they immediately demanded, under threats to the Prague Government, President Beneš',[14] departure from Czechoslovakia.[15] Before leaving

---

in this connection, since he could have otherwise resigned later either on his own free will because of his health or because of the appearance of some new overriding factor other than German threats, such as e.g. animosity of the majority of his countrymen towards his own personality.

14 Since this author has fully accepted President Beneš' "Continuity Theory" he will be using his title "President" even during the period following his forced, and therefore legally invalid, resignation.

15 For details about Berlin's threats to the Prague Government, see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 50 -- Theoretically, the German demands after Munich first for President Beneš' resignation from his office and then for his departure from Czechoslovakia into exile were based on the following four premises elaborated before Munich:

1. "A number of members of the Czechoslovak Cabinet were in favour of conciliating Henlein but President Beneš was obdurate." (Weizsaecker's statement to American Ambassador at Berlin Wilson, reported by the latter in his telegram 247 from Berlin of May 14, 1938; USDS, 860F.00/499).
2. "There was no Czech problem in Europe. There was only one problem and that was named Beneš. The Czech people wished no war - Beneš was driving them to it." (Official Nazi comments in German press of September 27, 1938, reported by American Ambassador at Berlin Wilson in his telegram 503 from Berlin of the same day; USDS 760F.62/1170).
3. "Hitler was convinced that nothing could be expected from Beneš but trickery and bad faith. Beneš was infinitely more clever than Chamberlain, Daladier or Bonnet and would

his country, due to these German threats, at an earlier date than he had originally contemplated, Beneš had laid down the foundations of the Czechoslovak military efforts abroad and of the resistance organization at home which were to begin operating against Germany after the outbreak of the second European war.[16] Having been convinced that the war would start not later than in May or June, 1939, he expected and "fervently hoped that post-Munich Czechoslovakia would still be to some extent independent when the war started".[17]

Amid the ruins of his whole life-work, with "his health temporarily shattered"[18] by enormous mental and

---

therefore always find ways, regardless of all his promises, how to reach his own objectives. Czechoslovakia under Beneš was an ulcer which had to be lanced and cleaned up once and for all." (Bullitt's strictly confidential telegram 1619 from Paris of September 27, 1938 about the local German Chargé d'Affaires' statement of that day; USDS 760F.62/1171).

4. Hitler's violent accusations of President Beneš and his policies, given in his speech in Berlin Sports Palace of September 26, 1938 (The Deutsche Diplomatische - politische Korrespondenz of September 27, 1938. President Beneš quoted those passages from this speech which he had considered to be most important in his Mnichovské dny, Praha, pp. 298-301.)

16 Lockhart, R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš" in The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 28, No. 70, November, 1949, p. 39.

17 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 52.

18 Lockhart, R.B., op.cit., p. 39.

physical sufferings, and following persistent strong urging of the Prague Government, intimidated by Hitler, to leave the country at the earliest possible moment, Edvard Beneš flew on October 22, 1938 to London; thus began the agony and triumph of his second exile.[19]

---

19 Beneš had intended to stay in Czechoslovakia "for several more weeks, at any rate until October 28th" - the Independence Day and the twentieth anniversary of the Republic. (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 51). There were also circulating rumors in the diplomatic circles in Prague that Beneš would not go abroad but take up the residence in Prague, after he would have recovered his health. (American Minister Carr's telegram 287 from Prague of October 8, 1938 - USDS, 760F.62/1563).

2. Into The Second Exile as a Private Personality

(a) In Great Britain

> ... Hitler and Goering want war. While they have recovered much politically and territorially that they lost, and more too on the Continent, they want now to live down 1918 and its military defeat; it is almost like a form of crusade to them...[20]

President Beneš' second exile had begun for him under the most adverse circumstances. Having been continuously attacked, ostracized and ridiculed by his former friends and foes alike both at home and abroad -- attacks conducted by the former having been for him particularly painful,[21] witnessing the rapid physical and

---

20 Statement made by President Beneš in London on January 28, 1939 in a conversation with Vinton Chapin of the American Embassy at London, who was during 1938 stationed in Prague, contained in Herschel V. Johnson's dispatch 1967 from London of January 30, 1939, (USDS, 760F.62/1919).

21 Beneš described these attacks and his attitude towards them: "The development of political conditions in Czechoslovakia after Munich is well known: I was simply held responsible for Munich and all its consequences. The bitterest reproaches and most violent attacks were directed against me. It was so easy and convenient to put the whole responsibility on the man who in the fateful moment stood highest... I had told myself from the outset that it was not the moment either to discuss these things or to look for the real culprits... I therefore silently accepted this responsibility and told myself that I must resolutely and patiently bear it until the march of events made an explanation possible. So I never protested, never defended myself, never reproached anyone either at home or abroad..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 53). Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, one of the foremost Beneš' critics, saw in Beneš' pro-Russian policy the root of his country's tragedy. Commenting on November 18, 1938 to American Minister at Belgrade, Lane about the Munich and post-Munich developments in Czechoslovakia, Prince Paul "blamed the partition of the

spiritual disintegration of the Czechoslovak Republic, which he had helped to establish and tried so desperately to preserve, the over-whelming approval given to Chamberlain and Daladier by their countrymen for their "myopic and futile"[22] policy of Munich, and triumphant Nazi Germany -- all these developments provided a dreary picture to a mentally and physically exhausted political personality who until recently appeared uninterruptedly for more than two decades in the forefront of the European political scene. There was but one conviction in his mind which kept on going the spark of his hope of being eventually able to restore his state and thus to successfully carry out his sacred mission - the inevitability of a new war which he considered

---

Czechoslovak Republic on the misguided notion of Dr. Beneš and his collaborators that the Soviet Union might come to Czechoslovakia's aid. Paul who is bitterly opposed to the Soviet regime, said that he had advised Beneš regarding the futility of his pro-Russian policy and that now the Czechoslovak people apparently realized the truth of what the Yugoslavs had always said to them, for they got rid of Beneš in a way as to indicate that they never wished to hear of him again." (Lane's dispatch 419 from Belgrade of November 18, 1938, USDS 760F.60H/57).

22 Beneš' description of Chamberlain's and Daladier's policy of Munich, given in the statement described in note 20 of this Chapter.

to be "the only means by which dictators could be destroyed"; early in 1939 he claimed that this war was "not too far distant" and would come "in a month, late spring, fall or perhaps not until next year".[23]

President Beneš did not leave his country entirely without plans as to his own immediate activities. Having received invitations to give lectures from several American educational institutions such as the Brown, Harvard[24] and Yale Universities, as well as from the Hobart College,[25] he had decided to accept the invitation extended to him by the President of the University of Chicago, Hutchins[26] and travel

---

23 Ibid.

24 United States Senator T.F. Green's telegram to Secretary of State Cordell Hull from Providence, Rhode Island, dated October 7, 1938, (USDS, 860F.001/95).

25 Dean G. Acheson's letter to Secretary of State Hull of October 20, 1938, (USDS, 860F.001/99) contained the invitation of the Yale University. Especially touching was letter to President Beneš dated October 6, 1938 from William Alfred Eddy, President of the Hobart College at Geneva, New York - a comparatively small and little known American Institution, the material means of which were by far not comparable to the other institutions mentioned here - in which he expressed to him "admiration and profound respect for his heroic role", offered him his Institution's hospitality, a home and $4,000 a year for being only an honourary member of the Faculty of Political Science. (Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, DC, German Foreign Ministry, Political Archive, Documents Concerning the Archive of the Former Czechoslovak State, Serial No. 2028 H, Roll 1143, Neg. Fr. No. 444 406).

26 Confidential telegram 299 from U.S. Minister at Prague, Carr to Secretary of State, Hull from Prague of October 15, 1938 (USDS 860F.001/96) and Chicago University President

there after spending a few months, so urgently needed for his mental and physical recovery, with his nephew Bohuš Beneš in London.[27] His behaviour at that time was governed by his decision to remain, for the time being, silent, not to appear politically in public and thus to entirely maintain a private character of his personality; he wanted to wait until it was clear to all that a war would soon break out.[28]

He was determined, however, to answer correspondence addressed to him by various political representatives and leaders: in answers to them he had exposed his views on the general Czechoslovak situation, his role which he so far played in it and his ideas about the future. There are two such outstanding documents of this period: his answer to Ladislav Rašín[29] and his message to Czechoslovak political

---

Hutchin's reply from Chicago of October 17, 1938 that he and the University were very much delighted at President Beneš' decision - (USDS 860F.001/98).

27 Besides having to recover his health and to prepare himself for the lectures on democratic institutions before arriving at Chicago, the main reason for his stay in London was England's geographic proximity and easier accessibility therefrom to his native country than it would have been from the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. This geographical reality was essential to President Beneš because of his zealous endeavours to organize channels of communication with Czechoslovakia and prepare a permanent underground connection with his homeland to be used after the war has started.

28 For an interesting but unfortunately Communist-biased version of President Beneš' behaviour during this period see Křen, J., op.cit., pp. 244-273.

29 L. Rašín's letter to President Beneš from Prague

representatives in Prague sent via Karel Lisický of the Czechoslovak Legation in London.[30] Another document sent by President Beneš to the newly elected President of the Second Czechoslovak Republic, Emil Hácha, was not so much important because of its content but because it was sent in the first place.[31]

---

of November 7, 1938 is contained in Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 95-96.

President Beneš' answer of November, 1938 (no precise date was given) appeared in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu a druhé světové valky, pp. 11-18. Among the most important points was his acceptance of responsibility for the decisions made before and at the time of Munich, and his justification for them. He dealt at length with his decision to capitulate to Munich (in contradistinction to Rašín who stated that he would have chosen the war) and came to the conclusions that this forced acceptance meant the possibility to save for the state as much as possible and to make preparations for the fight under better conditions than those existing at the time of Munich. His key idea was contained in a single sentence: "Of course, we must never forget betrayal of us to anyone; we must never give up those rights and territories which were taken away from us!" (Ibid., p. 17). In the conclusion of his letter he had indicated that he would continue to go along the path he had chosen and would change nothing from his firm beliefs.

30 This message dated January 27, 1939 which was prepared in the form of a discussion between Beneš and Lisický, had as its leit-motiv his concept that "salus rei publicae" had been to him and had to be to all, the only Czechoslovak program. (Ibid., p. 18 - for details, see Ibid. pp. 18-20; Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 54-57).

31 President Beneš' letter to President Hácha had been interpreted by those who argued that by resigning his office on October 5, 1938, Beneš interrupted himself the continuity of his presidency and that he had by this letter officially acknowledged that Hácha took over the vacated presidency. Yet this is not the true interpretation of the reality. Beneš' Presidency, in the same manner as the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic did not cease to legally, de iure, exist - they were replaced only temporarily, under duress and thus illegally

These documents revealed the leit-motiv of President Beneš' political personality, its character, traits and psychological aspects. Although having just suffered a crushing personal political disaster which so seriously undermined his health, he was nevertheless overcome, out of sheer desperation,[32] with utter determination to eventually bring about victory to his and his state's cause, and began almost immediately to make plans and lay-out theoretical preparations designed to ensure this victory. Having subjected himself to his ruthless self-discipline devoid of any emotional and subjective considerations, he was capable of visualizing success in the most dire circumstances and against overwhelming odds when most other men would have given up even entertaining such hopes.

---

under the terms of international law, and unconstitutionally under the terms of the Czechoslovak constitutional law, by an artificially-created Second Czechoslovak Republic and its Presidential office. That Hácha clearly realized this fact is evident not only from the tone of his reply to Beneš of December 10, 1938 but was even more emphasized by the fact that he had addressed Beneš as "Mr. President" (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 97).

32 This desperation was the result not only of his mounting doubts as to the wisdom of the course which he had followed and for which his countrymen were so signally unprepared but also by his inability, because of his personality traits and his incorrigible optimism, to accept the disaster of Munich as something more than a temporary reverse which had to be sooner or later rectified; because of his feeling of responsibility for the ultimate decision

Conceptually, he was facing the dilemma of having acted, by deciding to capitulate to the Western demands and the Munich dictate, contrary to the Palacký's, Masaryk's and his own interpretation of the Czech history, which he on the one hand so desperately attempted to refrain from doing because of the devastating subsequent effects on his political standing in his own country due to the inevitable and just accusations that he had betrayed the very ideological basis of the Czechoslovak Republic, yet he was incapable, on the other hand, of finding, in the circumstances surrounding Munich, some other solution which would have convinced him of being able to preserve the life of his state first, and then to restore it to its pre-Munich form after.[33] It was therefore inevitable that

---

made by his country at that time, he was determined to do all in his power to bring about this rectification at the earliest possible date.

33 E. Táborský who was President Beneš' personal secretary during the entire period of World War II wrote that he was told by him on several occasions that it was his concern for the preservation of the physical substance of the Czech nation - he dreaded a life-or-death war with Germany in which Czechoslovakia, fighting alone, would inevitably be defeated and might have resulted in the eventual liquidation of the Czechs as a nation - that played by far the chief role in his decision to capitulate. Beneš added: "A statesman must consider such matters sub specie aeternitatis, as Masaryk used to say. We are a small nation. One cannot be concerned with the happiness of just one generation. One must think of the generations of the future, and of how to assure them the chance to be born and to be able to live in the land of their forefathers". (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 673).

he would concentrate all his efforts in elaborating and developing a theory of the restoration of entire Czechoslovakia; in its embryonic form, late in 1938 and early in 1939, it presented the claim that Munich was a crime against Czechoslovakia, that the Czechs would never forget their betrayal to anyone, would never give up their lost rights and territories, and that they would use their claim, which was a mortgage against France and England, as a weapon for the revision of Munich and all of its consequences.[34]

President Beneš' first short stay in England[35] was not a happy one. Both he and his devoted wife were physically and mentally worn out by the recent events: the latter, having felt even more keenly the brunt of this disaster was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. The greatest hardship for a political personality of President Beneš' character of almost incessant top-level political activities stemmed at that time from the fact that "he himself was condemned to a period of comparative inactivity".[36] There were two reasons for such enforced, and for him

---

34 President Beneš' letter to L. Rašín of November, 1938 (see Note 29 of this Chapter).

35 October 22, 1938 to February 2, 1939.

36 Lockhart, R.B. "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 39.

unnatural, inactivity: the first having been that he "was abstaining on principle from interfering in Czechoslovak internal affairs... in the interest of the State... and from political actions which could bring difficulties to the Government in foreign policy..."[37], the second reason having been the fact that his presence in England "was embarrassing to the British Government, and he had received a hint from the Foreign Office to refrain from public activity".[38] Having sufficiently recovered his health and prepared material for his lectures on democracy to be given at the University of Chicago, President Beneš - his personality having ostensibly been of entirely private character - set out with relief from unfriendly England on February 2, 1939 for the United States.

---

37 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 54.

38 Lockhart, R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 40.

In his aide-mémoire of October 28, 1938, Jan Masaryk assured Sir L. Oliphant that Beneš "might be relied upon to be absolutely quiet and to give no trouble whatever..." ...Beneš "wishes to assure HM Government that he will live here as an absolutely private individual, make no public or political contacts, grant no interviews and in no way make difficulties for HM's or Czechoslovak Governments..." (BFO, C13246/13246/12, FO 371/21588).

In an exchange of notes, Secretary of State ascertained on November 1, 1938 that the Home Secretary had no objection to M. Beneš' settling in England - he stated that on the contrary he would personally do all he could to help. (BFO, C 13548/13246/12, FO 371/21588).

(b) In the United States

> ... Roosevelt's telegram... was in this sense[39] the most decisive one. What was, however, the main point and what had showed me that it was already quite impossible, regardless of Roosevelt's good intention, to count under these circumstances on a just solution of our conflict with Germany was the fact that he put Germany and us on a quite equal plane, that he had addressed himself equally to me as to Hitler with an appeal for an agreement and for a solution of the conflict without a war, and did not take into consideration how this conflict began, why did it begin, what was involved and that it was the case of threats of war and violence against us... that an agreement in the circumstances and under proposed conditions could only mean the preparation of a way towards the destruction of Czechoslovakia...[40]

During the days which President Beneš spent sailing from England towards the New World, he was wondering about the events which were awaiting him in the greatest Democracy in the world. When he had to earlier leave his country and go to England which was mainly instrumental in his own and

---

39 President Beneš was talking about "the last event in the entire September crisis which took away from us our last hope for its more favourable solution to our benefit. From the evening of Monday, September 26th and during the entire next day I was receiving one after another telegrams from all the American Republics (these Republics had simply followed suggestion of the US Department of State in its circular telegram - see USDS 760 F.62/1607 - note by author) asking me to reach an agreement with Germany, to prevent a war between the two of us at any cost and thus to prevent a war extended all over Europe..." (Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 332).

40 Ibid., pp. 332-333.

his country's disaster,[41] he knew that he would neither be welcome nor his stay therein a happy one; his visit to France was for him at that time completely unthinkable.[42] The United States Beneš viewed with mixed feelings: he considered Roosevelt's telegrams to himself, Hitler, Daladier, Chamberlain and Mussolini as having been extremely damaging to Czechoslovakia, the first of which had come exactly at the time when war appeared inevitable[43] and when

---

41 England's infamous part in the preparations for, and actual participations in, Munich was even more revealed shortly after President Beneš' arrival to the United States in February, 1939. In his telegram 430 from Paris of March 8, 1939 Bullitt reported that "British policy was revealed as one of issuing public statements promising to back up France on the Czechoslovak question and then sending private and secret communications to the French Government that the public statements were not to be taken seriously." (USDS, 760F.62/1928, also 751.65/576-p.)

42 Ladislav Feierabend (member of President Beneš' Cabinet in Great Britain) stated to the author in the interview held on September 17, 1967 at Washington, D.C., that he was told during the war by President Beneš that it was good that France fell and was occupied by Germany since he hated even to think about having to travel there. (His disastrous trip to Paris in the fall of 1939 only confirmed his animosity towards the French Government and the latter's towards him.)

43 It was at the time when "Hitler figuratively slammed the door in Wilson's (Chamberlain's emissary - note by author) face" (Kennedy's telegram 1040 from London of September 27, 1938, USDS 760F.62/1133); when Phipps told Bullitt that "Hitler's reply to the two notes from Chamberlain presented to him by Wilson was the most violent outburst possible; that nothing could have been more unhelpful..." (Bullitt's Str. conf. telegram 1604 from Paris of September 27, 1938; USDS 760F.62/1135) and when President Beneš told Carr that "the new demands now made by Hitler in the Godesberg Memorandum meant in their application 'the assassination of

President Beneš appealed to President Roosevelt "to urge the British and French Governments... not to desert his country and permit it to be destroyed and thus bring nearer a greater conflict vital to them as well as to the peace of the world".[44] Instead, the plea for peace at any price contained in Roosevelt's and various American Republics' telegrams, inspired by Bullitt, stressed the idea which Roosevelt told Hull: "It can't do any harm. It's safe to urge peace until the last moment".[45] President Beneš

---

the state'. He and his people prefer to die fighting rather than accept those terms and hence he believes war inevitable unless the British and French are willing to support this country in opposition to these demands. He says he has one and a half million soldiers now on the frontier..." (Carr's double priority telegram 234 from Prague of September 25, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/1082).

44 Carr's telegram 234 (see the above note No. 43).

45 Secretary of State Hull pointed out clearly that the evil genius behind Roosevelt's telegrams was Bullitt, as it also is apparent from the relevant American documents (Bullitt's strictly confidential telegram 1569 from Paris of September 24, 1938 - USDS 760F.62/1052; Bullitt's str. conf. telegram to President from Paris of September 27, 1938 - USDS, 760F.62/1152); Hull discussed this matter with Roosevelt who was prepared to make personal appeals, and Hull, while not opposing them, was not convinced that the results would justify them. He considered Germany as having been armed to the teeth and nothing short of a sufficient amount of force (in this he was in agreement with President Beneš - note by author) or complete capitulation as having been able of stopping Hitler in the pursuit of his plans. Hull was afraid that too ardent steps by Roosevelt would, on the one hand, throw the United States into the same appeasement camp with Chamberlain and sooner or later attract the same obloquy that Chamberlain received, and would, on the other hand, further confirmed Hitler in his belief that he was being all-powerful and that nobody would dare to oppose him. Although Hull kept on advising Roosevelt to go slow, the latter believed with

emphasized that the greatest and irreparable damage of the first Roosevelt's telegram was done by the fact that having also been sent to Chamberlain and Daladier, "it thereupon gave both of the Prime Ministers an opportunity to express with the telegram of President of the United States their full consent and to regard his telegram to be the support of their policy during the entire crisis..."[46] Beneš had

---

Bullitt that his appeals, in Bullitt's sense and not in Beneš' sense, should go forth. After describing the two Roosevelt's telegrams, Hull concluded by a rhetorical question and quasi affirmative note: "Whether the actions taken by the President brought about this result (Munich Agreement - postponement of war - note by author) is impossible to say. Undoubtedly they exercised considerable influence." (Hull, C., The Memoirs of Cordell Hull, New York, 1948, 2 Vols., pp. 590-596).

46 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, Praha, p. 334. - While Beneš did not say so directly, he inferred that without this Roosevelt's telegram Chamberlain and Daladier would not have had the solid ground on which to justify their appeasement policy subsequent to Hitler's violent outbursts to Chamberlain's proposals submitted to him by Horace Wilson; diplomatic documents of the moment indicate that the British Government's reaction was that Hitler's answers proved "that there was no sanity left in the man", and had seriously considered the idea that Chamberlain would have broadcasted something to this effect: "I have gone as far as my conscience and reason would permit me to go and a great many people say further than I should have gone. I tell you now that in spite of all efforts to preserve peace and sanity for the world, I do not believe this man intends to cooperate or help." Oliver Stanley and other members of the British Cabinet believed that such message would have had a tremendous influence on public opinion, that the die was cast and it was only a question of hours. (Kennedy's str. conf. telegram 1011 from London of September 24, 1938, USDS, 760F.62/1055).

The disastrous effects of Roosevelt's telegram are evident in Chamberlain's telegram of September 26, 1938, to Hull replying to President's message - (USDS, 760F.62/1101), and in Bullitt's telegram 1620 from Paris of September 27,

also noted that Roosevelt's proposal concerning an International Conference contained in his second telegram to Hitler was subsequently employed by Daladier for his justification of Munich - Munich was according to him the fulfilment of this Roosevelt's proposal.[47]

Theoretically, Beneš' interpretation of the preservation of European peace in the 1938 September crisis ran counter to that expressed by Roosevelt in his telegrams: the former's concept called for the resolute demonstration by England and France, in a similar manner as it was done by Czechoslovakia, that employment of force by Hitler against Czechoslovakia meant ipso facto an immediate retaliatory use of their own forces against Germany, the latter's concept

---

1938 reporting that Daladier "expressed the greatest gratification to the President's continued efforts to preserve peace. He said 'the United States of all the countries in the world is the only one that has a deep and sincere interest in the peace of Europe and whatever may happen, it will go down in history to the eternal credit of the President that he is continuing to strive for peace to the last moment.'" (USDS, 760F.62/1175). The most eloquent in this regard is Kennedy's telegram 1073 from London of September 28, 1938 to the effect that jubilant Chamberlain announced in the House of Commons that Mussolini asked Hitler to postpone action and Hitler informed Chamberlain of the meeting the next day - Kennedy stated that "The President can feel that God was on his side and that he was on God's side" and that he was told by Cadogan that "unquestionably the President's appeal had done the trick..." (USDS, 760F.62/1248).

Also eloquent are literally hundreds of telegrams sent to Roosevelt from various people throughout the world thanking him for "saving peace" (USDS, 760F.62/1500 ff).

47 Beneš, E., Mnichovské dny, p. 335.

was understood "by the greatest section of the political opinion of Europe, and especially also in France and in England" as having been that of appeasement of the same vein as that pursued by Chamberlain and Bonnet.[48] Irate Beneš accused the three most important American Ambassadors in Europe - Bullitt in Paris, Kennedy in London and Hugh Wilson in Berlin - of fundamentally having supported the policy of European appeasement, of having on it a significant and disastrous influence, and remarked later, with obvious satisfaction, that the war itself had rightly expelled them from the American diplomatic service.[49]

---

48 Ibid., p. 334. Beneš attempting to clear Roosevelt from accusations of having also following the policy of appeasement, stated categorically that such was not the case.

49 Beneš left himself open here to serious criticism of intentional shallowness, of providing an incomplete picture of the true reality. While it is undoubtedly true that Bullitt and others of like mind had supported the policy of appeasement of Hitler, Beneš failed to provide the all-important answer to the question of why these high-ranking diplomatic representatives of the Greatest Democracy had been doing so, what were the reasons for their seemingly illogical action of supporting the policy which was then obviously leading to the sacrifice of a small democratic state to a repugnant expansionist dictatorship. The answer, for Beneš of a distinctly disagreeable character, would have explained that the existence and threat of another dictatorship, considered by them to be even more dangerous than German Nazism - that of Russian Bolshevism, governed their steps during the 1938 September crisis. While Beneš believed that for all-overriding reasons of the preservation of his state an Alliance with Moscow was essential, Bullitt and the like-minded were determined to prevent at any price a war between the West and Hitler in their hope that Hitler would eventually

On the other hand President Beneš was in February, 1939, well conversant with "the terrific blast from the American newspapers on the question of the betrayal of Czechoslovakia,"[50] was informed that "with the exception of the Hearst's publications, all the American press sincerely sympathized with the Czechoslovak Republic",[51] that there were many American prominent personalities of the calibre of William E. Dodd, who had resigned in 1937 his post of Ambassador at Berlin because of his inability to influence the State Department to adopt a policy of vigorous opposition to Hitler's Nazism,[52] of the Ambassador at the Spanish Government located in Saint-Jean-de-Luz, France, Claude G. Bowers,[53] and of the Publisher of the Chicago

---

turn against Stalin and in the process of their struggle the two dictatorships would either eliminate each other or the winner would emerge after the conclusion of this conflict in such a weakened condition that his dictatorial regime would be unable to endure in the presence of democratic states.

50 Kennedy's telegram 1040 from London of September 27, 1938 (USDS, 760F.62/1133).

51 Thomas Čapek's letter from New York of October 3, 1938 to President Beneš (The Thomas Čapek Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, MS 59-44, Ac No 10, 225, II - 28 - C, 1, 4-6).

52 See note 234 of Chapter III of this study.

53 Ambassador Bowers who was a well known champion of democracy, described in his letter to Secretary of State Hull of October 10, 1938 so fittingly Munich, its participants as well as its main victim - President Beneš, that his main ideas deserve to be quoted: "The first thing that occurred

Daily News, Knox.[54] There were also those on the staff of the Department of State who had the vision of foreseeing correctly

---

me on learning of the Great Betrayal of Munich was the possible effect on your policies, which alone among those of all the statesmen of the world today, are calculated to remove the cause for war. The Betrayal at Munich reduces France to a second-class Power, deprives it of the Alliances so carefully made in twenty years, definitely ends the League of Nations and the policy of collective security, and substitutes a new Holy Alliance under the domination of the two Powers that notoriously disregard treaties, agreements, legality and reason, and substitute brute forces... Chamberlain has reversed the British policy of 250 years on which the greatness of the Empire rests and he has brought to England the darkest hour it has known since Austerlitz... In view of what I have consistently written about Chamberlain you may be sure I was not surprised by his conduct. If not a Fascist, he is most decidedly pro-Fascist and he speaks for the little group that is all Fascist at heart...

... We certainly are living in a dark hour. For twenty years I have heard nothing but the highest praise of Beneš and his great predecessor from all Americans and British with whom I have talked. Since Hitler began his filthy abuse of Beneš I have been unspeakably disgusted to note what a large percentage of expatriated Americans about here tell me that Beneš is a vicious character. I am glad that two American Universities have invited him to America..." (Cordell Hull Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, AC 9791, II-15-H, -M, 3; C 43, F 108).

54 In his letter to Secretary of State Hull of October 25, 1938, Publisher Knox strongly attacked US Ambassador at London Kennedy's speech associating America closely with "Chamberlain type of international relations". He was convinced that what had happened at Munich was a world tragedy from which the United States and the rest of the world would suffer for years to come. Knox strongly attacked "the popular assumption as promoted by the specious arguments of those who tried to defend Chamberlain's surrender that the alternative to yielding to Hitler and Mussolini was war", and informed Hull that he was going to publish the next day an editorial suggesting "a muzzle for both Kennedy and Bullitt, especially along the line of attempting to portray what American public sentiment is. They do not know - either of them..." (Cordell Hull Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, AC. 9791, II-15-H, -M,3; C43, F 108).

the consequences of Munich and who surprisingly well described events which were to happen, in the same vein as President Benes had seen and explained them months, even years earlier.[55]

---

55 There are many documents falling into this category. The two which were selected by the author as being most representative for the purpose of this study are:

1. State Department's confidential memorandum of September 29, 1938 from G.S. Messersmith in Washington to Secretary of State Hull, who in turn sent it to President Roosevelt on October 1, 1938. This memorandum provided an excellent account of the then existing situation: it was impossible to make agreements with Hitler whose regime was really weak badly needing economic strength. Fear of war having grown into a hysteria produced grave danger that by giving Hitler too far-reaching concessions, instead of arranging for peace, a war has been made inevitable. He stated that he was asked by a wise man what was the difference between Hitler taking something which did not belong to him and had never belonged to his country and between Chamberlain and Daladier giving away something which was not then and had never been theirs. He concluded by a warning "I am fearful that in the arrangements about to be made and which may be made in the near future growing out of the Munich meeting, someone other than ourselves is going to give away something precious that belongs to us." (USDS, 760F.62/ 1193½).

2. American Minister at Warsaw Biddle's letter to President Roosevelt, of November 5, 1938, a copy of which he sent to Secretary Hull, in which he described the consequences of Munich and dismemberment of Czechoslovakia which already had far-reaching repercussions throughout the whole extent of the European Continent: German influence increased to such an extent that it was impossible to foresee any development which in the final resort would not imply a variable degree of German rule over the various individual states East and South-East of Berlin. Biddle in reality confirmed all the forecasts made by President Benes months or even years earlier about the position of Czechoslovakia which was that of a fortress, holding the key to the political situation in Central, East and South-East Europe, and thus, de facto, in his and Bismark's words, to the whole political structure of Europe (USDS, 760F.62/1884). In this regard, see President Benes' conversation with Leo Kennedy, of March 16, 1938, contained in Newton's dispatch 75 from Prague of March 22, 1938 (BFO, C2117/1941/18, FO 371/21713).

President Beneš' triumphant welcome in New York City upon his arrival, receiving all the honours granted by protocol to heads of state, cheers by crowds of people who were waiting in the streets to greet him on his way from the ship to the City Hall, and, above all, Mayor La Guardia's emotional speech in which he referred to his visitor as "President of Czechoslovakia",[56] surpassed even the most optimistic President Beneš' expectations, provided him with so desperately needed encouragement and immediately changed him again into an active political personality.[57]

---

56 For the description of President Beneš' welcome to New York City and speeches involved at this occasion, see: Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 61-62; State Department Memorandum of February 13, 1939 from Messersmith (USDS, 760F.62/1925) and letter from Mallet of the British Embassy, Washington, of February 17, 1939 to William Strang of the Foreign Office, London transmitting a letter from British Consul -General at New York, Haggard of February 14, 1939 with clippings of the New York Times of February 10 and 12, 1939. (BFO, C2461/2461/18, F0371/23059). President Beneš had considered La Guardia's speech so extraordinary and remarkable, and so far ahead of any statement made at the period when Beneš was "at his lowest ebb" that he presented in his Memoirs the leit-motiv of this speech: "Four representatives of two decadent European democracies and two violent dictatorships meeting at Munich decided that instead of politics they would perform common butchery. They laid a small, fettered State on their operating table and then with merciless treachery began to cut it up. Today we welcome the President of this State in New York. We assure him that we have not forgotten this act of butchery by all European Great Powers, that we value him according to his merits and that therefore here in the United States we will always assist his brave Nation. And we declare that this Nation will soon again rise to freedom and that its President will again return to his liberated country". (p.61).

57 President Beneš was well aware that he had become the centre of world's press attention and ceased to be private

His arrival to Chicago was no less triumphant especially because its population contained more than half a million people of Czech and Slovak origin. He immediately began, amid his lectures, to propagate the Czechoslovak cause by receiving important American personalities and explaining to them in his typically painstakingly detailed manner all the aspects of the tragedy of his nation.[58]

---

personality which he kept so far in the interest of his mutilated country left by Munich defenceless against Hitler; yet, as he had stated he had to answer to Mayor La Guardia "in the same or similar vein and that was not my exact intention." (Memoirs, pp. 61-62). Yet President Beneš was elated and the change from old, stuffy and uneasy England to the New World was overwhelming and signally meaningful: he immediately realized the power of the democratic forces in the United States once they would get in the struggle behind the Czechoslovak cause, if, even at such an early date, one of its leaders so bravely and resolutely attacked Munich - that Munich, the undoing of which became the sole raison d'être of his existence, of his life.

58 It must be stated that Jan Masaryk who came into the United States several weeks before President Beneš and whose vast number of American friends provided him with access to most of the prominent personalities of the country, was largely instrumental in arranging these meetings with President Beneš who had almost no personal friends there.

The Germans watched carefully, in the meantime, activities not only of President Beneš but practically of all Czechoslovaks who were in any way associated with him;[59] Hitler, Goering and Ribbentrop became in reality obsessed with what they called "Beneš' spirit"[60] and kept on repeatedly expressing their mistrust of Czechoslovakia because it was still "imprégnée de l'esprit de M. Beneš" and "she would return at the first opportunity to 'Beneš politics'".[61]

---

59 This is quite evident from the German diplomatic documents from the period following Munich and preceding March 15, 1939. See e.g. Dispatch 247/38 from German Consul General at Chicago, von Stolzmann of October 17, 1938 to the German Foreign Ministry's Pol IV, describing activities of President Beneš' brother, Vojta Beneš at Chicago, mentioning that "Beneš' name means very much to the Democratic Fanatics in the United States". (Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, DC, German Foreign Ministry Pol IV, Czechoslovakia, Serial No 1941 H, Roll 1077, Neg. frame Nos. 435076-77). He also sent clippings from the Chicago Sunday Tribune of October 16, 1938 and from the Chicago Daily News of October 17, 1938, both commenting on Vojta Beneš' speeches and statements (Capt. Germ. Docs, National Archives, Washington, DC, Germ. For. Min. Pol IV, Political Relations Between Czechoslovakia and Germany, Vol 54/4, Serial No 5725 H, Roll 2693, Neg. Fr. Nos. E 415144-46). In his dispatch 203, of January 31, 1939, the Chargé d'Affaires of the German Embassy at Washington, Thomsen, informed Berlin that Vojta Beneš was conducting a very anti-German campaign of speeches in the United States and reported that the third brother of President Beneš who lived since 1910's in Milwaukee, had not, so far, entered politics. (CGD, NA, GFM, Czechoslovakia 1936-42, Serial No 2367, Roll 1307, Neg. Fr. No 489623 - Microfilmed at Berlin on April 27, 1947 at the request of the visiting Czechoslovak Delegation as supplementary to Serial Nos 1613 H and 2276 H).

60 Both the British Blue and the French Yellow Books of diplomatic documents abound, insofar as they deal with Czechoslovakia, with the term "The Beneš spirit" - "l'esprit

It was therefore quite natural, in the circumstances, that reports about attempts to be made by Germans to assassinate Beneš in the United States were taken by the American Government seriously.[62] In addition to the Germans, officials of the short-lived Second Czechoslovak Republic watched with an increased anxiety Jan Masaryk's and President Beneš' activities because of their growing fear that they would offend Hitler and thus provide him with an opportunity and excuse for taking some further drastic measures against their crippled, defenceless state.[63] While President Beneš withdrew after his arrival

---

Beneš" employed by German leaders. An excellent explanation of the meaning of this term appeared in an article "The Beneš Spirit" in The Central European Observer of February 16, 1940, pp. 11-12. (Newspapers Division, Library of Congress).

61 Czechoslovak Minister in Paris, Osuský's telegram 1367/38 of December 12, 1938 to Dept. B. of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry, describing Ribbentrop's conversation with Bonnet of December 6, 1938 (CGD, NA, GFM Pol iv, Czechoslovak Secret Documents, Serial No 1809 H, Roll 1039, Neg. Fr. Nos 412236-37). See also the article "The Beneš Spirit" mentioned in the above Note (No 60).

62 The first document reporting that it was an intention of the Germans to assassinate President Beneš at Chicago was the Department of Justice's note of February 10, 1939 on the attached letter it received from Klička (details about this person not given) to this effect. (USDS, 860F.001/111). On April 28, 1939 Bullitt in his telegram 839 reported from Paris that he was advised by the French Sureté Nationale that a Gestapo agent was en route to the United States to assassinate Beneš; he was immediately instructed by a Str. Conf. Tel. from the Secretary of State on April 29, 1939 that should such person apply at Paris or any other consular office in France for any kind of visa, to suspend action and telephone the Department immediately. (USDS, 860F.001/112).

On June 1, 1939, the Department of Justice further informed the Department of State that there was definitely "contemplated a plot to assassinate President Beneš". (USDS, 860F.001/113). While the author was unable during his research in Washington to confirm beyond any

to Chicago again into greater privacy, nothing he or Prague officials could have or would have done, really mattered. Hitler, bent on destructing the remnants of Czechoslovakia, was determined that nobody and nothing would prevent him from taking this fateful step so abounding in its implications not only for Czechoslovakia and

---

doubt that this further information was the result of Jaroslav Kvapil - František Kubka - Lone Liang (see Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 199-200) efforts, all the circumstantial pieces of evidence indicate that the Department of Justice was warned by the Chinese Embassy in Washington that the Germans were sending to Chicago a Czech-speaking assassin whose assignment was to get near to Beneš and shoot him.

63 This anxiety was evident not only among the officials of the Second Czechoslovak Republic at Prague but also those stationed abroad: communications exchanged between the Czechoslovak Legation at Washington and Foreign Ministry at Prague document this reality. Czechoslovak Minister at Washington Hurban felt it necessary to ask his Foreign Minister Chvalkovský for instructions about what should be his behaviour towards Beneš and Masaryk. In his personal telegram 14/39 of January 14, 1939 Chvalkovský answered that Hurban's behaviour should be the same as to any other private Czechoslovak citizen, taking into account not only American but also Czechoslovak public opinion. (CGD, NA, GFM, Pol iv, Czechoslovak Secret Documents, Serial No 1809 H, Roll 1039, Neg. Fr. No. 412242). Three days later, on January 17, 1939, Hurban received instructions from Dept. B of the Foreign Ministry at Prague in telegram 22/39 signed by Krno, to draw to Masaryk's attention that his present political behaviour was causing the Government considerable difficulties and to appeal to him that he would not attack, in his speeches, any of the Czechoslovakia's neighbours. (Ibid, Neg. Fr. No. 412238). On January 26, 1939, Hurban received instructions from Dept. B. of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry in telegram 130/39 signed by Rejholec, to immediately submit a detailed report on Jan Masaryk's activities. (Ibid., Neg. Fr. No. 412269).

Numerous articles dealing with President Beneš' situation in his exile appeared in Prague - they ranged from those which persistently defended his political behaviour (see e.g. the Přítomnost No 42, Vol. 15, of October 19, 1938, pp. 659-660, which quotes a letter President Beneš received from a Frenchman (initials G.W.) from Paris who, after having described Beneš' tragedy and Calvary, added: "...How bizarre and tragicomic can appear the idea that in all this collapse of all that what you helped for more than twenty years to build it is still possible to envy you something. And in reality, it is possible. I

Germany and, in the end, for the whole world, but in the first instance for President Beneš.

---

envy you that you were not here in France, which had until that time never broke its word, and when was destroyed faith of that nation in itself and its mission in the world..." No. 48, Vol. 15, of November 30, 1938, p. 768 - President Beneš was reported to have been modestly living in a small London house with his wife because his financial situation was far from having been good; No. 49, Vol. 15 of December 7, 1938 pp. 775-777 - a warning to the Czechs that they would not, by continuously attacking only President Beneš, absolve the West from their guilt; No 6, Vol. 16, of February 8, 1939, p. 83 - President Beneš left England and by having completely withdrawn from politics, did not cause any difficulties to the Prague Government) to those which mercilessly attacked his policies and personality (see e.g. the Venkov of December 18, 1938 - The election of Beneš to the Presidency of Czechoslovakia was a grave error and tragedy for the nation, "it had shown that an entity, which has no roots, which does not reflect the spirit of the nation, which does not rest on political reality, which is artificial, can live only temporarily for a short period of time but cannot last for long."

One of the most outstanding articles of this period was entitled "Was All This the Fault of One Man" (meaning President Beneš) which appeared in the Přítomnost , No 41, Vol 15 of October 12, 1938, pp. 641-643. Its importance was not in its defence of Beneš but the enormous reaction which it caused virtually in every Czechoslovak newspaper and magazine of the period - the majority of these comments appeared to be unfavourable to Beneš.

B. The Aftermath of German Occupation of Czechoslovakia - Return to Politics

1. Activities in the United States

> The Czech and Slovak people are victims of a great international crime. The people of Czechoslovakia cannot protest today, and because of the happenings of the last months cannot defend themselves. Therefore I, as ex-President of Czechoslovakia, address this solemn protest to you... ... Before the conscience of the world and before history I am obliged to proclaim that the Czechs and Slovaks will never accept this unbearable imposition on their sacred rights and they will never cease their struggle until these rights are reinstated for their beloved country. And I entreat your Government to refuse to recognize this crime...[64]

President Beneš admitted that the occupation of Prague by Germany on March 15, 1939 which was "the real beginning of the Second World War", was a "terrible blow" for him.[65] "Literally overnight,

---

64 President Beneš' telegram of March 16, 1939 from the University of Chicago to President Roosevelt (USDS, 860F.00/713). He also sent on that day the same telegram to Chamberlain, Daladier and Litvinov, and a slightly amended version to the President of the Council of the League of Nations. (for details see Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 64-65).

65 He explained that the main reason for this blow was the fact that the whole foundation of his further plans in case of war had already been destroyed in time of peace. "The Germans in our country were masters everywhere and of everything! And the uncertainty about what the rest of the world, our people at home, our representatives abroad would do!" (Ibid, p. 64). He also claimed that March 15, 1939 was, above all, a new blow for England and France, both morally and materially because Munich cost no other states more dearly than them, except Poland and Yugoslavia. Even Czechoslovakia fared according to him better because it had kept its honour, its rights and claims morally intact. March 15, 1939 had to lead, in his opinion, to the war, the brunt of which had then to be borne, through their foolishness, first and foremost by London and Paris.

the basic assumption upon which Beneš had founded his surrender in the previous year was destroyed".[66] His immediate reaction to the first news of this disaster which he heard at Chicago on the morning of March 15, 1939 was that of utter despair and virtual panic as to the future events.[67] The most shattering news for him was the fact that President of the Second Czechoslovak Republic Hácha and its Foreign Minister Chvalkovský "sacrificed the State both internationally and internally without having any right, authorization or mandate to do so..."[68]

---

66 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš". op.cit., p. 673. Táborský also provides the reasons why Beneš assumed that Hitler would leave "the crippled and helpless torso of Czechoslovakia" alone and use the same methods which had so successfully been employed in the case of Czechoslovakia, against Poland. Beneš also hoped that when war at last broke between Germany and the West, Czechoslovakia would still be in a position to make its military contribution against Germany and thus earn the revision of Munich. (Ibid., p. 673).

67 His despair was the result of his doubts, immediately renewed by Hitler's action, about the correctness of his decision in September 1938. He was tortured by the thought that those who advocated the other course were, after all, right. He remembered well that he had received, at the time of Munich, hundreds of communications to the effect that "There remain only two ways: capitulation or determination to fight. We must not allow the first one. We are determined to defend ourselves even alone. The whole world may betray us but you must not betray us. We, who are now living, would never forgive you such a step, nor would do such the future. We are all standing behind you as one, prepared to defend ourselves, well aware that by decisiveness we can gain everything, by yielding lose everything. We are imploring you, do not give in!" (Telegram to President Beneš from J.L. Fischer, Professor of the Masaryk University, of September 19, 1938, quoted by Fischer, J.L. Proti Mnichovu, Brno, 1968, p. 156).

68 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 59; Beneš had therein also attacked Tiso because they had "at the same time deliberately committed base treason, infamously stabbing their own Nation in the back..." Viewing these harsh attacks objectively, the author feels compelled to emphatically state that Benes was in this regard very unfair. Hitler's,

Yet President Beneš' analytical mind quickly found way out from this seemingly disastrous event. Hitler's irrational and entirely unwarranted step of March 15, 1939 which seemed to forever seal the fate of Czechoslovakia[69] coupled with another French and British failure to keep their solemn undertaking and Hácha's signature on Hitler's document establishing the so-called Protectorate, had actually provided Beneš and his cause with a welcome and intensive aid from the completely unexpected and unlikely source by dispelling most of the doubts as to the legal continuity of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic and by opening all the gates to Beneš' high-geared political

---

Goering's, Ribbentrop's and Keppler's outrageous treatment of Hácha and Chvalkovský is well-known and received at the time world-wide coverage. (see: Carr's conf. telegram 50 from Prague of March 18, 1939, USDS 860F.00/693; also Ministère des Affaires Etrangères de la République Française, Le livre jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques 1938-39, Paris, 1939 Document No 77 - dispatch from French Ambassador, at Berlin Coulondre to his Foreign Ministry of March 17, 1939). Hácha had no possibility to refuse Hitler's demands - he had no more an army and fortifications, and after Munich, Prague was almost at the reach of Germany. Beneš' harsh criticism of Hácha is therefore even more astonishing than it is unfair - he decided to capitulate at the time when he had at disposal a magnificent army, fortifications and the spirit of the nation at its highest in many centuries, and should have thus been the last person who felt justified to attack Hácha. (For an excellent study on this subject see Kopecký, R., "Případ Dr. Emila Háchy," in the Zpravodaj, Chicago, 1967, Nos 7-8, p. 3).

69 Hitler's invasion and occupation of the remnants of Czechoslovakia was immediately interpreted by the West as a grave error. Thus in his telegram from Geneva, dated March 18, 1939, American representative at the League of Nations, Bucknell wrote that this Hitler's "move by its revelation, even to the most skeptical, of the ruthlessness of German methods and the extent of her ultimate aims, has marked a turning point in the European situation and has rendered an eventual war almost inevitable. The Czech annexation is considered as Hitler's first great error since it cannot be justified on racial or other reasonable grounds..." (USDS, 860F.00/698).

Four months later Kennedy informed the State Department in his telegram

activity.[70] His very first step in this direction was the dispatch of his well-known telegrams.[71] He was greatly encouraged in his efforts by the statement of the United States Government issued by Acting Secretary of State Welles at the press conference held at Washington on March 17, 1939 which condemned in harshest terms the German annexation of Czechoslovakia describing it as an act of "wanton lawlessness and of arbitrary force threatening world peace and the very structure of modern civilization..."[72] President Beneš

1031 from London of July 20, 1939 that "Hitler has admitted to his own group that the taking of Czechoslovakia in March was his major mistake." (USDS, 860F.00/890).

Another four months later, even after the beginning of the war, the occupation of Czechoslovakia did not stop bothering the Nazis. This reality has been documented in Harriman's str. conf. telegram 118 from Oslo of December 22, 1939 informing that Prof. Wilhelm Keilhan, adviser to the Nobel Institute since 1922, had sent to Berlin Tryggve Gran, a personal friend of Goering because of their common interest in aviation, to ascertain the then existing opinions in leading German circles. Goering told him, among other things, that Czechoslovakia might be restored, provided Beneš be not recalled. (USDS, 740.0011 European War 1939/1314 - also 860F.01/311).

70 As Beneš had admitted himself he was very fortunate in having been at that time in the United States where he found understanding, sympathy and admiration for the Czechoslovak cause, and he was determined to do all in his power "to win these great moral and political forces in the United States to the side of the victory of our truth and never lose them again!" (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 63).

71 See note 64 of this Chapter.

72 President Beneš was especially grateful to the United States for its stand at this time since France and England, while not approving of the German action, went to some pains to point out that no question of their military intervention arose since the guarantee of the new Czechoslovak frontiers of September 1938 never became operative. The Daily Mail of March 15, 1939 went even to the extent of saying that "another big mistake made at Versailles was rectified. Europe should rejoice that more frontiers have been changed without

immediately began receiving offers of help and support from hundreds of Americans, especially those of Czechoslovak origin. Within a few weeks he answered most of such offers, expressing his gratitude and his conviction that "the time was rapidly approaching when their help in the struggle for the restoration of Czechoslovakia would urgently be needed" and explained that in similar fashion as he had done 24 years before, he was preparing all for this struggle.[73]

Having considered the new status of Czechoslovakia after March 15, 1939 "to be legally a state of war between Czechoslovakia and Germany,"[74] President Beneš began to organize the second resistance

---

resort to a big conflict." (Kennedy's telegram 331 from London of March 15, 1939, USDS, 860F.00/646).

Welles' statement which also mentioned the United States' "condemnation of the acts which have resulted in the temporary extinguishment of the liberties of a free and independent people with whom, from the day when the Republic of Czechoslovakia attained its independence, the people of the United States have maintained specially close and friendly relations..." was sent by Welles on the same day (March 17, 1939) in a telegram written in confidential code to his Minister at Prague, Carr. In an unusually display of ignorance of the situation Welles added a "strictly confidential" note to Carr:"We hope that you may be able to make this available to the Czechoslovak press and that the latter may find a way to give it publicity." (USDS, 860F.00/690A). In his telegram 52 of March 18, 1939 Carr replied to Welles from Prague: "The entire press here is under strict German control, the Gestapo is everywhere and it would be virtual suicide for anyone to publish the statement..." (USDS, 860F.00/693).

73 See e.g. President Beneš' letter from Hotel Windermere, Chicago, of April 7, 1939 to Thomas Čapek of New York, answering the latter's letter of March 20, 1939, (Thomas Čapek's Collection, MS 59-44, Ac No 10, 225, II-28-C, 1, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.).

74 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 71.

movement.[75] Personally he dedicated most of his time to conducting a vast campaign of making broadcast speeches, attending and giving addresses to huge meetings and demonstrations, lecturing at a number of Universities which were honouring him by granting him their honourary degrees; as he had himself explained, "next to the Munich period, this was one of the most active and at the same time one of the most fatiguing periods of my political life".[76] In this work he was extremely successful as is documented not only in letters he and

---

75 For details see: Ibid, pp. 69-75; the USDS' documents of the 860F.00, 860F.01 and 860F.001 series covering the period between the German occupation of Prague and the beginning of World War II, the British F.O.' documents of the F.O. 371 series, Volumes Nos. 22828, 22898, 23059 and 23081 covering the same period as the US documents and, above all, the hitherto unexplored collection of documents revealing Beneš' untiring activity in this regard which are contained in the Edward O. Tabor Papers, MS 60-3, AC. 11,040, III-21-0, 3-4, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (hereafter referred to as the Tabor Papers; Tabor was an outstanding personality in the Czechoslovak-American public life and a well-known Attorney in Pittsburgh whose merits in the Czechoslovak cause during the 1938-1948 period were legion).

76 On pp. 62-63 of his memoirs Beneš proudly went to some length to give details about his "immense work of propaganda for peace, democracy and Czechoslovakia; against what had happened in Munich". He mentioned that at some of the meetings he attended there were participating "ten, fifteen or even twenty thousand people". With apparent satisfaction he also noted that his efforts with this campaign among all classes of the American population "bore the richest fruit in every direction" after the commencement of the war.

From the Tabor Papers it is evident that the organizors of Beneš' tour which took him across the United States were doubtful whether he would be able physically to endure so much travelling, so many public appearances, addresses and lectures within such a comparatively short time. But his well-established personality trait of working hard and long hours enabled Beneš to successfully complete all the engagements as well as add to them some of his own projects, the most important of which was his determination to hold a talk with President Roosevelt before his departure from the United States.

his wife received from their old and newly acquired admirers, and in the American newspapers of the period[77] but in the fact that not only

---

To be able to return so fully and in such an impressive manner into political life - the only life he had known since 1914 - meant literally for him his own resurrection and heaven—sent opportunity of being able to successfully carry out his sacred mission of restoring Czechoslovakia in its pre-Munich shape, and no toil, no efforts were for him too hard or insurmountable to undertake and complete.

77 The Tabor Papers contain numerous letters which reflect the effectiveness of President Beneš in his undertaking. Tabor himself sent a letter to Madame Beneš of April 3, 1939 saying that meeting her and her husband in Cleveland on April 1, 1939 at the luncheon given in honour of President Beneš by the Union Club of Cleveland was an inspiration and a source of new strength and courage, adding "Your great husband made us all believe and know that there is a better world than the one now around us and with the confidence of a Hus and a Komenský, he gave us reason to believe that a new and a free world will be ours, in which the brave people of your great little nation will play their part freely..." He then attached a copy of his letter to Oliver Keller of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette of the same date in which he thanked him "for a great job for the cause of decency and democracy" because Keller was instrumental in getting out, on the occasion of Beneš' visit, a special Czechoslovak Edition of the Post-Gazette. Tabor emphasized further in his letter that "the outstanding fact about Dr Beneš' talks was that he pleaded, not alone for the freedom of his people and of his country, but for a free Order, a free Europe, in which free nations could exist. Without hatred and without desire for revenge, he asked for an Order based upon basic American spiritual values, love as against hate, good as against evil, and right as against wrong backed up by brute force. Always the optimist, he pleaded for the establishment of the principles of American democracy and felt sure that those principles would prevail..." (This letter was printed in its entirety in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette in "The People Speak" column on April 6, 1939).

Of the vast collection of American newspapers covering President Beneš' US campaign which are in the Tabor Papers, typical is the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette of April 3, 1939 which in a front-page article described President Beneš' and Mayor LaGuardia's attacks on the Nazi regime at a mass meeting held in the Cleveland Public Auditorium before more than 10,000 people on April 2, 1939. The article stated that Beneš had promised to work for Czechoslovakia's restoration "to my dying days", and had given his countrymen in the United States a message "to be good Americans. In that way you can help Czechoslovakia most. Help

Germany but also other states, hostile to Czechoslovakia, became greatly disturbed because of President Beneš' campaign in the United States, especially Hungary and Poland.[78] During this period Beneš

---

to make the greatest democracy greater and you will be helping to bring back democracy to the land of your ancestors. Successful democracy is the best answer to dictators..." La Guardia attacked sharply Germany and both he and President Beneš applauded the statement of Sumner Welles that the United States regarded Czechoslovakia's extinguishment as "temporary".

78 It is little known that President Beneš played an important part in the field of American relations with Germany, Hungary and Poland during the period of his first stay in the United States subsequent to March 15, 1939; it was mainly because of his relentless, violently anti-Nazi campaign conducted there at this time that the German-American relations, already greatly strained by the events of Munich and especially of March 15, 1939 deteriorated even further. For the influence of the March 15th event on the relations between these two countries see Chargé d'Affaires ad interim of the German Embassy at Washington, Hans Thomsen's letter of March 17, 1939 to the Secretary of State Hull notifying him of the decree of March 16, 1939 of the German Government establishing out of Czechoslovakia the so-called "Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia", and the Acting Secretary of State Welles' reply of March 20, 1939 informing Thomsen, in a curtly manner, that "the Government of the United States has observed that the Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia are now under the de facto Administration of the German authorities. The Government of the United States does not recognize that any legal basis exists for the status so indicated. The views of this Government were made known on March 17th..." - USDS, 860F.00/756).

On May 4, 1939, Thomsen reported to Berlin that "because of the present attitude of the Americans, it was impossible to expect anything else than that Beneš found wide and sympathetic understanding in the press, on radio, etc., and these voices were even stronger because of the U.S. feeling of responsibility for the creation of Czechoslovakia..." (Captured German Documents, German Foreign Ministry Pol. iv, Vol. 58/4, Political Relations between Czechoslovakia and the U.S. May 1938 - October 1940, Serial No. 3529H, Roll 1638, Neg. Frame No. E 021769, National Archives, Washington, DC).

President Beneš had also been the central figure in a serious diplomatic incident between the United States and Hungary of April 25, 1939 in which Budapest had de facto served Washington an ultimatum. (In his telegram 104 of April 25, 1939 American Minister at Budapest, Montgomery informed Washington that Hungarian Foreign Minister Csaky

received a number of letters threatening his life and he was kept continuously under police protection; these threats which came from Nazi sources soon expanded to include Beneš' supporters, organizers and even the institutions which invited him to personally address

---

had sent him a note which seemed to him to be practically an ultimatum, since it made American-Hungarian friendship conditional upon the answers to the following questions:

(1) Is it true that Dr Beneš, the "late President of the late Czechoslovak State", has formed a government in Pittsburgh which is acting as it was during the great war against Hungary, too?
(2) Is it true that the so-called American Beneš government has started to form military forces in the U.S?
(3) Is it true that the prominent official and non-official Americans are contributing to the funds of Dr Beneš' government?

Secretary of State Hull's reply to Montgomery was swift, indicating that he was annoyed: "The letter addressed to you by Csaky is so unusual a document and the questions it contained are so close to impertinent that we believe it would be best for you not to make any reply in writing. You may, however, orally point out that Mr. Beneš has not formed a "government" in the United States and that foreign recruiting of military forces on American soil is not permitted by statute. This Government will of course not tolerate any violation or evasion of our laws but it could not be expected to discuss with a foreign government the activities of officials or former officials of a country from which we still receive a diplomatic representative". (USDS, 860F.01/217). - In his dispatch 1531 of May 3, 1939, Montgomery dealt in detail with this affair and the replies given by him to Hungarian Under-Secretary Voernle).

The British considered this incident to be a very serious one, stemming from the newspaper reports from Chicago of April 18 and 19, 1939 that "Dr Beneš accepted the leadership of a world-wide movement for the restoration of Czecho-Slovak independence..." (British Ambassador Lindsay's dispatch 457 from Washington of April 20, 1939 (BFO, C 6071/7/12, FO 371/22898) and in his telegram 109, British Minister at Budapest, Gascoigne gave on April 28, 1939 all the details to the Foreign Office about the Hungarian note to, and the reply from, the American Minister. (BFO, C6227/7/12, FO 371/22898).

Almost a year later, in his dispatch 2060 of March 12, 1940, Montgomery informed the State Department that in a reply in Lower House of Parliament on March 6, 1940, Csaky talked about "a repeated attempt of Benesian Czechoslovak propaganda known from the 1914-18

their members and audience.[79]

In the field of political theory President Beneš developed during his 1939 American visit on the one hand, the origins and basis

---

World War," and mentioned Beneš' stay in the United States a year earlier. (USDS, 860F.00/941).

While President Beneš' political activities in the United States did not constitute a diplomatic incident between Washington and Warsaw as they had done between Washington and Budapest, Poland left no doubts as to its hostility towards Beneš and his American campaign. (see e.g. State Department's memorandum of conversation of September 20, 1939 between its Political adviser J.C. Dunn and Polish Ambassador at Washington, Potocki in which the latter mentioned that he felt that "Dr Beneš' activities in the United States had been an abuse of American hospitality and, according to his information, had hurt the Czechoslovak cause rather than helped". (USDS, 860C.01/508).

79 The Tabor Papers contain numerous references, in documents hitherto generally unknown, to such threats directed both at President Beneš and at those associated with, or involved in, his activities. Thus e.g. his Personal representative in the United States at that period, E.B. Hitchcock after having described in his letter to Tabor of April 27, 1939, written at Chicago, the details of planned Beneš' trip to Pittsburgh where he was to speak on the subjects of European Democracy and Czechoslovakia's significance to World Democracy (the latter to be given in the Czechoslovak Room in the Cathedral of Learning at the University of Pittsburgh which was dedicated on March 7, 1939, on the occasion of the 89th anniversary of birthday of the First Czechoslovak President T.G. Masaryk, by his son Jan Masaryk), added that because of "new information" they were forced to exercise special precautions for Beneš' safety and asked Tabor to arrange for plain-clothes protection at every moment of his stay in Pittsburgh. not to encourage any personal interviews during that time as well as to take up the matter of any delegations or individuals who may desire to see Beneš with him at Chicago before decisions were made at Pittsburgh. (President Beneš' visit to Pittsburgh on May 12 and 13, 1939 was an enormous success, and in his letter from Chicago of May 18, 1939 Beneš expressed to Tabor his sincerest appreciation for all his "planning, work and the sacrifices of his time and efforts to make this occasion the most enjoyable and profitable for the Czechoslovak cause".)

The "Národné Noviny" of Pittsburgh of May 10, 1939 stated that President Beneš had been getting threatening letters, and even the Boy Scouts Organization at Fort Wayne, Indiana, where Beneš spoke on May 6, 1939 received threats that they "would be sorry for allowing Dr Beneš to speak to them." The paper noted that police which gave

of his "Continuity Theory",[80] and on the other hand, combined the concept of the final victory of democracy over all the forms of dictatorship with that of the inevitable process of democratization of the Soviet Union[81]; having publicly exonerated that country from the events of Munich, he went so far as to proclaim that Moscow "was ready to fulfill its pledge of military assistance to Czechoslovakia even if France and Great Britain deserted the little Republic."[82]

Beneš protection, was of the opinion that those threats came from Nazi sympathizers.

Newspapers describing President Beneš' public appearances in the United States of that period noted that he was constantly under heavy guard of secret service men and police "as the result of threats made on his life from Nazi sources" (The Evening Bulletin of Philadelphia of June 5, 1939, describing Beneš' visit to, and speech given at, the Campus of Swarthmore College at Philadelphia of the same day) or that "state policemen and Hartford detectives surrounded campus because Dr Beneš' life has several times been threatened" (The Hartford Courant of June 19, 1939 describing Beneš' visit to, and speech given at, the Trinity College of June 18, 1939 on the front-page under the headline "Defeat is Predicted for Dictatorships by Dr. Beneš at Trinity".)

80 See Note 10 of this Chapter as well as the next Chapter, passim.

81 He expounded these concepts in his speeches given during his 1939 American visit, especially those given at:

(a) Cleveland to the Union Club on April 1st, and at the local Public Auditorium on April 2nd;

(b) Pittsburgh at the Syria Mosque to a special committee chaired by Pittsburgh Mayor on May 12th;

(c) Pittsburgh in the Czechoslovak Room in the Cathedral of Learning, University of Pittsburgh on May 13th;

(d) Philadelphia at the campus of Swarthmore College on June 5, 1939;

(e) Hartford at the Trinity College on June 18, 1939;

(f) Princeton at the Princeton University on June 20, 1939;

(g) New Haven at the Yale University on June 21, 1939. The Tabor Papers contain the above speeches; see also Beneš' Democracy Today and Tomorrow, completed and published also during this period; and also

For his stand towards the Soviet Union at that time as well as in the past, Beneš was branded by various groups as having been a

---

Beneš, E., et al., International Security, Chicago, 1939 - this publication contains i.a. Beneš' lectures given at the Harris Foundation at Chicago in 1939 on the general theme of "The Problems of Collective Security in European Post-war Policy": on July 5th and 6th he spoke on the Geneva Protocol, and the Locarno Pact and on July 10th he talked about the "Locarno Policy and Some Conclusions on the Problem of Collective Security".)

82 British Ambassador at Washington, Lindsay's dispatch 457 of April 20, 1939, quoting from President Beneš' interview given to Erika Mann, writer and daughter of the self-exiled German novelist, Thomas Mann, at Chicago on April 18, 1939. (BFO, C 6071/7/12, FO 371/22898). The authorized version of this interview which appeared in the Chicago Daily News of April 19, 1939 was attached to Lindsay's dispatch 476 from Washington of April 28, 1939. (BFO, C7587/7/12, FO 371/22898).

To find a truly objective answer to the question why Beneš had made this statement, concerning such Moscow's readiness to come to military assistance of Czechoslovakia, which he had well known was not reflecting the truth - a task which has so far remained undone, presented a formidable challenge to this author. There is no doubt that President Beneš well knew the truth: he had himself stated that Czechoslovakia could count on no outside help at the time of Munich: "Alas, we had remained deserted and totally isolated in the hands of our ferocious and barbarous enemy". (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p.64). His translator, Godfrey Lias made an eloquent explanatory remark to this sentence: "This is a tacit refutation of the Soviet Government's assertion that it had offered help which Dr Beneš had refused. When this book was published in Prague (in the autumn of 1947 - note by author), President Beneš was not able to speak openly on this subject." (Ibid.) This fact was further confirmed by the relevant evidence and testimony given by those who knew Beneš, and talked with him on frequent occasions after Munich - and none of them spent more time with him than Eduard Táborský, who permanently lived and travelled with him on almost every occasion during the entire period of World War II and described this phenomenon at length and with admirable clarity. (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., pp. 671-672).

Why then did Beneš knowingly take a course dealing with such a fundamental, and for Czechoslovakia vital issue which was based on untruth, or to put it in the mildest possible terms, on his wishful thinking which defied the true state of affairs? While there exists no documentary evidence which would state in precise terms Beneš' reasons for having taken such a fallacious and, in the long run, for

Communist,[83] or "Communistically inclined who was against religion".[84] Having well understood the American hatred of Communism, he vehemently defended himself against such charges by ridiculing them and

---

his country disastrous cause, this author, by having carefully examined all the available relevant evidence and testimony of witnesses, and having studied Beneš' political behaviour, arrived at the conclusion that there were three such basic reasons:

(a) He had to screen from the Americans the truth that his Russian policy was for Czechoslovakia a disaster; such a revelation would have eroded his political position (he was quite successful in this aspect);

(b) He was alarmed by the possibility of a development of overwhelming anti-Soviet public sentiment in Western Democracies, especially in the United States which would drive Moscow into a permanent alliance with Berlin - it has already been documented earlier that he had suffered an almost pathological phobia of such an alliance; to paint the Soviet Union in much better colours than the reality warranted was therefore a part of Beneš' campaign to prevent the formation of the Moscow-Berlin Axis ;

(c) He counted on Stalin's gratitude in return for his pro-Soviet stand which, as Beneš expected, would translate itself, at the time when Moscow would join the Allies in the forthcoming conflict with Hitler, into the form of an all-out Soviet support for his own political position and policy of the restoration of Czechoslovakia within its pre-Munich boundaries and which would force the West to follow suit (in this expectation he was correct).

Strictly speaking from the Realpolitik, pragmatic, utilitarian point of view, Beneš' course was a plausible and in the short-run to himself and his country even an advantageous one; on moral grounds, however, it was an undefensible one, defying the very foundation of T.G. Masaryk's political heritage which Beneš kept on so proudly and frequently claiming to have truly been following, and in the long-run it was an untenable course bound to result in another disaster for his own personality and his country. (See the subsequent Chapters of this study, passim).

83 The Tabor Papers contain such charges levelled at Beneš by various groups: the most notable of these groups was the Slovak League of America which not only branded President Beneš a Communist and protested his intention to speak in the name of Slovaks but attacked, through its Propaganda Chairman, Father Hrtánek, President Masaryk as having been an imperialist. (These charges appeared in the Pittsburgh Sun -Telegraph of May 10, 1939 and brought a vigorous reply from Attorney Tabor published in the same newspaper two days later).

by denouncing their originators and propagators, especially those in the Slovak League of America.[85] By having consistently expressed his optimism and faith in the final victory of democracy, he gained the sympathy of his listeners and with the exception of the few, predominantly pro-Nazi groups, he was able to convincingly capture

---

84 Letter from Rev. A.J. Ftaire of the Holy Ghost Fathers to Attorney Tabor of May 7, 1939. He also warned Tabor against sponsoring Beneš and his activities because the latter was "never for democracy". (Ibid.)

85 President Beneš took this line especially in his two speeches at Pittsburgh of May 12 and 13, 1939, which was one of the main centres of American Slovaks. He denounced the charge of leaders of the Slovak League of America that he was a Communist as "the greatest stupidity I have ever heard" and ridiculed it as "German propaganda", but added that "Even Hitler who had called me nearly every other name, including madman, had not the courage to call me a Communist". He stressed the point that "President Masaryk was a sincere democrat. I am his pupil, his follower and his successor..." - In his letter to Beneš of May 20, 1939, Tabor dealt with this particular aspect of Beneš' speeches at Pittsburgh. Having expressed his belief that Beneš' frank meeting of issues would strengthen those Slovaks who were willing to look at the problems involved objectively and honestly, he added: "And Heaven knows, some of them need strengthening, considering the kind of leadership which they are now blindly and hatefully following. The fact that their group sat for an hour and a half, quietly and attentively, at Syria Mosque (Beneš' first Pittsburgh speech of May 12, 1939 - note by author), although they had come to heckle and disturb, is a sign of encouragement to me..." Tabor concluded that among hundreds of letters which he received from Mayor of Pittsburgh and other politicians and officials saying how much they had enjoyed being with President Beneš, there were also many from the Slovaks.

Yet it must objectively be stated that President Beneš' contacts in the United States with Soviet Ambassador at Washington, Umansky greatly contributed to the attacks on himself as having been a Communist or a pro-Communist. Beneš admitted that after getting in touch with Umansky in April, 1939, he gave him "detailed information" based on his reports from Europe and especially from Germany and his country, and was, in turn, kept well informed by Umansky about "the future policy of the Soviet Union..." Beneš had also stated that Umansky was the only Ambassador of the Great Powers in the United States who after Munich and even after March 15th remained quite openly in touch with him

trust of the American public in his cause and in his political personality.[86] It was in this connection that he propounded for the first time the concept of the United States of Europe to be built and nourished by the same spirit of justice, tolerance, co-operation, freedom and truth which had brought into being and kept

---

and supported him whenever possible (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 134).

86 That he was truly successful in gaining American sympathies, admiration and trust witnessed not only large gatherings of people attending his addresses who subsequently documented their enthusiasm and support in their letters to Beneš and his organizers (see the Tabor Papers) on the prominence of personalities who invited Beneš to visit their institutions to confer on him their highest honours (one of the most outstanding of these was Judge Joseph Buffington of the US Circuit Court of Appeals in Philadephia who according to Tabor had two loves - his old College and Czechoslovakia. He was instrumental in having this College - the Trinity College of Hartford, conferred on President Beneš its honourary Degree of Doctor of Laws while he was standing upon the very stone which was used by Jan Hus outside of the city of Tabor for his preaching in the open fields at the end of the 14th and the beginning of the 15th centuries; judge Buffington obtained that stone pulpit from the city of Tabor (in Southern Bohemia) in 1929 and had it built into the open air pulpit at the Trinity College in order to show continuity between the old world and the new one in the matter of the re-affirmation of man's inherent right to worship freely in his own way. Judge Buffington's original invitation which came to Attorney Tabor on January 20, 1939 was forwarded in Tabor's letter to Benes to London on January 25, 1939. - During his 1939 American visit Beneš received honourary degrees from the University of Chicago, Columbia, Yale, Princeton, the Trinity College and the University of Colorado; of the citations read on these occasions, the most inspiring was the one read by William Lyon Phelps, professor emeritus at Yale which said of Beneš: "In the cause of peace this great patriot made sacrifice of his most sacred national aspiration. Greater love hath no man." The frequency of these invitations made him almost physically exhausted - in his letter to Beneš of June 1, 1939 Tabor felt obliged to ask him "not to over-do things" and to conserve his strength and energy by saying "no" to so many requests for his visits that kept on coming from so many quarters) but by the very fundamental, and indeed crucial, reality that was clearly emphasized by Speaght of the British

on sustaining the "Great American Democracy" - the United States of America.[87]

In the field of practical politics President Beneš' accomplishments during his 1939 American visit were impressive. Besides the already described successful campaign of speeches and reception of honours, he quickly became, subsequent to Hitler's occupation of

---

Foreign Office in his comment on the report of British Ambassador Lindsay from Washington of April 28, 1939 about Beneš' activities in the United States:"Dr Beneš is being very active, and as was to be expected, the U.S. authorities are making no effort to discourage him". (BFO, C 6789/7/12, FO 371/22898). It was this tacit approval and blessing given to Beneš by the U.S. Government which made his 1939 American Campaign not only possible but successful, and provided him personally with enormous political capital which was later one of the key factors which assured him the undisputed leadership of the Czechoslovak cause during World War II.

87 It was in his speech at the campus of Swarthmore College at Philadelphia on June 5, 1939 when Beneš, having departed from his prepared text, declared: "The United States of Europe will come. It must come. We must bring about this organization as soon as possible Better sooner than late..." (The Tabor Papers).

In his speech at the Trinity College on June 18, 1939 Beneš repeated this concept stating that a European Federation, a kind of United States of Europe was to be an antidote to "new regimes created by violence when the whole life of society is thrown into an intellectual chaos," and this concept was given the prominent place on the front page of the Hartford Courant of June 19, 1939. (Ibid.)

On June 20, 1939, President Beneš received an honourary degree of Doctor of Laws from the Princeton University. On this occasion he praised President Wilson who studied at Princeton "in preparation for the wider responsibilities that were to come to him" and said that "Wilson's understanding of the aspirations of my people and his aid in building my state will never be forgotten and is today more significant than ever". Having then expressed his strong belief that "democracy which is the inherent quality which makes man something higher than beast, cannot be crushed by tyranny and Czechoslovakia will be free again", he quoted the message of Comenius in the 17th century "After the temptest had passed, the rule of thy country will return to thee, O Czech people". He concluded by stating that such moment came in 1918 with the help of Wilson and American democracy and would come again.

Prague on March 15, 1939, the leading Czechoslovak political personality abroad.[88] Czechoslovak Minister at Washington, Hurban played during that period a prominent role in the Washington government circles to obtain their official tacit acknowledgement of this President Beneš' leading position.[89] This achievement was particularly painful to the

---

(New York Times, June 21, 1939). At the alumni luncheon at Yale as the guest of its President Charles Seymour (Beneš knew Seymour from the times of the Paris Peace Conference after World War I) Beneš expressed on June 21, 1939 his belief that new reorganization of Europe had to come after the next crisis "through a revival of democracy in Europe in the internal policy of the states and through a kind of federative system similar to your United States of America in European external policy. That will not be easy to accomplish and it will be a long time before it will be accomplished and perfected. But your own system had its troubles and they were not insuperable. Every serious statesman must take it into consideration, work for it, prepare for it and try to execute it." (The New York Times, June 22, 1939).

88 As early as on March 31, 1939, British Ambassador at Washington Lindsay reported in his dispatch 377 to Halifax that it seemed to him as if "Dr Beneš, with the consent, tacit or expressed, of the State Department, is supporting a kind of shadow Czechoslovak Government in the United States..." (BFO, C 4964/3955/18, FO 371/23081). - On April 20, 1939, to his dispatch 457 Lindsay attached a copy of the Baltimore Sun of April 19, 1939 which reported from Chicago of April 18, 1939 that "Dr Beneš accepted the leadership of a world-wide movement for the restoration of Czechoslovak independence..." (BFO, C 6071/7/12, FO 371/22898). - In his dispatch 476 of April 28, 1939, Lindsay transmitted an extract of the report of the Acting British Consul-General at Chicago of April 20, 1939 informing about "the creation of a new Czechoslovak National Movement in the United States under the leadership of Dr Beneš..." and that "... Dr Beneš was reported to having said he was in contact with representatives of Czechoslovakia in various countries to form a political Czechoslovak Directorium to direct the activities of the Movement..." (BFO, C 6789/7/12, FO 371/22898). - (See also Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 69-75 and 298-300).

89 In a State Department memorandum of conversation with Czechoslovak Minister Hurban of March 21, 1939, Pierrepont Moffat, chief of the Division of European Affairs wrote: "...Hurban advanced the doctrine that as his Government had disappeared and he could not obtain full powers from the Czechoslovak Government, he could act on the theory

Germans who did not miss any opportunity of attempting to destroy Beneš' position of leadership.[90]

The crown of his accomplishments of that period both in the fields of political theory and practice, was his ability, following

---

that he was the Czechoslovak Government and control its physical properties as he saw fit..." (USDS, 860F.01/204). Hurban had thus, de facto, advanced the so-called "Envoy-Theory" which Beneš described in detail in his Memoirs, note 19, pp. 99-100. However. since Hurban considered President Beneš to be the highest Czechoslovak political leader, offered him his services and followed his instructions, he did not put this "Envoy-Theory" into practice. As will be seen later, Czechoslovak Minister at Paris, Osusky, decided with the help of the French Government, to effect this theory. - In his dispatch 377 (described in the above note 88) Lindsay reported on March 31, 1939 that Hurban who refused to hand over the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington to the Germans, continued to be recognized by the U.S. Government as Czechoslovak Minister and stated he intended to keep the flag flying over the Legation. Lindsay added that Hurban who also controlled all the five Czechoslovak Consulates in the United States "looked on Dr Beneš as his Chief". -

90 Besides the already described barrage of verbal attacks, abuses and threats against President Beneš and his collaborators, one of the most ambitious attempts to discredit Beneš as the leader of the Czechoslovak Political Movement was staged on June 5, 1939 by the German shortwave radio station DJB. It was claimed that Charles Pergler, one of the early Czech leaders for independence and then on the staff of the National University, had written a letter to President Roosevelt saying that "the great majority of Czechs and Slovaks in America did not look up to Dr Beneš as their real leader." In a letter to the State Department of June 13, 1939, Pergler denied that he had written any such letter and stated the whole thing "was a sheer invention and German propaganda whose aim is to bewilder the Czechs and Slovaks in Czechoslovakia and to create confusion in their struggle against German oppression". - In a letter of June 22, 1939, the State Department thanked Pergler for his information. (USDS, 860F.001/114, /115 and /116).

his persistent efforts, so typical to his political behaviour, to be received in a private audience by President Roosevelt at his summer home at Hyde Park on May 28, 1939 - the day Beneš had celebrated his 55th birthday - and lay before him his political program for the future.[90a] Beneš, for whom this meeting represented a personal triumph and who subsequently kept on referring to this meeting on frequent occasions, especially when he was forced to fight for the

---

90a President Beneš attached an extremely important role to his talk with Roosevelt first of all because he needed to strengthen his political position. He did not say so in his "Memoirs"; the reader gets the impression that it was his friend Hamilton Fish Armstrong, editor of the Foreign Affairs who was the originator of the idea of Beneš - Roosevelt meeting. Yet this is not so. Only three days after Hitler's occupation of Prague, when the ink on Beneš' protesting telegrams (see Note 64 of this Chapter) was not yet dry, on March 18, 1939, Moffat reported in a State Department memorandum of conversation he held with Czechoslovak Minister Hurban on that day, that "Dr Beneš who had previously refrained from coming to Washington because he wished to avoid embarrassing Hurban, now desired to come to Washington and wanted to know if the United States Government saw any objection". Having received from Moffat a negative answer, Hurban then asked if Beneš could be received by President Roosevelt. Moffat replied that only the White House could give the answer and that "an appointment" would have to be sought through channels..." - In a reply to this inquiry, Under-Secretary Welles informed Moffat on March 20, 1939 in a confidential memorandum that he had consulted President Roosevelt about the desire of the Czechoslovak Legation to make arrangements for an interview with President Beneš; Roosevelt replied that he would like Moffat to say very confidentially to Hurban that "he hopes very much that in view of the present situation, Dr Beneš will not come to Washington at this time nor ask for an appointment to see him". Moffat was instructed to make it clear, however, that under different conditions the President would have been very happy to receive President Beneš and to talk with him. - Moffat wrote a note on this memorandum that he spoke to this effect with Minister Hurban who confirmed to him at 5.05 p.m. March 20, 1939 that "Dr Beneš was, for the present at least, remaining at Chicago." (USDS, 860F.00/774; 811.111; 860F.00/830).

Of great importance is H.F. Armstrong's lengthy letter to Roosevelt, dated April 20, 1939, which he gave personally to the President on May 4,

implementation of his concepts, described in a detailed manner its proceedings.[91] He stated that he had held on that day "one of my most important conversations of post-Munich times...this conversation was decisive - it contributed to the forming of my whole future policy

---

1939: in it is clearly evident that it was President Beneš who was most desirous of his meeting with President Roosevelt. Armstrong went into great deal of efforts to have Roosevelt's consent and assured him that "Dr Beneš will avoid doing anything embarrassing to the Government of the United States during his stay in this country. Specifically, he will not take any action which might precipitate events either in the former territory of the Czechoslovak Republic or generally in Europe... He had avoided visiting Washington himself in order not to cause any sort of embarrassement." (Beneš would have been more correct had he stated that "he had avoided visiting Washington himself because he was told to do so by the State Department informing to that effect, after having consulted with Roosevelt, Czechoslovak Minister Hurban -- see the above paragraph of this Note) "But he will be glad to receive any advice that may be offered privately and he, of course, is always at the President's disposal to supply any further information or to give personally any comment which may at a given moment seem useful." (PPF - President's Private File - 6011, National Archives, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.).

91 This author searched in vain for a transcript of this Beneš - Roosevelt conversation as well as those held between them in May and June, 1943. (Contrary to the statement of a German historian that "Roosevelt had a second conversation with Beneš on July 24, 1941" (Wolfe, J.H., "Roosevelt und die Sudetenfrage" in the Bohemia, Jahrbuch des Collegium Carolinum, Munich, Vol. 9, 1968, pp. 206-207) such a conversation had never taken place; and Wolfe's Note 60 in the same article (p. 207) is also completely erroneous). This search was conducted during the author's three-months' stay in Washington in the fall of 1970 in the National Archives and the Library of Congress. Having been advised by the White House Records Officer to write to the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, he had done so from Washington on October 5, 1960; he received a reply dated October 12, 1970 from James E. O'Neill, Director of this Library who stated that they had "no record of Dr Beneš' conversations with President Roosevelt on May 28, 1939 and in May, 1943. The President only rarely kept a record of his conversations..." Upon arrival at Hyde Park on November 13, 1970, the author was further informed by Director O'Neill that neither President Roosevelt's private conversations nor his talks with people who visited him privately - President Beneš' first visit was not only of private but also of "entirely

which I built up from the beginning of World War II and during its progress..."[92] Having held a meeting with President Roosevelt, President Beneš held subsequently discussions with Secretary of State

---

confidential" (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 76), nature - were ever recorded. Under these circumstances Beneš' version (Ibid., pp. 75-80) is the only version available which was written by an actual witness. Many of the points contained therein, however, have also been included in the already mentioned H.F. Armstrong's letter to Roosevelt of April 20, 1939 (see the previous note).

92 Having dealt in detail with the way he foresaw the development of the European conflict, and having presented the Soviet Union in a very favourable light which only reflected Beneš' wishful thinking coupled with his own particular reasons for doing so (see Note 82 of this Chapter) he assured Roosevelt that the Soviet Union would enter the war on the Allied side because he felt that "war between the Soviet Union and Germany was sooner or later quite inevitable", and added that the United States would also have to enter the war in any case since Europe alone could not win the war against Hitler. The most important Beneš' concepts dealt with Czechoslovakia. The then existing situation was that the Czechoslovak Republic was recognized as continuing to exist but the normal functioning of the Government was suspended. In the meantime all the main Czechoslovak legations and consulates which were continuing to function, recognized him as head of the movement to reestablish national independence. He was now in touch with leaders of the political parties in Prague and even with present Czech Government circles and his plans were made in concert with them. Beneš then explained to Roosevelt that upon the outbreak of war in Europe he intended to constitute at once a new Czechoslovak Government in the exile as well as to establish an Army and thus to repeat in a new form all the activities which were conducted under Masaryk's leadership abroad during World War I. At the end of these discussions Beneš received Roosevelt's assurance that the United States intended to direct its future policy towards the re-establishment of an independent Czechoslovakia and that even after the outbreak of a new European war the United States would continue to maintain its policy of refusing to recognize the German occupation of his country. Insofar as the granting of eventual recognition to a Czechoslovak Government in Exile and of help to the Czechoslovak liberation movement, Roosevelt stated that his country would do as much for Czechoslovakia as it had done during World War I but that the nature of this help would depend on circumstances and the actual war situation. (For further details see Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 75-80 and H.F. Armstrong's letter to Roosevelt of April 20, 1939 - see Note 90a of this

Hull and the Under-Secretary Welles;[93] these events greatly enhanced Beneš' political stature on the international political forum,

---

Chapter).

President Beneš described in detail his program for the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic in his address to Czechoslovak Legionaries held at Chicago on June 8, 1939. Having declared that the then existing situation was only of a temporary nature and that the European developments and situation would "themselves trigger a new great world conflict in which European democracy would again triumph, democracy would return and we would again be a part of the victorious front in the same way as it had been the case in the last war," he solemnly proclaimed his conceptual interpretation of the Czechoslovak political program for the future: "We are therefore not bound by the Munich Agreement on the one hand because it was never accepted constitutionally and on the other hand because it was violently and arbitrarily annuled by dictatorial Nazi Germany through the establishment of the so-called Protectorate. For us therefore it does not exist in regard to Germany. We are going into the battle for the liberation of our old fatherland and for the restoration of our old Czechoslovak Republic. We are not giving and will not give, either a de iure or a de facto recognition of any fait accompli. We will not recognize any occupation, and therefore our state continues to legally exist for us... Czechoslovakia continues to be a member of the League of Nations... All that what happened before and after March 15th during negotiations between Berlin and Prague, on the basis of which the Nazi regime announced to the world that it established in the Czech and Slovak countries a Protectorate, has no legal foundation, it was violently and fraudulently enforced... We are also not giving recognition to these acts. In accordance with our laws these are all unconstitutional acts, legally invalid, illegal, enforced by the employment of barbaric threats, and they therefore cannot affect in any form our rights of the free nation and state... We are therefore getting united for the struggle for the liberation of the nation and state... We have behind us more than 10 million of Czechs, Slovaks and Ruthenians who are today subdued by the dictatorial regime... and who are today all united in a single idea to undertake everything for the restoration of the old Republic..." (Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, op.cit., pp. 28-37).

93 During his stay at Washington (June 28-30, 1939) President Beneš visited Secretary of State Hull on June 29, 1939 and held a meeting with Under-Secretary Welles at the Czechoslovak Legation on June 30, 1939.

The author had discovered at Hyde Park among President Roosevelt's personal papers of that period a White House Strictly Confidential note

especially in England, at the time when the question of recognition of his political leadership by Foreign Governments was yet far from having been settled.[94]

Shortly before his return to Europe he had visited the Czechoslovak Pavilion at the World Exhibition in New York City where he was afforded on July 31, 1939, after having received another triumphant welcome by its Mayor La Guardia,[95] all the honours reserved only for the head of a state,[96] and was the main guest of honour and speaker on the occasion of the Czechoslovak Day held at Triborough Stadium in New York City on July 2, 1939 where its

---

dated June 29, 1939 from the Assistant to the Secretary to President Roosevelt, Kannee, that Under-Secretary Welles phoned that "Former President Beneš is here in Washington and will be here until Saturday at 1 o'clock. He has not asked for a definite appointment but has asked me to let the President know he is here and if the President desires to see him, he will be delighted". -Secretary to the President General Watson wrote under his remark: "Sorry, but can't be done." - This is one of the rarest documents which presents clearly Beneš' admirable persistence, his habitual custom of never giving up and trying to accomplish even ostensibly impossible tasks - being officially received by Roosevelt in the White House at that time was certainly one of such tasks, and while in this case he did not succeed, he had at least tried.

94 See the next Section of this Chapter - Return to England, and Chapter VI.

95 For the first of these welcomes see Note 56 of this Chapter.

96 Slavnostní Výbor, Památník Československého Dne v New Yorku 2.VII, 1939, Special Edition in Czech and Slovak, New York, 1939, p.8; also Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 134-135.

The interesting story of the opening of the Czechoslovak Pavilion was told by President Beneš himself. The question of whether or not the Czechoslovak Pavilion was to be allowed at the New York World Exhibition became a matter of negotiations and "a small diplomatic battle". This Pavilion had been prepared before the occupation of Czechoslovakia, and since the United States had not recognized this

ceremonies were carried out strictly in the spirit of the famous Sokol Slet Festivals held every six years at Prague and the last of which was held there only a year earlier under the clouds of German threat. On both of these occasions, President Beneš' addresses were overflowing with his proverbial optimism and faith in the future of his country; on the latter occasion, even after all the disasters of Munich and March 15, 1939, he proclaimed, after having announced and described unity of the Czechoslovak Political Movement abroad, his unshakable faith in the liberation and restoration of "Masaryk's Czechoslovak Republic":[97] these two events strengthened, on the other hand, Beneš' political standing among his countrymen throughout the world.[98] Physically worn out but mentally in high spirits, Beneš

---

occupation de iure, they therefore gave their consent to its official and ceremonial opening. Mayor La Guardia gave this matter his special attention and support. When the Pavilion was officially opened, President Beneš and his Minister at Washington were acting, in agreement with Washington, in the capacity of official Czechoslovak representatives "to the great discomfiture of the diplomats of the European Powers". While the State Department was officially represented, of the diplomatic corps only Soviet Ambassador Umansky took part officially in the event and then immediately invited, and personally received, Beneš during the latter's ceremonial visit to the Soviet Pavilion. With obvious satisfaction Beneš remarked about his visit: "...This caused a great sensation. And so far as we were concerned, of course, it served its purpose..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 134-135). - Beneš could have remarked, to present both sides of this story that "as far as the Soviets were concerned, of course, it served its purpose" - their purpose having been to ensure the continuation of Beneš' support of their policies which was so valuable for them because they correctly foresaw that his position and influence in the Western Democracies was bound to keep on increasing with each of the forthcoming events on the international scene.

97 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

departed on July 12, 1939 for Britain to be nearer to his enslaved and suffering country at the time of a rapidly approaching military conflict in Europe.[99]

---

98 This fact is documented in the number of letters which Attorney Tabor received from individual Czechs and Slovaks and their many organizations and institutions. (See the Tabor Papers, mentioned in Note 75 of this Chapter and subsequently). - See also Papánek, J., "Organizovanie a vedenie československého odboja v Spojenych Štátoch - 1938 až 1941" in the Proměny, New York, Vol. 2, No 3, July 1965, pp. 27-34.

99 In connection with President Beneš' departure from the United States, German Consul-General at New York Mueller sent to Berlin a truly fantastic story in his telegram 66 of July 20, 1939. He reported that a Czech German whose name was Kohaut and was unknown to him told him that he had overheard on the Pier at New York Harbour from which Beneš' ship was sailing for England, Beneš' conversation in Czech with his brother Vojta, the daughter of the First Czechoslovak President Masaryk and another, to Kohaut unknown, Czech. According to Kohaut, Beneš was going to fly from London over Holland to Poland and then allegedly intending to visit border towns and the Communist centres of Vítkovice and Kladno, and to furnish them with weapons. Kohaut then said that the unknown Czech had given Beneš a package of about $700,000 which, as he claimed he had overheard, came from the local Czechs and Jews. It is rather ironic that Mueller, in an apparent attempt to give credibility to this nonsense, concluded his report by stating that Kohaut had appeared to him to be trustworthy. (German Foreign Ministry, Czechoslovakia, Vol. 5, Serial No 2313, Roll No 1279, Neg. Fr. No 484 574, Captured German Documents, National Archives, Washington, D.C.).

2. Return to England

> ...I left the United States. I was hastening to Europe because I feared I might not arrive before Hitler attacked Poland.[100]

President Beneš' fear did not materialize - he did not arrive in England after the outbreak of the war, yet only six weeks had to elapse before this event took place. His arrival to London on July 19, 1939 did not even faintly resemble his triumphant welcome to New York City five months earlier - this time only a handful of Czechoslovaks had come to welcome him.[101] British Foreign Office was notified at an earlier date about his arrival and agreed, after having consulted with the Home Office, that while it had no objection to Beneš returning to England,[102] it would "make it clear that it was expected that he would not abuse British hospitality", and informed the Czechoslovak

---

100 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 81.

101 Táborský, E., Pravda Zvítězila, Praha, 1947, p. 246.

102 Letter from the British Embassy at Washington of June 30, 1939 informed Beneš that the British had granted diplomatic visas for the United Kingdom to him, his wife, his secretary Bohuš Beneš and their servant. (BFO, C 9737/7/12, FO 371/22898).

103 Foreign Office Minute prepared by Sargent on June 28, 1939 that he was told by the Czechoslovak Chargé d'Affaires Lisický on June 27th that President Beneš "was coming to England in July, had already taken a house in London, was going to occupy it but it was not yet known for how long." Lisický then asked whether there would be any difficulty in the way of Beneš' coming to England and whether he would be required to abstain from political activities while there. Consultation from the Foreign Office was in the form of a letter of July 7, 1939 from Kirkpatrick to Cooper of the Home Office, reply in a form of a telephone call from Cooper to Roberts of July 25th; Lisický was informed on July 28, 1939 (BFO, C9152/7/12, FO 371/22898).

Legation at London along these lines.[103] Beneš' determination to establish "the central seat of our resistance movement in London this time"[104] was not discouraged by the fact that "he found there the political atmosphere colder."[105] The second day after his return had already witnessed beginnings of the series of meetings with prominent Czechoslovak political personalities who had also managed to escape from their country, directed towards the organization of the Czechoslovak Resistance Movement abroad.[106]

Because of the Foreign Office's warning to President Beneš that "it would not be advisable to air our (ie. Czechoslovak - note by author)

---

104 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 84 - during World War I it had been established first in Geneva and then in Paris.

105 Lockhart, R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 41; yet this coldness was not of the same type to the one which had existed during his stay between October 22, 1938 to February 2, 1939 when, with the exception of the very few true friends of Czechoslovakia who had paid him a visit at that time (named by Beneš in Memoirs, p. 81) the British attitude towards him was generally governed by their feeling of hostility mixed with satisfaction and relief that his plans to involve their country in a European war were nullified and his political career was brought to an abrupt end. In the period of the six weeks following his return from the United States and immediately preceding World War II, more people came to visit President Beneš, he was asked to lecture and the British attitude towards him,while undoubtedly colder than that of the Americans, was generally governed by their feeling of uneasiness stemming from guilty consciousness of having committed a serious political blunder and embarrassment emanating from their unwillingness to admit it; yet they felt that sooner or later political events in Europe would prove Beneš correct in his stand towards Hitler. This change was brought about by Beneš' political successes in the United States (see Note 94 of this Chapter) and the events of March 15, 1939 as well as by subsequent Hitler's moves which left no more doubts about his explosive imperialist policy aiming at the conquest of Europe.

106 For details see: Táborský, E., Pravda Zvítězila, op.cit., p. 247; Kren, J., op.cit., pp. 512-527; Beneš, E. Memoirs, p. 81.

problems in public",[107] he was forced to adopt an attitude of caution and reserve. Viewed from practical politics, the climax of his stay in the British political milieu during this brief period before the outbreak of World War II was an extension, to President Beneš, his wife and the Czechoslovak Minister at London, Jan Masaryk, of an invitation by a special British Parliamentary group, sponsored by Winston Churchill and Anthony Eden, with the participation of all British political parties, to lunch and to staging of, in Beneš' words, "a small, intimate but, for the time being, private political demonstration to show that they had not forgotten Czechoslovakia or me."[108] Following Churchill's opening and moving speech,[109] Beneš declared that

---

107 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 81.

108 Ibid. In Foreign Office Minute of July 31, 1939, Troutbeck noted that he was told by Lisický on July 29th that Beneš wanted Foreign Office to be a little more specific as to what it meant by asking him "not to abuse British hospitality" and made an inquiry whether or not Foreign Office had any objections to this particular lunch. Troutbeck noted thereon: "I think it would be better not to try and define our attitude more specifically, though we could say that if Dr Beneš ever felt in doubt, we would be glad to advise him". After having stated that he had no objection to the lunch in question, and Beneš' acceptance of an invitation to lecture at the Cambridge Summer School on a non-controversial subject of "Political Philosophy", he added: "There would be an outcry in any case if we tried to stop him". On August 9, 1939 Troutbeck sent a letter along these lines to Cooper of the Home Office. (BFO, C 10944/7/12, FO 371/22898).

109 Beneš described in detail not only Churchill's moving speech during which "his eyes filled with tears," but the events of this entire occasion in his Memoirs, pp. 81-84.

in September 1938 he had felt that he was unable to stand alone against the will of Western Democracies, reminded Eden of their talk of April 1935 in Prague when he foretold him the chain of events which were going to, and actually had, passed in Europe,[110] described his American visit and asked all present not to forget the great suffering his people were undergoing at that time.

Neither President Beneš' meetings in his house in London's suburb Putney with prominent Czechoslovak political personalities when the principle of their mutual political co-operation had to be agreed upon,[111] nor his pronouncements made on such occasions went on unnoticed by the British Home Office which passed on quickly its observations to the Foreign Office.[112] From the tenor of the relevant

---

110 For the transcript of the then Foreign Minister Beneš' talk with Sir Anthony Eden in Prague on April 4, 1935 see: German Foreign Ministry, Political Archive, "Akten betreffend die Archive des ehemaligen tschechoslovakischen Staats, Ser. 2028 H, Roll 1143, Neg. Fr. Nos. 444408-444418, Capt. Germ. Docs., National Archives, Washington DC; see also Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 143-144.

111 Beneš explained this principle of political co-operation between himself and other Czechoslovak politicians when he described his meeting of July 20, 1939 with Milan Hodža: "We concurred in the necessity of consistently fighting against Hitler and of re-establishing the Republic. We decided that we would not return to the past, would not discuss nor quarrel either about Munich or about our future internal affairs or about the new organization of the State ... This would be settled later when war began, while the war was in progress and especially after the war had ended - at home. I simply did not want to begin discussing matters which I feared would immediately give rise to dissention..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 85).- It has to be noted that while this principle appeared to be quite reasonable and advantageous to the Czechoslovak cause since it greatly helped to achieve unity of the Czechoslovak resistance movement, it was mainly instrumental in preventing any effective criticism of Beneš himself or of his past activities at the time when his political position was not yet firmly

document it is evident that the British, having employed a purely pragmatic approach in regard to President Beneš' political activities

---

established and when such criticism, if left unchecked, could have had for his political personality devastating effects.

It is important to note that most of the Czechoslovak political personalities who met Beneš in London in this period regarded him to be the leader of the Czechoslovak political action because they were in agreement with the leader of the Social Democratic Party, Bechyně who, while having met Beneš for the first time in the exile in London in August 1939 told him frankly: "You have always remained for me President of the Republic..." (Bechyně, R., Pero mi zůstalo, Praha, 1948, p. 182.)

112 In a Foreign Office Minute of August 22, 1939 Jones noted that Russell from the Home Office passed on the information that on the outbreak of the war "it was the intention of Dr Beneš to proclaim the independence of Czechoslovakia and to take immediate steps for the formation of a Czech Legion".

Four of the Foreign Office members wrote their comments on this memorandum which revealed British stand to the Czechoslovak cause in general and President Beneš in particular:

1. Roberts - August 22nd: "This is hardly consistent with the understanding that Dr Beneš should refrain from political activities. But in the event of war we should no doubt be glad to use him. The information in C11663 casts some doubt upon Dr Beneš' hold over his people but I should have thought he could count upon the support of the great majority."

2. Troutbeck - August 23rd: "I have for some time been thinking that we ought to consider the question of organizing some form of co-operation with the Czechs in time of war. I believe we already have plans for stirring up the natives in Abbyssinia. The Czechs could probably, if encouraged, do as much or more to embarrass Germany as the Abyssinians could do to embarrass Italy..."

3. Jebb - August 23rd: "According to my information, Dr Beneš has already formed a sort of shadow Government in Putney! Dr Hodža and M. Bechyně are in it and the Chef de Cabinet is Bohuš Beneš who is also the organizing genius. It is, in the event of war, Dr Beneš' intention to declare this Government the legitimate Government of the Czechoslovak State and he will also ask us to put the reconstitution, in its integrity, of that state among our war aims. I think we should soon take a decision whether or not to adopt a war aim of this description. To my mind the re-emergence of that distressful and indefensible mosaic would be something to be avoided rather than desired..."

4. Cadogan - August 24th: "That may be so. We shall have a long time to think about that during the war. But for immediate purposes,

in their country, were prepared "to use" him in the event of war, to "stir up" the Czechs, along with the Abyssinians and to "back Dr Beneš" but in exchange they were not willing to go further in their commitment than to "inscribe the independence of Bohemia and Moravia on their banner"; they also had taken this position in regard to continuation of the existence of the Czechoslovak Legation in London.[113] Their prompt action to assure President Beneš' personal safety upon receiving information about German plans on his life reflected mainly their fear that without Beneš' political personality their utilitarian

---

I should have thought we might back Dr Beneš if war breaks out. We can't refuse to inscribe the independence of Bohemia and Moravia on our banner. Whether the post-war settlement should incorporate Bohemia and Moravia in a wider union or not, is not a question that we can settle off-hand now."
(BFO, C 12826/7/12, FO 371/22898).

113 In his letter to Lord Halifax of July 28, 1939, Beneš stated that he had heard that Foreign Secretary was about to consider the question of the further existence of the Czechoslovak Legation in London. Having assured Halifax that he was aware that even if HM Government were to decide not to continue its recognition of the legal status of the Legation, such action would not imply, ipso facto, its recognition of the annexation of Czechoslovakia by the Germans, he continued: "I would like, however, to draw your attention ... (that) such a decision would be a tremendous blow to our people at home, as they would all interpret it as a recognition, de iure, of the Protectorate, and a sign that HM Government has taken his final decision in this sense. The Germans, on their part, would not fail to make the utmost use of such a step for their propaganda purposes among our oppressed people... I would refer to the fate of about 10,000 Czechoslovaks in England who have never accepted the establishment of the Protectorate. Their consular affairs are still dealt with by the Legation and if it ceased to exist, they would become stateless, as they certainly would not accept a German passport..." - Halifax replied to "Monsieur" Beneš on July 31, 1939. (BFO, C 10784/7/12, FO 371/22898); see also Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 88.

concepts involving Czechoslovakia would be frustrated.[114]

The milestone in the international political events of this brief period shook the Western World yet had no effect on President Beneš - the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact of August 24, 1939; it enabled Hitler to launch his attack on Poland, to ignite World War II, and thus to fulfill the first of the series of events which Beneš foretold. Beneš' theory of the restoration of the pre-Munich "Masaryk's Czechoslovak Republic" rested on the inevitability of the Soviet Union's (as well as of the United States') participation on the Allied side in the war against Hitler and having already placed so high stakes on Stalin for such a long period of time he was neither prepared to amend his views in this aspect nor did he believe that his stand towards Russia was an erroneous one; he was preoccupied with explaining and justifying this Stalin's step.[115] Beneš explained that he was well informed ahead

---

114 Lisický informed in his letter from the Czechoslovak Legation of August 24, 1939 the Foreign Office that "the German Secret Police in Prague proposed to send emissaries to Great Britain whose presence would be detrimental to the personal safety of Dr Beneš", and asked that a Czechoslovak Air Force Officer, Řídkošil, who was then at Paris, be granted permission to proceed to London to act as body-guard to Beneš. - F.O. sent immediately a note to this effect to the Home Office. (BFO, C 12055/7/12, FO 371/22898). - In his secret letter to F.O. Secretary of State for Home Affairs, Sir Samuel Hoare granted an immediate permit for entry to Řídkošil on the same day - August 27, 1939. (BFO, C 12265/7/12, FO 371/22898).

Czechoslovak Minister at Washington, Hurban informed on August 30, 1939 the State Department that Gestapo was about to send, or had already sent to England three agents who were promised 30,000 marks each if they assassinated President Beneš. (USDS, 860F.001/120, 860F.0128/27).

115 Beneš told his Personal Secretary Táborský in the morning of August 25th: "Poland will succumb quickly, and the Nazis will achieve

of the event about the Russo-German secret negotiations and got himself invited by the Soviet Ambassador in London, Maisky - the two of whom "always helped one another in a friendly manner" - on August 23, 1939 when "the London newspapers sensationally announced the arrival of Ribbentrop in Moscow" to sign the German-Soviet Pact.[116]

---

their objective of avoiding war on two fronts. But this will be only temporary. Hitler and Stalin can never trust each other, and any deal between them is dictated solely by opportunistic reasons of a transitional character. Russia cannot afford to stand aside. She is bound to become involved sooner or later, and so Germany will end by fighting on two fronts after all." Táborský added that Beneš had spoken "in the same vein to his British friends as well as in his frequent messages to the Czechoslovak underground." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 674).

In his message to the underground movement in Prague sent on August 21, 1939 from London, Beneš stated clearly that the Soviet Union "in the end will assuredly fight against Germany and will uphold and support us politically." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, n.3, p. 158.).

116 Ibid., pp. 137-139. - Beneš was driven by his conviction that an understanding with the Soviet Union was indispensable to the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic in its entirety as well as to its security in the future: it was for this reason that he always endeavoured to see Soviet policy from the Soviet point of view and he became literally addicted to make excuses for, and put the most favourable interpretation on, all Soviet actions. He thus looked upon the Russo-German Pact as a very limited temporary affair, and the only apprehension which caused this event to him and his associates was its possible effect on the unity of the people at home. Táborský expressed these fears in asking himself several questions to the effect whether or not the Russo-German Pact would weaken the spirit of resistance to Germany in some of those Czechs who had already undergone their Calvary of extreme sufferings and thus to destroy the nation's unity, and he then remarked about this Pact: "Its first effect at home had to be quite certainly not good." (Táborský, E., Pravda Zvítězila, op.cit., p. 305). - Yet even this consideration for his countrymen at home was not a unique Beneš' reaction for no matter what event took place on the international political forum, his first and foremost thought turned always towards the effect of such event on morale and unity of his people at home - would it be good or bad for the Czechoslovak cause? There was none of that indignation and condemnation on ethical and moral grounds which Beneš and his collaborators so often practised on other issues

The most important aspect of Beneš' description of this conversation was his remark, made in a superlatively self-evident manner that so far as the developments leading to the conclusion of the Russo- German

---

save Soviet actions and which would have truly been in the Masaryk tradition.

This double-standard of judging the Soviet Union's actions vis-à-vis those of other states presents the grave accusation against President Beneš during the entire period of his Second Exile. This practice which is completely indefensible on moral grounds, bound to be observed by a true statesman, will be described in the next chapter of this study. It is sufficient to state here that it is beyond the imagination of anyone who knew or studied Masaryk that he would be able to act in like manner - he would have surely condemned the Russo-German Pact on its own merits without allowing his judgement to be influenced or overruled by any tactical or strategic consideration. In this most important aspect Beneš was not the true student and follower of Masaryk, as he used to so frequently state. (On the subject of differences between Masaryk and Beneš see: Polák, F., "Beneš a Masaryk" in the Zpravodaj, Chicago, May 1967, pp. 3-4). - Táborský provided maybe the best explanation of this Beneš' defect in his political personality. Having described Beneš' political personality "The Grand Master of Compromise", who "had to practise compromise to such an extent that it became an integral part of his personality", he stated that Beneš' long Geneva "years of negotiating compromises and devising political formulas dulled his power of moral indignation and especially the capacity to use it against those who deserved excoriation ... he was much too forbearing toward evil and wickedness in others. In that respect he definitely lacked the moral intransigence which had been so characteristic of his great teacher and predecessor, Thomas Masaryk, and he was well aware of it. 'When Masaryk came to the conclusion that a man was a scoundrel, he refused to deal with him and even to talk to him', Beneš used to tell me. 'But if the scoundrel was politically important, someone had to deal with him, and so it was left for me to do it.' And he did, unwittingly giving them undeserved respectability... His known addiction to compromise became serious weakness. There are occasions when righteous anger and brutal frankness serve one's cause better than tolerance. Once in a while the need may even arise to burn all one's bridges and make a last win-or-die stand. Such behaviour was utterly alien to Beneš; he would have considered it foolhardy, an unwarranted gamble which no responsible statesman could afford..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš," op.cit., p. 670). It follows that for Beneš it was not the issue whether or not he had considered Stalin "a scoundrel", the main point was that he had considered him "politically important" for the Czechoslovak cause and

Pact were concerned, he "took all these events for granted";[117] he was no longer interested in the Pact itself but concentrated his attention to the future developments - the Pact meant for Beneš war against Poland, and therefore against England and France - by Nazi Germany, and the events which he had predicted to Roosevelt at Hyde Park three months earlier were about to come to pass.[118]

---

went further than only to be willing to make compromises with him but even to find excuses and justifications for Stalin's actions in the Western political circles, "unwittingly giving him undeserved respectability". Before any harsh judgement is passed on Beneš because of his defects in political morality in his stand towards Russia, it must objectively be taken into account that Beneš, after having mortally been wounded by the morally bankrupt policies of Western Democracies at Munich, he had subsequently to witness their political behaviour at the lowest possible ebb; in comparison with Chamberlain and Daladier, Stalin, as seen through Beneš' lenses of wishful thinking and desperate hopes, presented a much better picture than the reality warranted.

117 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 138. - By "all these events" Beneš meant all the international developments which affected the Soviet Union and which culminated in Munich, from which Moscow had completely been excluded. In Beneš' own words "... the exclusion of the Soviet Union from all pre and post-Munich discussions was equivalent - in the Soviet view - to an attack against the Soviet Union and to an attempt to secure its complete isolation. Moscow rightly feared that this fatal step could soon lead to a military attack by Germany against the Soviet Union..." (Ibid, p.131). - Beneš thus concluded that in the circumstances Moscow "decided to follow a policy which would bring the greatest momentary security to itself and which would grant it the greatest possible freedom of deciding its future behaviour in accordance with its own interests and the march of events..." (Ibid, p. 133). - Since the negotiations between the West and Moscow had definitely broken down, as Beneš was informed, before his departure from the United States, by Soviet Ambassador at Washington, Umansky, Beneš considered the Berlin-Moscow Pact as an inevitable development but of temporary nature only, bringing about the European war in which these two Great Powers were bound sooner or later to face each other on the opposite sides. To Beneš this Pact represented "a great turning point in world policy, the beginning of the downfall of the whole Munich policy and particularly of Germany, and that the real and fateful fight for our new liberty and

Maisky did not agree with Beneš' view that the Russo-German Pact meant an immediate German attack on Poland, and having thought that neither England nor France would fight, and Poland would not dare to do so alone, he expected another Munich, this time at the expense of Poland. In the long run, however, Maisky hinted to Beneš that the Soviet Union would try to remain neutral as long as possible so that when the war was nearing its end with the two combatant sides exhausted, the Soviets could then decisively intervene "and bring about an automatic solution of European problems by means of social revolution."[119] Such a revolution presented an obvious threat to the very existence of Czechoslovakia whether before or after its restoration, and while Beneš took notice of this threat and "repeatedly warned his collaborators

---

existence was about to begin!" (Ibid., p. 138).

118 See Notes 90-92 of this Chapter. President Beneš described his first conversation with Soviet Ambassador at London, Maisky of August 23, 1939 to have been "the second decisive conversation - after that with Roosevelt - which helped me to direct my whole policy in this war. I took it for granted that for a certain length of time we would have to be prepared for the neutrality of the Soviet Union. We would have to watch events carefully, giving nothing away to anyone and be ready for a possible change later. From this standpoint I again confirmed my instructions given in my letter of June 26, 1939, to Envoy Slávik (Czechoslovak Minister at Warsaw - note by author) while I was in America to the effect that our soldiers in Poland must be prepared to retreat into the Soviet Union in case of a Polish defeat and try to remain there until they should again be able to intervene..." (Ibid., p. 139).

119 Ibid., pp. 138-139.

in Czechoslovakia against the dangers of Communist subversion",[120] the most important issue which had really mattered to him at that time and overshadowed by far all other considerations, was the fact that his theoretical expectations were gradually being translated into reality since the new European and World War became by then truly inevitable having been only a few days away.[121] And, as he well understood, without this war he had no hope for carrying out successfully his sacred mission of restoring the pre-Munich Masaryk's Czechoslovak Republic, the task to which he dedicated after the disaster of Munich his all energies, indeed his whole life.

---

120 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", op.cit., p. 675 - Táborský also presented therein the documentary evidence supporting his claim that Beneš sent at least several messages to the Czechoslovak Underground Movement at home urging them "to resist the exaggerated Sovietophile feelings and Communist propaganda", and always "to be careful". Táborský commented that he was able to cite many more such warnings which "all prove beyond doubt that, while pleading for East-West collaboration against the Nazis, Beneš harboured no naive illusions concerning Communist aims and strategy..." - On the other hand there are scholars who in the like manner as Lansing, after having attacked Beneš for his "pro-Soviet bias" but without presenting sufficiently convincing documentary proof that such was indeed the case, and not having explained the reasons for such bias, claimed that although Beneš had realized after his first meeting with Maisky that the Soviet Union was aiming at the "settlement of European problems on social revolutionary lines, he nevertheless went ahead with his plans of friendly collaboration with Soviet Russia shutting entirely his eyes to the dangers stemming from such policy..." (Lansing, A.E., Czechoslovakia's Foreign Policy, 1939-45 - A Study in Futility, An unpublished PhD thesis in the Department of International Relations, University of Chicago, 1951, p. 115).

121 For the details about President Beneš' activity during this entire period see: Táborský, E., Pravda Zvítězila, op.cit., pp. 246-319.

Chapter VI

Second World War

A. Struggle For Recognition by the Allies and For Their Rejection of Munich

1. The Question of Leadership - Towards Unity in Struggle For the Czechoslovak Cause

> ...The Czechoslovak nation has participated in this war from the very beginning on the side of the democracies... From the beginning of the war we have tried to be accepted as participants in the war with full rights, representing a State which is temporarily occupied by the enemy...[1]

Beneš' prognostications made so frequently about the inevitability, first of a European, and ultimately of a World Conflict, which formed the first of the three basic primary objectives of his post-Munich foreign policy,[2] was realized by Hitler's attack on Poland.[3] It was therefore

---

1 Beneš, E., Czechoslovakia's Struggle for Freedom, A reprint (no date) from the October, 1941 issue of The Dalhousie Review, Halifax, Nova Scotia, pp. 8 and 10.

2 See Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, op.cit., pp. 165-183; also Chapter V of this study, passim, and those sections of the two previous chapters which illustrated Beneš' consistent assertion that unless Hitler were shown a determined, united display of force by the West acting in concert with Czechoslovakia and other like-minded states, a new war was inevitable. The other two Beneš' primary objectives were: (1) the establishment of a Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile which would be granted full recognition as the only legally constituted Government of Czechoslovakia by the Allies and would receive their rejection of Munich; (2) Quest for the external and internal security for the restored Czechoslovak Republic.

3 It is an irony that by having commenced this war, Hitler could be looked upon as an actor who was willingly and well playing the role assigned to him by his arch-enemy Beneš; furthermore he was the only actor

in the Czechoslovak camp, both at home and abroad in general and in the President Beneš' entourage in London in particular where this event caused "the greatest possible rejoicings".[4] Beneš himself, having realized that the formation of a Provisional Czechoslovak Government was completely out of question as long as peace prevailed, set to establish, immediately following Hitler's attack on Poland, such a central governing body. Having dispatched a telegram to the British Prime Minister informing him that Czechoslovakia "which legally continued to exist had been in a state of war with Germany since March 15, 1939 and that it was automatically joining the Allies",[5] he concentrated most of

---

capable of playing this role to Beneš' satisfaction. Hitler played other roles of this type, the most notable of which was his foolish and unecessarily drastic employment of brutal force against the Czechs in the Protectorate without which Beneš would have never been able to become so quickly "a hero" of the Czechs, ("...it is true that German clumsiness has given to Dr Beneš' name a superficial boulevard popularity which his personality on its own merits was never able to command..." - Dispatch 246 of August 19, 1939 from U.S. Consul-General at Prague, Linnell, transmitting George Kennan's appraisal of developments in Bohemia and Moravia, USDS, 860F.00/902), and his attack on Russia which Beneš considered as his own personal triumph and greatly boosted his status and credibility in the West.

4 Táborský, E., Pravda zvítězila, op.cit., pp. 314, 324-327.

5 This telegram, dated September 4, 1939 was published by the British press on September 4th; (Ibid., p. 333). Its text as well as Chamberlain's reply are quoted in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, op.cit., p. 280 and Memoirs, p. 87), was closely scrutinized by officials of the British Foreign Office who were at some pains to compose for Chamberlain's reply an acceptable and non-committal version. Dealing with this subject, Troutbeck noted on September 4th: "...In the present telegram Dr Beneš, though implying that he is the spokesman of the Czechs and Slovaks, does not suggest in any way that we should recognize him as the head of a Czechoslovak Government..." On the same day Strang remarked: "...I should prefer not to make any reference to our war aims (whatever they may be) in our reply to this telegram from Dr Beneš who must be regarded as a

his efforts in the gradual process of uniting various groups of the prominent Czechoslovak personalities abroad[6] since without the conclusive evidence of the actual existence of such unity no recognition from the Allies could ever be received, while he continued, at the same time, to keep a close watch on, and to be in a continuous contact with, the British Foreign Office.[7]

---

private individual..." On September 7th, Sargent made a recommendation to Halifax which was accepted and adopted in the final version of Chamberlain's reply to Beneš sent on September 9th: "...I should also prefer to make a distinction between the Czechs and Slovaks and have words in Chamberlain's reply "your countrymen" substituted by "Czech nation"... (BFO, C13303/7/12, FO 371/22899).

Beneš sent similar telegrams to the Prime Ministers of France and Poland, but received from them no replies.

6 The detailed historical account of the unification of the Czechoslovak Movement under President Beneš' leadership was dealt with on numerous occasions by Beneš himself (e.g. Memoirs, pp. 89-94, 102-122; Šest let exilu, passim) or by various authors whose accounts, although influenced by their political convictions, provided basically a correct picture of efforts and struggles which Beneš had to undergo before he ultimately became the undisputed leader and was officially recognized as such by the Allies, of the Czechoslovak Government in exile. The most relevant of these are the three works of Křen, J.: Do emigrace, op.cit., passim; V emigraci, Praha, 1969, passim; "Beneš - problém politického vůdcovství" in the Revue Dějin Socialismu, Vol. 1968, No. 2, pp. 180-202; Feierabend, L.K., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu, New York, 1964, pp. 125-137, and Ve vládě v exilu I, Washington, DC, 1965, passim).

7 Because of the open hostility of the Polish and French Governments towards his personality as well as his conviction that Poland would quickly be overcome by Germany, Beneš saw in England the Allied Country which held the key position in regard to the eventual acceptance of his "Continuity Theory" and the granting of recognition to his Government in Exile as the only legally existing Czechoslovak Government; since England had been in 1938 the principal promulgator of, and participant in, the Munich Agreement, he understood that London was to play the key role in its rejection. He was equally determined to do all in his power to prepare the way for the British Government to take such steps.

It was one of the great paradoxes of President Beneš' political career that after having risen in such a spectacular manner to the highest political position within his country, during the period between his election to the Presidency and Munich, he had subsequent to the Munich disaster disappeared almost overnight from the Czechoslovak political scene, attacked and abhorred by many of his countrymen as the "Man of Munich", a man who was alleged to betray his own country.[8] In a similar fashion and at the same time his renowned position which he held for so long on the international political scene, was suddenly shattered and he became, on the European scene, an unwanted intruder who, although tolerated by England on its soil, was subjected, as a little boy, to humiliating instructions of how to behave in order to be allowed to stay therein; in his "beloved" France he was quite openly ostracized. Having undergone this Calvary of personal humiliation so closely connected with the destruction of all political ideals he stood for, and above all, of the "Masaryk" Republic which was an excruciating experience that only a man of Beneš' personality qualities was able to

---

8 See e.g. Křen, J., "Beneš - problém politického vůdcovství", op.cit., passim; Lockhart, R.B., "Some Personal Memories" in Opočenský, J., ed., Edvard Beneš, pp. 80-96: He stated, inter alia, that "To the President Munich was almost a mortal blow, and at one moment I thought he would not recover from it. But the spiritual strength that is in him pulled him through, and his character and magnanimity have been greatly strengthened by the ordeal..." (p. 91). - The most important are, however, notes made by Beneš' Chancellor Smutný during the early period of World War II contained in Otahálová L. and Červinková, M., Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943, Praha, 1966 (hereafter listed as DHCP) which bear witness to this dilemma facing Beneš at that time.

endure,[9] provided him actually with additional strength which enabled him to pursue much more effectively his political activities during the period when the question of leadership was being determined.

His way to the recovery of his former political status was no less phenomenal than its loss, although it constituted a much slower, gradual process: it had begun by his welcome in the United States early in 1939, then received an impulse by Hitler's occupation of Prague, moved ahead at full speed by the beginning of World War II and reached its zenith by having his Presidency and his Government accepted by his countrymen as well as by the international community of nations as the only existing governing body of the Czechoslovak Republic. While Beneš' struggle for the leadership took a considerable amount of time and there were moments that even his habitual optimism gave way,[10] he was always

---

9 For the details of President Beneš' political personality see the previous Chapters of this study as well as works listed in Notes 6 and 8 of this Chapter. Beneš illuminated indirectly some aspects of his suffering during that time in his Memoirs and Šest let exilu, as well as in the speeches in which he explained his program and his own personal role.

10 Křen wrote that "in the darkest periods of time, when everything had already seemed to had been lost, Beneš had also become a victim of depressions and reacted in a depressed manner as he had done, for example, on October 15, 1939 when he had offered his demission in Rambouillet park..." (Křen, J., V emigraci, p. 300). In this connection see DHCP, Document No 14, Chancellor Smutný's entry for October 15, 1939, p. 42.

On March 22, 1940, Smutný describing President Beneš' personality wrote inter alia: "...Politics is everything to him; by political opinions he is usually being shaken, in the beginnings he finds himself in a state of certain despondency, perhaps it is so only now, after he had gone through so many bitter events and perhaps it was not so before, when I did not know him so closely, but he is now reacting towards every unpleasant report very sensitively. However, this does not mean that it would defeat him. He usually waves his hand, explains it as the fate, human nature, transfers

able to recover and to continue in fighting and working out new ways in which to effect his ideas and plans, and secure for himself the position of leadership.[11]

In the peculiar atmosphere prevailing in the Czechoslovak Resistance abroad[12] there was a number of men who thought of themselves

---

himself from it to some other field from which he is able to return to this unpleasant problem but already after an interval of time and with hope for its less unfavourable solution..." (DHČP, Document No. 69, p. 91).

11 The whole drama of President Beneš' struggle for leadership of the Czechoslovak political action aiming at the restoration of pre-Munich Czechoslovakia encompasses a wide field which alone would require a special study and transcends the frame of this study; only its most fundamental aspects in their hitherto unexplored phases closely associated with Beneš' political personality are being presented in this study.

12 It was not a happy atmosphere where the legacy of Munich resulted in vast and disastrous spiritual devastation and demoralization which even Beneš was not equipped, due to his personality traits, to handle and eliminate, certainly not in the early stage of World War II. Of all the authors who dealt with some aspects of this phenomenon, its description was provided most aptly by Chancellor Smutný on March 22, 1940: "What is lacking our Resistance abroad is an atmosphere. An atmosphere of trust, friendship, mutual understanding, co-operation. Instead of that we are living in an atmosphere of continuous, universal and permanent distrust, fight, conflicts, discords, competing difficulties, struggle of all against all. It is a struggle under the cover of a false co-operation. I have not found two men who would agree on a common way of positive work. It is only where there is some criticism of others, always a malveillante criticism, that we reach an agreement. We are lacking a spiritually great man. Beneš is an outstanding tactician and strategist, the greatest Macchiavelli of the present period, but he is incapable of prevailing upon the crowds, provide them with enjoyment from their work, knowledge of unity, solidarity in the struggle, suffering and joy. He does not inspire confidence. People who come to him, feel instinctively, that there is always something not said, that Beneš is using them towards some of his plans which he does not tell them. (This very point has been repeated to the author over and over during his interviews with people who at one time or another worked with Beneš - he gave them the quite unpleasant feeling of being either unable to comprehend his plans or, what was even worse, of not being trustworthy of knowing them - in each case, unfortunately, the result was the same - people left Beneš feeling belittled or bitter - this

as having been capable of taking over its leadership and were willing to assume this role yet there were in reality besides President Beneš only three contenders in the race for leadership who could seriously be classed as such: the first and weakest of these, General Prchala whose main, if not the only supporters were concentrated in Warsaw, was quickly eliminated and had all his aspirations shattered by the swift fall of Poland to the Germans in the fall of 1939;[13] the second contender who was supported by the French Government of Daladier - Czechoslovak Minister in Paris, Osuský - caused President Beneš difficulties at times so serious that the latter had to temporarily abandon on several occasions his hopes of being able to immediately achieve some of his objectives and had to adopt instead awaiting tactics;[14] the last

---

aspect presents a very grave accusation of Beneš' political personality: the author sees the worst aspect of this situation in the fact that such a development was totally unnecessary and could have easily been overcome with just a little effort on the part of Beneš). They feel that he either trusts or distrusts them, that within himself he is finding some fault with them but is not saying it directly. People depart from him persuaded but not gained, assured, but not become fond of him. It is the fate of all egoistic people that the people deal with them according to their value but do not love them. The egoists are feared, they are even obeyed, but when disaster befalls them, they suddenly remain completely alone. This is so because when they had good fortune they were unable to understand others; at the time of their defeat it catches up with them. It is a great want of our Resistance..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 69, p. 91).

This subject was also a matter of numerous British Foreign Office memoranda as well as dispatches from the British Embassy at Paris during the period before the fall of France. (See e.g. BFO, C 15433/7/12, FO 371/22899, C 15647/7/12, FO 371/22899; C 17089/7/12, FO 371/22899; C 17236/7/12, FO 371/22899).

13 See Křen, J., Do emigrace, pp. 392-410.

14 During the period following Hitler's occupation of Prague and preceding the fall of France, Osuský's position seen from the international

serious contender, Czechoslovak Prime Minister until September 22, 1938, Hodža, who was then replaced in his office by General Syrový, should have been at least in theory the strongest contender in the race

---

point of view, was actually much stronger than that of President Beneš, since he had enjoyed recognition and support of the French Government and drew from the so-called "Envoy-Theory" his own conclusions: (see Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 99-100; also the previous Chapter of this Study) he regarded all other Czechoslovak political representatives, including President Beneš, as private persons and himself as the sole political embodiement of the Czechoslovak state and nation. Beneš admitted that this Osuský's attitude "caused us great difficulties for a long time" (Ibid).

Beneš' trip to France in October 1939 was "...a failure. He had made no progress towards recognition of his proposed Provisional Government by the French - he had not been received by Daladier..." (Lockhart's memorandum of October 24, 1939 about his talk with Beneš of October 23, 1939, BFO, C 17236/7/12, FO 371/22899). Beneš described bitterly the French Government's hostility towards his person and plans in Memoirs, pp. 89-92; see also Bullitt's telegrams Nos. 2413 from Paris of October 10, 1939 in which warned that "the United States should be extremely careful about recognizing any Provisional Czechoslovak Govermment - USDS, 860F.01/274; 2422 of October 11, 1939 about his conversation with Dr Beneš, and in which Bullitt stated that the feeling in France was that Beneš could no more be the rallying point for a revival of Czechoslovakia than Napoleon III could have been for the revival of France after Sedan - USDS, 860F.01/275; and 2440 of October 12, 1939 that Daladier had stated that "he had decided definitely that he would not recognize a Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia and he positively would not receive Beneš..." - USDS, 860F.01/277).

While Osuský seemed to be firmly entrenched in his position claiming of being "entitled to some special position of leadership in the resistance movement, to the right of independent decisions about what should and should not be done, what a particular person should, or was allowed to, do and whether he should be admitted to this or that work or official position..." (Ibid., p. 99), through the support of Paris, his position within the Czechoslovak Resistance Movement was never strong enough to provide him with any hope of becoming, on his own merit, its leader. This fact was clearly stated by the leader of the Czech Catholics, Msgr. Šrámek, during his visit at the Quai d'Orsay in October, 1939. When Champetier "began at once to hint at French objections to Dr Beneš and to suggest that Osuský might be a more suitable leader", Msgr. Šrámek replied that "Dr Beneš was the chosen leader of the Czech people, that a Czech action without Dr Beneš would be no action at all and that Osuský represented nobody but himself. If the French Government chose to put forward Osuský, this was their affair. But the Czechs would not follow him..." (Lockhart's above quoted memorandum of October 24, 1939).

Lockhart who had an excellent knowledge of the atmosphere within the

for leadership against Beneš; in practice, however, this was not the case.[15] Even disregarding all his human weaknesses, "in 1939 and 1940

Czechoslovak Resistance Movement since he was appointed on Leeper's suggestion by the British Foreign Office on September 19, 1939 to the somewhat vague post of liaison officer with Beneš and the Czechoslovaks in England (see Leeper's F.O. Minute of September 13, 1939 BFO, C 15006/7/12, FO 371/22899), had sarcastically remarked (Ibid.) that "Even if Dr Beneš were in his grave, there would be as much chance for Osuský playing a Fuehrer's role in Czechoslovakia as of a mandrill conducting the orchestra at Covent Garden..."

Feierabend correctly noted that Osuský was able to represent, according to the "Envoy-Theory" only the so-called "Second", post-Munich Republic while President Beneš represented the First, Masaryk Republic; Osuský was furthermore quite dependent on the French Government and was "a toy in their hands..." (Feierabend, L.K., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu, p. 67).

Besides the French Government, Osuský had another supporter in unexpected quarters: U.S. Ambassador at Paris, Bullitt whose hitherto unknown personal and confidential letter to President Roosevelt from Paris of September 16, 1939 brings to light Bullitt-Osuský relations and their mutual attempts to prevent Beneš in carrying out his plans. After having gleefully remarked that Beneš, who planned to set up a Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia, "naturally ran into a series of snags" because London and Paris continued to recognize the Czechoslovak Ministers as representing the Czechoslovak state and "they could see no basis for a Beneš' provisional Government except Beneš' desire to place himself at the head of something again", Bullitt provided Roosevelt with his appraisal of Beneš' status: "Moreover, nearly everyone in political life in both France and England considers that Beneš is an utterly selfish small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country..." After stating that Osuský was in charge of all the matters affecting Czechoslovakia, Bullitt urged Roosevelt that the US should adopt the same line as Paris and London and that the Czechoslovak Minister at Washington whom Beneš had "more or less in his pocket... should be told that he should co-operate fully with the Czechoslovak Minister in France who is organizing the Czech Army and is recognized by the French Government as the sole representative of the Czechoslovak State". Bullitt concluded by informing Roosevelt that Osuský "was for seventeen years an American citizen, a highly successful lawyer in Chicago and during the war one of my hired men when I was running the information on the enemy in the State Department. Indeed, the reputation I then acquired as a prophet was largely due to my use of Osuský's brains..." (The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (listed hereafter as FDRL), Hyde Park, PPF 6011).

Hodža waged a lost struggle in a lost position and moreover he did not wage it well - no wonder that he did not succeed..."[16]

Whatever impact might have had Bullitt on Roosevelt, it was not helpful to Osuský who saw all his aspirations for leadership completely wiped out by the fall of France - his only effective support.

15 The case of Hodža's aspirations for leadership and his political activity abroad is as complex as it is tragic in its character: it is impossible for an interested observer not to feel sympathy for this elderly gentleman - politician who had so much deserved for the Czechoslovak Republic. He was genuinely a human being with some of its inherent weaknesses: Lockhart who by that time knew Hodža for more than twenty years, provided one of the most fitting descriptions of Hodža's personality: "...Hodža cannot be compared as a war leader with Dr Beneš... Not even Hodža's closest friends can claim that he is a man of action. He has probably thrown away his opportunity to do good. There remains his capacity to do harm... Hodža is as different in temperament from Dr Beneš as a jovial Central European politician from a clock-work robot. He is intimate with all men. He takes even the most frigid British diplomatist by the arm and calls him "old boy". He likes the good things of life and has incurred some odium by his extravagance in exile... He has his fair share of human vanity and I have always felt that in Hodža's opinion the Czechoslovak National Committee would be a thoroughly good Committee provided that M. Hodža himself had a place of honour in it ... The answer is that while Dr Hodža can bend in every direction, Dr Beneš is as stiff as a poker. The enmity between the two men is of many years' standing. Moreover, Dr Beneš has doubts, incidentally shared by the late President Masaryk, of Hodža's moral integrity, and Hodža himself, unfortunately is aware of the existence of these doubts. I do not think, judged by Central-European standards, Hodža is corrupt but I imagine he has sometimes been careless in his accounts..." (Lockhart's memorandum of February 10, 1940, BFO C 2331/2/12, FO 371/24287). Of the five F.O.'s notes brought about by this Lockhart memorandum, three are of interest here: Roberts wrote on February 15th that "Dr Beneš would have been well-advised to be more tactful with Hodža..." - Troutbeck's note took a critical attitude towards Beneš: "It is a great pity that Dr Beneš cannot show sufficient health of mind to take the elderly and amiable Hodža into the Committee where he would be quite harmless". - Leeper wrote: "I have known Dr Beneš myself since 1918 and Hodža for the last five years. The former lives for his work and the power it brings him, depends entirely upon himself, takes his own decisions and is essentially a man of action. He has the defects of his qualities - a certain narrowness and obstinacy. There are few people who could know him intimately... Dr Beneš might have avoided this open rift by being more conciliatory and including Hodža on his Committee".

The British Foreign Office documents contain several pieces of evidence which are shattering to the image of Hodža as a political leader. Among the

In the 1939-40 period there were in play several extremely powerful forces, both in Czechoslovakia and abroad, which made President

---

most important of these are:
1. Memorandum No. 24 of February 20, 1940 in which Lockhart described his conversation with Jaromír Nečas (former member of the Czechoslovak Cabinet and until January 20, 1940 Chairman of the Price Control Board in Prague before his escape to England): "...Nečas then drew a picture of Hodža's moral decline, more shattering because it was drawn with restraint. In his younger days Hodža had been a stalwart champion of the oppressed Slovak peasantry. But the temptation of office and a taste for high living had been too much for him. There had been unfortunate money scandals, loss of reputation. The decline had set in long ago until today it had become a great personal tragedy. Nečas said that Hodža was a pathological and not a political problem; he spoke with Hodža who did not even know what he wanted, in one breath he had attacked Dr Beneš, in the next had offered to serve him 'like a dervish'. Hodža's new Czecho-Slovak National Council was a problem for the French deuxième bureau and for the British intelligence service and not for politicians. Of the members of the Council, the two most honest, Madame Sisová and General Šnejdárek had already withdrawn their names. There remained two relatively honest but unimportant members in M. Schwarz and Pauliny Toth. The others were riff-raff who were only dangerous because there are grave fears, and more than fears, that some of them are still in touch with the enemy. It was unthinkable that a sane Hodža could surround himself with such people. But whether he knew what he was doing or not, he had now burnt his boats. He would never be allowed to set foot across the Czech or Slovak border again..." (BFO, C 2829/2/12, FO 371/24287).
2. Lockhart's memorandum of March 16, 1940 concerning Dr Feierabend's (Chairman of the Czechoslovak Wheat Board and the Second Republic and the Protectorate Minister of Agriculture until his escape in January, 1940) views on Dr Beneš - Dr Hodža dissensions: "..Feierabend brought to Hodža (who is his old party colleague) a message not only from the Czech secret organization but also from Beran, the Agrarian leader, warning Hodža that he must submit to Dr Beneš' leadership or risk complete ostracism". (Lockhart then notes that in his conversations with Hodža, the latter has always claimed that Beran was his chief supporter among the home Czechs - note by author). "Feierabend said that while he was still a member of the Czech Government in Prague he had heard of Hodža's disruptive activities. Feierabend said that Hodža's activities had been unanimously condemned by the Czechs. Hodža is also in danger of losing his supporters among the Slovak Protestants and his Chief lieutenant in Slovakia, Lichner, regards so seriously Hodža's activities that he will come to Paris in order to put the views of the Slovak Protestants who are strongly Czechoslovak in sentiment, to Hodža and the National Committee.. Feierabend said that no one but a madman could have collected round him such a band of rogues as the members of Hodža's separate Committee. Those who had any claim to decency had already left him. Feierabend thinks Hodža cares very little about these members and

Beneš' victory in the leadership race just as much inevitable in its character as it was overwhelming in its scope.[17] By far the most powerful of these forces was the united "General Will" of the Czechoslovaks at home to regain their freedom in the restored pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic and their unshakeable faith that President Beneš was destined to be their next "President Liberator" in the same manner as President Masaryk was their first "President Liberator" more than two decades earlier.[18] This powerful force of the "General Will" of the Czechs gained

---

is using them only as a means of pressure to secure a place for himself in the National Committee... Feierabend is going to Paris to do his best to effect a reconciliation but will do nothing without Dr Beneš' approval..." Lockhart concluded that Feierabend was "a honest man who ever since March 1939 has been the staunchest opponent of Nazism in the Czech Government" and added that while Hodža liked him, he considered him to be "a child in political matters"...(BFO, C 4073/2/12, FO 371/24287).

3. Secret Lockhart's memorandum No. 31 of March 30, 1940 about his talks with Němec and Laušman who escaped recently from the Protectorate and who stated that the home Czechs "who were now solidly behind Dr Beneš had pledged themselves to ban party politics until the end of the war and condemned the disruptive activities of Hodža"...(BFO, C 4850/2/12, FO 371/24288). For further details about Hodža's political behaviour during this period see: DHČP, passim; Křen, J., "Hodža - Slovenská otázka v zahraničním obdoji" in the ČSČH, Vol. XVI, 1968, pp. 193-214; Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 85-90, 130n. Of interest is a State Department memorandum of conversation between Dr Hodža and Adolf A. Berle and Harold B. Hoskins of the State Department which took place at Washington on December 9, 1941 during which Dr Hodža submitted a memorandum dealing primarily with the problems of Slovakia: he emphasized that the Slovak problem was a domestic problem to be solved within the framework of the Czechoslovak state - "a self-governing Slovakia inside a Czechoslovak Republic". He stated that "an independent Slovakia of three million inhabitants would be a poor solution for everyone concerned"...(USDS, 860F.01/429 3/4). The second meeting of the same personalities took place on June 18, 1942: Hodža then explained his efforts to persuade the American-Slovak groups to support the Czechoslovak state, and made a very good impression on the two State Department officials (USDS, 860F.00/990 1/2).

16 Křen, J., "Hodža - Slovenská otázka v zahraničním odboji", p. 213.

17 The most important documentary sources dealing with this phenomenon are: DHČP, British Foreign Office documents and records of the United States

even much greater momentum by the fact that "not only the country but the Czech Government in Prague regarded Dr Beneš as their leader. At

---

Department of State. Of the several relevant works, of interest are the previously quoted: Křen, J., "Beneš - problém politického vůdcovství (1939-1940)"; Křen, J., Do emigrace; Křen, J., V emigraci; also Křen, J., "Dr Beneš za války" in the ČSČH, Vol. XIII, No. 6, pp. 797-826; Kennan, G.F., From Prague After Munich: Diplomatic Papers, 1938-1940, Princeton, 1968; Táborský, E., Pravda zvítězila; Smutný, J., "E. Beneš a československý odboj za druhé světové války" in the Svědectví, Vol. VI, No. 21; Feierabend, L.K., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu and Ve vládě v exilu I and II.

18 This subject was well described and documented by Mastný, V., The Czechs Under Nazi Rule, New York, 1971. DHCP and British Foreign Office documents abound with references to Beneš' popularity among the Czechs at home - this was the reason why this author saw it fit to describe their will by J.J. Rousseau's term of "General Will" in its strict sense.

In a lengthy F.O. Minute of December 31, 1939 about his conversation with Colonel Kolaček, the Chief of Staff of the Secret Czech Army in the Protectorate who just came to London to see President Beneš and was going to return to Prague via Paris, Lockhart wrote that "Dr Beneš is clearly regarded by the greatest majority of Czechs as their leader and enjoys a greater popularity in the Protectorate than he had ever known when he was in power"... (BFO, C 62/6/18, FO 371/24386).

A Czech author who had been during the war arrested by the Gestapo and spent years in prisons and concentration camps, gave after the war perhaps the best description of what President Beneš meant to the Czechs under the German tyranny in general and to those of them in German prisons and concentration camps in particular: "...Remember what President Beneš was to us at the time when we suffered the worst catastrophy (Munich and the subsequent German occupation - note by author) which during the twelve hundred years of our history had not yet suffered any generation of our nation... The personification of the Czech adamant faith in justice, in humanity and in our liberation in the most tragic period was President Beneš. The consciousness that President Beneš was working, that he was leading our fight for liberation, elated and strengthened all... all saw in the personality of President Beneš a firm guarantee that our cause would succeed. There was a great excitement throughout the concentration camp every time when a word got around that Beneš sent a broadcast message home, and President's words flew from mouth to mouth as a message from Heaven, weeks, even months his words encouraged, exalted, strengthened, never lost their force; through Beneš' words people became again people... President Beneš suddenly belonged to all, boundless and unconditional faith in his personality broke all old prejudices, those who had been at one time his determined enemies and obstinate opponents built then on President Beneš, and looked towards his personality, in the same way as did those who

the first meeting with his Ministers after March 15, 1939, Hácha said: 'Gentlemen, we were wrong and Beneš was right. He was the victim and not the culprit, of the policy of Munich and of the collapse of European democracy'."[19] The Protectorate's President Hácha considered himself to be only Dr Beneš' temporary successor and was prepared to immediately hand to Dr Beneš the Presidency upon his return; both Hácha and the Protectorate's Prime Minister General Eliáš continuously

---

have always been his most faithful friends and admirers. He was the hope of all of us, he worked for all and there was not a man in the entire nation who was able to stand beside him or to be able to match him. No other nation among all the European nations whose members suffered with us in shame (concentration camps - note by author) had such an outstanding personality as we Czechs had in Beneš... a venerable Monsignore, priest from Moravia, who was a serious, strict and honest man, as well as a courageous and exquisite Czech, told me there many times: "I am praying to Our Lord, giving him thanks that we have Beneš. This is our good fortune . I do not know what would happen to us if we had him not. Yes, I am praying that Our Lord would let us have him for a long time..." The horrible catastrophy which affected almost every family, brought the people near to the President. He became our "Depth of Security" and guarantee that we shall win... When I was in the Gestapo prison in Pankrác (the largest prison in Prague - note by author) I heard often, too often.. about the executions of Czech people and how our people died... many of those our people... died on the place of execution with the exclamation: 'Long live Beneš!' Most of the last sighs of our martyrs belonged to President Beneš. He was the personification of the adamant Czech faith in the victory of justice and humanity as well as of the last consolation..." (Hajšman, J., Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1946, pp. 5-7).

Lockhart wrote in his memorandum No 24 of February 20, 1940 after having talked with Nečas, one of the most prominent Czechs who had at that time just escaped from Prague: "...Nečas said that regime (Gestapo were the real rulers of Czechoslovakia) was bestial but it had united the whole Czech action with the exception of a few paid Fascists and about twenty members of the former Communist party. Until September when Hilter made his alliance with Stalin, there was a tendency to look to Russia for protection - this tendency had disappeared and today 95% of the nation was behind France and Great Britain. Party politics had been abandoned and the political situation had clarified itself to a point at which it was now possible to say with complete truth that the nation had only one leader. This was Dr Beneš. With the possible exception of M. Havelka", (this point could be disputed because Havelka stated on numerous occasions such as he did on March 2, 1940, to Beneš'

recognized Dr Beneš as the head of the state and were glad to seek his instructions.[20] This reality was truly a paradoxical one, and presented a unique situation among all the other European states overrun and occupied by the Germans, and was so typical to that part of Czech spirit which was so ably described in the "Good Soldier Švejk":[21] while

---

connections in Prague that the Protectorate Government was always with Dr Beneš and never against him - DHCP, Vol. II, Doc. 384, p. 513 - note by this author) "the Czech Government in Prague supported him to a man. Even his former enemies now admitted that he had been right and had rallied to him with remarkable enthusiasm. The Germans had helped to increase Dr Beneš' popularity. Everything they did was anathema to the Czechs. When they denounced Dr Beneš daily in language disgraceful even to any semi-civilized nation, they merely swelled his stature in Czech eyes. The few pro-Russian Communists still left in the Protectorate were also violently anti-Beneš, and these attacks had added to Dr Beneš' popularity. His prestige was such today that if he were to return to the country, he would be given a more triumphant welcome than that received by T.G. Masaryk at the end of the last war. This was a truth that no Czech in the Protectorate would deny. It would be self-evident even to the casual visitor. 'I tell it to you', Nečas said, 'with the greater conviction because... I have not always seen eye to eye with Dr Beneš and have never been closely allied with him. Today, there is no one else who counts!..." (BFO, C 2829/2/12, FO 371/24287).

In his secret memorandum No 31 of March 30, 1940 Lockhart wrote, after having spoken with two prominent Czech political personalities who had recently left Prague that "they stressed the unity of the home Czechs who were now solidly behind Dr Beneš..." (BFO, C 4850/2/12, FO 371/24288).

In a note to a F.O. Minute written by Jebb on May 7, 1940, Lockhart states on May 21, 1940 that he is informed that "Cardinal Kašpar, the chief Czech Catholic dignitary condemns the subversive activities of Hodža and Dvorník (an anti-Beneš Catholic, professor of history) and is a staunch advocate of national unity under the leadership of Dr Beneš" (BFO, C 6647/2/12, FO 371/24288).

19 Lockhart's F.O. Minute No 22 of February 18, 1940, of his conversation with Professor Klecanda and Drtina both of whom just escaped from the Protectorate (BFO, C 2661/6/18, FO 371/24388).

20 Feierabend described this reality in his first conversation with President Beneš after his escape from Prague and his arrival to London, and how delighted Dr Beneš was by his information that the whole nation, with the exception of a few communist and fascist traitors, saw in Dr Beneš their own President and placed in him their complete hope that through his own efforts in exile he would free them again in the restored Czechoslovak Republic. At the end of the conversation Beneš said that he counted with

their Protectorate Government seemed on the one hand to co-operate, although sometimes under protests and with certain reservations, with the Germans, its members were continuously at the same time, in touch with President Beneš in London asking him for, and receiving, his instructions. In this phenomenon rested Beneš' fundamental strength, of which the Germans were well aware as is so amply documented[22] but with which they seemed, in the pre-Heydrich period, to be unable to cope.[23]

Feierabend's and Nečas' participation in the National Committee in order to show the world that the Government at home and in exile are in the reality one - they work together for one objective - the liberation of Czechoslovakia, each within the means at its disposal, (Feierabend, L.K., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu, pp. 56-58).

DHČP abound with references to the collaboration of the Protectorate Government with President Beneš in London, with their acceptance of his instructions and with their sharp criticism of Hodža, Osuský and all those who were responsible for creating disunity in the Czechoslovak efforts abroad. Among the relevant documents contained in DHČP, No 432 (Vol. II, p. 594) confirms Feierabend's information about Hácha's preparedness to co-operate with Beneš, when he told a high-ranking member of the Czech Underground about whom he knew that he would pass on his words to Beneš: after having said that he felt completely exhausted and faint-hearted, he stated: "I am at your disposition, whenever you will ask me to be so. I am looking forward with joy, when I will give it (the Presidency - note by author) back. You are well aware to whom... into the paradise (meaning into the exile, to England - note by author) I will already not go with you, I remain standing at the door..."

21 Švejk is a famous personality created by Hašek in his most outstanding literary work: Švejk personifies in its entirety that type of character of which every Czech has inherited only a certain, limited but distinguishable degree: while skillfully pretending to be anxious and eager to collaborate with, and work for the Austrians (or the Germans and now the Russians), he always somehow manages to bungle everything, yet succeeds to survive even during the most adverse situations). It is of course, quite true, that there have been and are many exceptions to this rule and it would be a fallacious statement that all the Czechs have always acted as did Švejk, (Hašek, J., Osudy dobrého vojáka Švejka, Praha, 1960).

22 Thus when in the summer of 1940 Protectorate Minister of the Interior Ježek brought to the attention of the Chief of the Gestapo Boehme

The second force which enabled President Beneš to attain the leadership of the Czechoslovak Resistance Movement was generated by the British attitude towards his political personality which though governed purely by their selfish self-interests of using the Czechs in the war against Germany nevertheless correctly perceived in him the only Czechoslovak personality capable of achieving the objective of uniting the Czechoslovaks in their fight against Hitler; the British did not therefore refute him like the French but let him unhindered to pursue his aims, and at times they considered it to be of their own

---

the fact that there was at that time in the Protectorate a quiet atmosphere, Boehme replied: "I am well aware that the Czechs are now quiet but only because they are instructed from abroad by Beneš to be quiet". (Archive of the Institute of the History of KSČ (the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia) 37/24, p. 11, quoted in Doležal, J., "Partyzánské hnutí a vznik českého květnového povstání," in the Sborník Historický, Československá Akademie Věd (hereafter quoted as SHČAV), Vol. II, 1963, p. 112).

23 The period of Heydrich's reign of terror in the Protectorate was already irrelevant to the outcome of the question of leadership of the Czechoslovak Political Action abroad since by that time President Beneš enjoyed the unchallenged and unchallengeable position of its leader.

When, acting on the instructions from London, the Czechs in the Protectorate responded in the summer of 1941 by a series of strikes, sabotages and the slackening of work to a point that Heydrich had to admit that "the unity of the Reich was definitely threatened", it was Hitler himself who provided the best description of the Czechs: "...Of all the Slavs, the Czech is the most dangerous, because he's a worker. He has a sense of discipline, he's orderly... Now they will work, for they know we're pitiless and brutal" (Hitler, on January 23, 1942 in Hitler's Secret Conversations, p. 192, quoted by Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 207-208, n. 14). Luža had also correctly pointed out that in regard to the Czechs, "Hitler mixed his hatred with a strange kind of admiration", and as an example quoted Hitler saying that "The Czech State.. was a model of honesty. Corruption practically didn't exist among them. Czech officials are generally inspired by a sense of honour. That's why a man like Hácha is more dangerous than a rogue of a journalist". (Ibid). In his secret speech of April, 1944, K.H. Frank called the Czechs "the masters of underground activities" (Ibid) and during his

post-war trial in Prague he stated, referring to the German attempts to eradicate Dr Beneš' all-encompassing influence in the Protectorate during the war: "...A violently hostile stand was taken from the German side in all the Protectorate newspapers and publications... and this struggle took a political-propagandist form because the German leadership saw in his personality symbol of the Czechoslovak state and national idea and of the Czechoslovak democratic movement for freedom, of the resistance against the Reich and the idea of national socialisms, and because he himself was the originator of the idea of the continuity and restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic which he also embodied as the highest representative of the Czechoslovak Government-in-Exile. Furthermore, with progressing war years Dr Beneš' respect and popularity kept on rapidly growing in the Czech nation, by the greatest majority of which he was eventually considered to be the future hoped-for Liberator... All the struggle against Dr Beneš was futile. His great political and diplomatic successes rendered in the end every German propaganda harmless. Upon enquiry I must admit that Dr Beneš had more political and diplomatic feeling in his small finger than all the national-socialist foreign politicians with all the diplomats and officers of the German Foreign Office..." (Výkusa, K., Zpověď K.H. Franka, Praha, 1946, pp. 104-105).

It is of interest to note that in the above quotation, Frank had entirely confirmed the content of the article entitled "The Beneš Spirit" which appeared in the Central European Observer on February 16, 1940 (see notes 60 and 61 of Chapter V of this study).

In his F.O. Minute of December 1, 1939 Lockhart reported that he had seen two samples of K.H. Frank's violent anti-Czech and anti-Beneš campaigns: in regard to Dr Beneš, Frank demanded his trial in Prague for treason in absentia, and at the same time stressed Dr Beneš' failure to win any measure of support from London and Paris (BFO, C 19603/53/18, FO 371/23013).

interest and to their advantage, they were even prepared to provide him with their support which was, after the fall of France, of utmost importance.[24] This positive British attitude towards President Beneš,

---

24 It is an irony that the English who prevented a year earlier in Czechoslovakia to employ its enormous and magnificent army which in Hitler's own words was, besides his own, the best and the only fully prepared army in Europe, were now scrambling for help from that crippled, occupied and helpless state on the fate of which they bore such great responsibility; they were also interested in Dr Beneš' offer to recruit a Czechoslovak Army from the Czechoslovak refugees and nationals abroad to fight alongside the Allied Armies. On the other hand it is true that it was Beneš who initially brought up this subject in his conversation with Halifax on September 19, 1939 that "he had regarded war inevitable ever since Munich and now that it had come, he regarded it as the precursor to the certain and inevitable collapse of Hitler's system. To this end all his and his people's efforts would henceforth be directed. They had already begun to take active measures against German domination and this would steadily be continued... we were engaged 100% in a common cause, and he thought it was in the power of his poeple to render substantial help..." Halifax who had written record of this conversation stated that "...I said that I would not leave Dr Beneš in any doubt as to the great value that we attached to any help and co-operation that it might be possible for his people to give in the struggle in which we were engaged..." (BFO, C 14548/7/12, FO 371/22899). There are many instances, in British Foreign Office Documents, which clearly reflect that the British realized that only Beneš was able to be an effective Czechoslovak leader who would, in his own, and his people's self-interests, satisfy also at the same time the self-interests of London. Thus Lockhart's F.O. Minute of November 7, 1939 dealt with the aspects of the Czechoslovak leadership problem and concluded: "...For all its failings, the former Czechoslovak Republic was the most successful, the most progressive and the best governed state in Central Europe. Today, Dr Beneš is the chief Czech champion of Western democracy and more than any other Czech can lead his people westeards instead of eastwards. These considerations are... intended to invite attention to the risks and dangers which may easily arise from

while governed by British self-interests, did not reach its expression

---

an active or even passive discouragement of Dr Beneš' leadership". A Foreign Office note written on November 9, 1939 by Roberts, and signed by Jebb, Kirkpatrick, Strang and Cadogan stated that "...It is clear that there is no other effective Czech leader at present and I agree with M. Lockhart's conclusion. Without committing ourselves to Dr Beneš or to any particular solution of the Czech problem, we cannot make the best use of the Czechs without Dr Beneš' help..." (BFO, C 18016/7/12, FO 371/22899).

Lockhart was convinced from the very beginnings of the leadership struggle between Beneš, Hodža and Osuský (no one in England had ever considered General Prchala as a contender in this leadership race) that Dr Beneš would in the end be the winner, and he stated that clearly on September 27, 1939 soon after his appointment by the F.O. (see note 14 of this Chapter) of September 19, 1939: "...Although I have always recognized certain defects of Dr Beneš' character and therefore certain limitations of his popularity, he is in courage and ability undoubtedly the outstanding Czech of today. For these reasons I believe that the position of the leadership will soon be clarified and that Dr Beneš will be accepted both outside and inside the country as the leader of the national movement for liberation..." (BFO, C 15433/7/12, FO 371/22899).

A month later Lockhart did not change his opinion about the outcome of the leadership race but could not resist his urge to criticize Dr Beneš at the same time: "...I am still of the opinion that Dr Beneš will emerge as the eventual leader of the Czech Action both outside and inside Czechoslovakia. I see no other Czecho-Slovak who can command anything like the same measure of support from the Czecho-Slovak people... at the same time, there is, I believe, some evidence that Dr Beneš is acting too much as a politician and too little as a President. Nevertheless, I regard him as an indispensable leader of the Czecho-Slovak cause during the war..." (Lockhart memorandum of October 20, 1939; BFO, C 17089/7/12, FO 371/22899).

Even before the outbreak of the war, Foreign Office had one of its officers prepare a report on "Our Attitude Towards Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War" (Written by Troutbeck and dated September 1, 1939). This report tried to foresee all the possible actions Dr Beneš would attempt to accomplish after the start of the war and also took into consideration all the cons and pros of Dr Beneš' personality, and suggested the action which should be taken by London if Dr Beneš were to proclaim himself "leader of the Czechoslovaks". After having admitted that he was "far and away the most outstanding Czech figure in the world", that his supporters claimed that Czechs and Slovaks both at home and abroad were unanimously behind him, the report stated that he was personally abhorrent in several other states, in particular, Hungary and Poland, and concluded: "...we should be wise to walk warily about any official recognition of Dr Beneš, whether as leader of the Czechs or the Czechoslovaks, though in view of his outstanding position we should presumably have no option but to accept him

without encountering opposition within the Foreign Office at London[25]

---

as their de facto spokesman..." (BFO, C 13304/7/12, FO 371/22899).

It was inevitable that the British Foreign Office was greatly, but not exclusively, influenced in their dealings with Beneš by the information supplied to them by their representative Lockhart who had also provided, during that period, on February 10, 1940 the best description of Beneš' personality written by an Englishman (for the best such description of Dr Beneš by a Czech see note 12 of this Chapter - Smutný's remarks of March 22, 1940). Lockhart wrote it at the time of Beneš-Hodža conflict and compared the two personalities as seen through the eyes of an objective observer who knew the two men for many years; (for Lockhart's description of Hodža, see note 15 of this Chapter) of Beneš he said: "...For all his faults, Dr Beneš has those qualities of courage, obstinacy and supreme confidence which, however objectionable may be at a peace conference, are indispensable to a successful war effort. Dr Beneš is self-reliant and self-confident. Although he understands compromise, his whole life is governed by a rigid self-discipline and by fixed moral principles from which he never departs. He is a man of immense vitality and certain aim. He has much of the obstinacy and the tenacity of purpose of the old Scottish Covenanter. He believes in the virtues of hard work, holding that knowledge is the armour of diplomacy. At Geneva he made himself to some extent indispensable by being two moves ahead of his rivals and three or four of his friends. These qualities, admirable yet unattractive, are largely responsible for his unpopularity. It is his rigidity and his conviction that he is always right that make him so hateful to the Italians, Hungarians, Germans and to many French and English. Those who dislike him have not hesitated to accuse him of double-dealings and of dishonesty of purpose. In some cases these accusations are made in all honesty; in others they proceed from a deliberate desire to blacken the character of a redoubtable enemy... I have known Dr Beneš probably more intimately than has any other British subject. Certainly I have discussed many matters with him which touch the very core of intimacy. As far as I know, he has never betrayed a confidence. He may not always tell, but he does not lie. Yet the intimacy is cold. He is a curious, lonely figure without a real friend in the world, and in his presence even the exuberance of Jan Masaryk is subdued. Dr Beneš' picture is a difficult one to draw, but the picture of him as an unreliable crook whose word is not to be trusted and who has laid up a secret fortune for himself is an erroneous conception which can only cause misunderstandings. He is not without vanity. He feels his present position deeply. But he has courage enough never show bitterness. He knows better than any refugee I have ever met that, unless the Czechs fight for their own independence, no Power on earth will make them a present of it or put him back in the Hradčany, which in spite of his protestation is still, I imagine, the goal of his ambition. Certainly, he feels that he has a special mission to lead his people back to the model state of petit-bourgeois plenty created by

himself and T.G. Masaryk..." (BFO, C 2331/2/12, FO 371/24287).

25 The main dissenter within the ranks of F.O. in London was Jebb who was apparently influenced by Papírník's thesis (an anti-Beneš Czech) in their conversation of October 24, 1939. Papírník said that the French Government was wise in refusing to allow Dr Beneš to see anyone in authority in Paris while he was there. He stated that it was no good for Dr Beneš trying to organize a Czechoslovak Government abroad since there was already a Czech Government in existence in Prague. If there was ever any trouble in Germany, as Papírník devoutedly hoped, the people who would actually take charge in Prague would be people on the spot - it was extremely unlikely that they would appeal to Dr Beneš and his friends to come and to help them. If, therefore, England recognized any government in exile by Dr Beneš, it might be stirring up trouble for itself in the future. Furthermore, if there was to be any hope for Central Europe it was clear now that it laid in the direction of some Federal Union. Rightly or wrongly, Dr Beneš had been identified with a policy of rigid nationalism and he was anathema to all Hungarians, Poles, Austrians and to Slovaks as well. Jebb concluded that he thought there was a great deal in what Papírník said and he personally hoped that "we shall be very chary about encouraging Dr Beneš in any way"..(BFO, C 17169/7/12, FO 371/22899).

The head-on collision between Jebb and other officials of the F.O. came about as the result of Jebb's F.O. Minute of February 13, 1940 in which he dealt with Papírník's anti-Beneš remarks. In the ensuing note, Leeper from the F.O. mentioned that Papírník was a man of no importance and asked a question: "Need we pay much attention to him when we have the testimony of Czechs who have risked their lives in escaping to this country to establish contact with Dr Beneš?" Jebb, clearly annoyed by this note, retorted on March 8th: "However passionately the Department may feel that Dr Beneš is always right... I should have thought that they might at least have read Hodža's address. (Papírník mentioned it in his talk with Jebb - note by author). To my mind, the federal ideas of Dr Hodža.. are at least as worthy as the plans of Dr Beneš.. The above is a swan song since I don't propose to see Dr Papírník any more. It is a bore not conforming with the Party Line".

Jebb's above retort brought immediately harsh reaction by his Chief in the F.O., Roberts, dated March 11, 1940: "...We certainly do not think that Dr Beneš is always right but the available evidence does suggest that at present he represents the vast majority of the Czech people. He certainly does not represent the bulk of the Slovak people, but nor does Hodža. In fact so far as we can see Dr Hodža represents very little except himself and that is why we do not attribute the same importance to his ideas, however excellent they may be, as those of Dr Beneš. The essential thing for the moment is to win the war and not to propound ideal paper solutions for the post-war reconstruction

and among its officers stationed abroad.[26] Yet in the end the

---

of Europe. Czech action, particularly in the Protectorate, may help us to win the war and to that extent we must encourage the Czech leader, Dr. Beneš. There is no evidence whatsoever that the Slovaks can or want to help us..." - To this Jebb's rebuttal by Roberts, Leeper added on March 22nd: "To my mind, Robert's minute puts the position admirably. The official attitude to Dr Beneš is based on the best evidence available and on an estimate of what is most useful to us against Germany. Surely that is right."

Even defeated, Jebb was unable to resist to have the last say, dated March 23rd: "The above argument rests on two assumptions: (1) That Dr Beneš really does represent the Czechs; (2) That he could co-operate with the Poles and Austrians, both of whom detest him. - But I agree that it doesn't matter very much at the present time"... (BFO, C 2455/2/12, FO 371/24287).

26 In his dispatch 132 from Budapest of October 9, 1939, O'Malley reported that the BBC announcement of the previous day that a Czechoslovak Government may shortly be formed in London with Beneš as its President exploded like a bomb in Budapest and O'Malley said that he was lectured the previous night about the sinister results which would accrue were a Czechoslovak Government and Dr Beneš to be accorded recognition and protection by the Allied Governments; he expressed his hope that the BBC announcement was incorrect and that something could be done to remove apprehension in Budapest. He then continues: "...But...a great deal of uneasiness will continue to be felt in Hungary at any prospect of a "come-back" by Dr Beneš himself. I share this uneasiness to the full. I had the opportunity for ten years in the Foreign Office of following closely Dr Beneš' activities and with all due respect to those upon whom his charms were exercised at Geneva and elsewhere, I cannot but feel that there are few public characters in Central European politics more likely to prove a source of embarrassment to British policy in years to come than this adroit little man. I use the epithet "little" advisedly because for all his diplomatic and forensic skill I should never expect him to take large-hearted or long-sighted views of questions in which European as well as Czech interests are engaged. As pet of the Quai d'Orsay and the League of Nations Union it is difficult to see how he can be prevented from fitting onto his own head the halo to which the martyrdom of his people and their readiness to enter the present war at our side may seem to entitle him..." - Roberts noted on October 24th: "We fully share O'Malley's qualms about Dr Beneš".. (BFO, C 16878/7/12, FO 371/22899).

British realization that there just was no other Czechoslovak political personality besides Dr Beneš who fitted their own plans, overruled all other considerations and it was Dr Beneš who alone was among all other Czechoslovaks always able to get an audience with the highest-ranking Foreign Office officials or even with the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and was even then afforded many special privileges not enjoyed by others of his countrymen.[27] In summary, the British sense of pragmatism led them to the conclusion about their attitude to Dr Beneš which was defined in a concise form by Roberts of their Foreign Office: "...Dr Beneš is clearly the best of the bunch of Czech politicians, but we must continue to be very cautious in our dealings with him..."[28]

---

27 The British Foreign Office documents of the period reveal the comparative frequency and easiness of Dr Beneš' visits to Foreign Office and his audience with its highest-ranking officials. These documents also reveal special privileges enjoyed by Dr. Beneš - ranging from the exemption from appearing in person before the Registration Officer in accordance with the Alliens Order, 1939, to supplementary allowances of gas for car, special arrangements for his bodyguards and for the allowance of using the British diplomatic bag with his correspondents abroad. (See e.g. BFO, T 11552/184/378, FO 372/3336; T 14070/184/378, FO 372/3336; T 14366/184/378, FO 372/3336; T 13101/2231/377, FO 372/3327; W 14081/13818/50, FO 371/24052; C 18903/18903/12, FO 371/22904.)

28 Robert's note of October 26, 1939 in comment to Lockhart's memorandum of October 24, 1939 about his talk with Dr Beneš in regard to the latter's unsuccessful trip to Paris as well as his personal quarrel with Osuský. Talking about the necessity of unity among the Czechs abroad, Lockhart concluded: "...I do not suggest that there is any immediate need to recognize Dr Beneš' leadership. I do consider that any attempt to eliminate him cannot fail to have a disastrous effect on the efficacy of the Czech action during the war..." (BFO, C 17236/7/12, FO 371/22899).

On his own part, Beneš was quite capable of bringing the Foreign Office in the situations where they were unable to do anything else than to go along with his plans and actions. Thus e.g. Strang wrote in a F.O. Minute of October 26, 1939 that Dr Beneš suggested to BBC that he

Besides all his personal traits and abilities, Dr Beneš' greatest asset in the British eyes was his direct contact with the Protectorate Government and his following there;[29] and he never missed an opportunity to emphasize this reality in places and to persons where it mattered the most.[30] In this sphere of political activity on which London placed

---

should broadcast on the evening of October 28th, (marking the 21st anniversary of the Czechoslovak independence); BBC agreed, subject to F.O.'s approval and Peake from BBC asked thereafter Strang for his views. Strang felt as having been put by Beneš over the barrel: "...This is a very tiresome development. If we refuse our assent, Dr Beneš will see that this is known and there may be questions in Parliament. If we raise no objection to his broadcasting we cannot be sure he will not cause us embarrassment. He is quite capable of suggesting that the negotiations for the formation of a provisional Government, and the prospect of its recognition by Great Britain and France, have reached a more advanced stage than is, in fact, the case. On the whole, I think it would be better to let Dr Beneš talk than to raise objection. Mr. Peake tells me that it is quite normal for him to see the text of such a talk before it is delivered and that he would certainly do so in the present case and refer it to the Foreign Office in case of doubt". After Cadogan's approval, arrangements were made to this effect, and Dr Beneš succeeded in having his own way; (BFO, C 17349/7/12, FO 371/22899).

29 This fact was confirmed on numerous instances by officials of the F.O., such as e.g. by Roberts' note of November 8, 1939: "...With all his faults, Dr Beneš appears to be the only experienced and really able leader among the Czech exiles. We understand that he has recovered lost ground in "Czechia" and he alone among the exiles has any real following there and is in direct contact with the present Prague Government"..(BFO, C 17805/7/12, FO 371/22899).

30 Early after the outbreak of the war, Dr Beneš emphasized in his conversation with Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Halifax the fact that "he was now in direct contact with the existing Czech Government at Prague who were now firm supporters of his activities, with the exception of one member. He added that the Czech Government were in fact supplying him with funds... He said that... ever since March 15, 1939 his former political opponents had been rallying to his side and he claimed that now he definitely represented the whole nation. He felt it is his duty, therefore, to building up of the organization which would carry on the task of Czech liberation but as soon as this had been achieved he would step back and leave the people to choose their new ruler"... (Halifax' record of conversation with Dr Beneš of September 29, 1939 - BFO, C 15436/7/12, FO 371/22899).

such a great importance, Beneš was entirely unique among all the Czechoslovak political personalities abroad and this reality made the outcome of the leadership question, in so far as the British were concerned, a foregone conclusion in Dr Beneš' favour.

Hitler personified the third force aiding Dr Beneš to attain the leadership because not only did he effectively unite all the Czechs at home, with the exception of a few Fascist and Communist traitors, behind President Beneš' leadership - a feat which Dr Beneš himself had tried so desperately yet unsuccessfully to achieve during his Presidency

---

In his letters to Sargent and Cadogan (My dear Sir Alexander) of October 30, 1939, Dr Beneš stated that he had received, through his secret radio connection with Prague, on October 27th and repeated on October 28th very important news and the government circles and his friends in Prague asked for his opinion and instruction which he had given on October 29th. Dr Beneš then gave all the details. In his reply of November 3, 1939 Cadogan thanked Dr Beneš for his letter, told him that he had shown it to the Secretary of State who asked Cadogan to say "that he was much interested to hear of this and of the communcations which have passed between you and the Prague Government..."
Of importance is a F.O. note by Roberts, of November 1, 1939, seen and signed by all the involved officials of the Foreign Office, including Halifax, which after praising highly Dr Beneš' efforts and attitude concludes: "...This letter, incidentally, provides useful evidence of the contact between Dr Beneš and the Government in Prague..." (BFO, C 17595/53/18, FO 371/23011).

British F.O. documents reveal a number of further Dr Beneš' letters of similar nature which were sent on quite frequent intervals (his next letter, following the above mentioned of October 30, 1939 was followed by his letter to Cadogan on November 5th - BFO, C 17944/53/18, FO 371/23012) as well as a whole series of Lockhart's F.O. Memoranda and Minutes.

prior to Munich - but also because he had effectively eliminated, by his military conquest of Poland and France all the opposition, with the exception of Dr Hodža who had eliminated mainly himself,[31] to Dr Beneš' leadership, whether it had originated, prior to this conquest, from the anti-Beneš' Governments of those two countries or from the two contenders in the leadership race, acting under the auspices of those Governments, Prchala and Osuský. While it is certain that even without the fall of those two anti-Beneš countries and their Governments Dr Beneš would have eventually attained the leadership of the Czechoslovak Action anyway, it would have taken a much longer period of time and he would have been forced to overcome many more obstacles, which Hitler had effectively removed.

Finally Dr Beneš had that ingredient in his political personality which had already expressed itself during the time of his mental depression in the spring of 1938 when he had sought a refuge among the Czechoslovak high-school children to whom he gave a very important

---

31 Hodža certainly did not help his cause by the way in which he had conducted his personal affairs in the exile. While the author had seen numerous criticisms of Hodža's behaviour emanating from people closely associated with Dr Beneš, he has certain doubts whether or not these judgements were prejudiced. Yet the fact remains that the English who were the only ones in position to provide him with their support, were, unfortunately, well aware of Dr Hodža's personal life and this aspect actually formed another reason why they supported Dr Beneš. In his F.O. Minute of November 7, 1939 Lockhart wrote: "...There is much to be said for the elimination of the elderly party politicians. Hodža, in particular, has not added to his reputation by his mode of living in exile. He takes his mistress with him everywhere and is said to spend far more money than any other Czech or Slovak emigré..." (BFO, C 18016/7/12, FO 371/22899).

address.[32] It definitely was a psychological factor of utmost importance providing him with enormous inner energy and élan which all his other opponents completely lacked, and which they neither comprehended nor were even aware of. By not having children of his own, he completely persuaded himself and honestly believed that he was the "Great Father" not only of all the Czechoslovak children, in the same way as a Catholic priest considers himself to be the "Father" of all the children in his class or church, but of all the Czechoslovaks. While this feeling was one of his most closely-guarded personal secrets, there had occured during his American tour in 1939 one of the rarest instances when he made this so highly-guarded secret of his innermost personal feelings known to an eleven-years old boy in Kansas who had written to Beneš on June 10, 1939 telling him that he had heard and read about him a great deal and asked him to write him about his children. Dr Beneš' answer to this boy is absolutely unique both in its, from him totally unexpected, emotional effects as it is in its supremely sincere and the matter-of-fact fashion in which it was written:

> "...I wish I could tell you that I have a lot of children, but I haven't... there are more than 10,000,000 people over in Czechoslovakia who are looking to me to take care of them; just about as your father and mother take care of you. I am doing all I can to help them to live in a free country such as the United States..."[33]

---

32 See Chapter III of this study.

33 Hitchcock, E.B., op.cit., pp. 333-334. - It defies all the imagination that anyone else but Beneš would have been able to make such a statement - (note by author).

2. Dr Beneš' Triumph - Recognition Granted - Munich Rejected

> ...Once again we have an internationally recognized new Government. Once again the international status of the Czechoslovak Republic has been recognized... Without recognizing Munich or any of its consequences, we are advocating and will continue to advocate the principle that the Czechoslovak Republic... continued to live and exist even after Munich... For us, my departure from office and country has no legal validity... for us, there was legally no destruction of the Republic... I declare to be non-existent and illegal everything that we have been forced to do illegally and unconstitutionally since September, 1938...[34]

When President Beneš was able to broadcast from London these words to his suffering nation, he had behind him more than two years of incessant, humiliating, irksome, vexatious and requiring the patience of Job's struggles and negotiations with the British.[35] Having observed the developments surrounding March 15, 1939 when Hácha and Chvalkovský were forced to sign a proclamation by which they placed the fate of the Czech Nation in Hitler's hands and tacitly recognized the separation of Slovakia,

---

34 President Beneš' broadcast to the Czechoslovak Nation from London of July 24, 1940, following the recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government by the British Government on July 21, 1940, quoted in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 52-53; also in Memoirs, p. 114.

35 For an excellent description of these struggles and negotiations between Beneš and the British, written by the man "in the middle" during this entire period, see: Lockhart, Sir R.B., Comes the Reckoning, London, 1947, and his "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", in the Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 28, No. 70, November 1949, pp. 39-50. In the former work he speaks about Dr Beneš having persistently been subjected to "irritating delays and minor humiliations" (p. 106), in the latter that "at times Dr Beneš' patience was to be sorely tried, but he never lost it" and that before the fall of France, in order to please the anti-Beneš French Government, "mark time and keep Dr Beneš quiet were the orders of the day"... (p. 44).

Beneš foresaw that he would have to undergo, in the similar way as he had to in World War I, "the Calvary of winning step-by-step international recognition ab initio for a new revolutionary Government and State..."[36]

The hostility of the French Government towards Dr Beneš' personality[37] and his plans for the formation of a provisional Czechoslovak Government as well as its open support of his political opponents, enabled him to concentrate all of his efforts in London;[38] it was only after the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government by England on July 21, 1940 that President Beneš began to take steps at Washington aiming at the similar recognition by the United States.[39]

---

36 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 57-58.

37 Dr Beneš explained this hostility on the grounds that both Daladier and Bonnet had even at that time held to their Munich-policy line, and while they had been forced to come to the aid of Poland "against their will", they had hoped for a quick peace with Germany and then to turn Hitler against Soviet Russia. "In order to realize this aim, they were ready to sacrifice Czechoslovakia once more and, in some new form, Poland also". Beneš mentioned that having been himself "a symbol of pre-war Czechoslovakia" and its policy towards Hitler, the French found it impossible to associate in any way with him, and that he was told that after Munich, Daladier "did not dare to look me in the face. No wonder..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 90-91; see also Bullitt's telegrams from Paris quoted in note 14 of this Chapter).

38 See Note 7 of this Chapter; also Kennedy's telegram 1917 from London of October 4, 1939 about his talk with Beneš in which he explained to him his plan of organization of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government as well as of the Czechoslovak Army in France - (USDS, 860F.01/273).

39 See Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 175-180. This did not mean that Dr Beneš had done nothing at an earlier date: he had made unofficial enquiries at the State Department through his Minister at Washington, Hurban, as early as October 9, 1939. His main points stated in a conversation with Moffat of the State Department were that since there had already been created a Czechoslovak Army in France, it was obvious that it had to have leadership of a political character, and since it most likely would be

Soviet Russia, which during the period between the conclusion of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and Hitler's attack on Russia, openly collaborated with Berlin and condemned the 'imperialist war', made any such recognition by Moscow completely unthinkable.

During the early period of the war Dr Beneš' struggle for the recognition of a Czechoslovak provisional government was intermingled with his fight for the leadership of the Czechoslovak Resistance Movement to such an extent that until July 21, 1940 these two questions were seen by the British as a single phenomenon, and were treated by

---

termed a "Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia", he wanted to know what would be the U.S. attitude towards it, since he was not certain, if the United States as a neutral country could recognize such government. While he hoped that the U.S. would recognize it, Hurban pointed out he would "thoroughly understand the U.S. legal position if it found that it was impossible to do so." The main thing he wanted to avoid is to put the United States in a position of having to announce that it could not recognize such government. Unless, therefore, he could be informally assured that recognition would be granted, he would decide not to notify the U.S. Government of the creation of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in any formal document. - A week later, on October 16, 1939, Moffat received again Hurban and gave him Secretary of State Hull's reply which emphasized that there were so many difficulties for a neutral Government of a legal nature to extend such recognition that he hoped that the Czechoslovak Minister would not raise this subject formally with the United States Government; (Moffat's Memoranda of conversation with Hurban of October 9th and 16th, 1939 - USDS, 860F.01/276).

On November 15, 1939 Hurban visited again the State Department and spoke with Moffat about the failure of Dr Beneš to get France's approval to his plan to establish a Czechoslovak Provisional Government, stated that there was "a clash of personalities between Osuský and Beneš" and that the main reason for the French attitude towards Dr Beneš was that "he typified for them their own guilty conscience. One does not like to have a perpetual reminder of one's failure to honour one's obligations forever in the neighbourhood..." (Moffat's memorandum of conversation with Hurban of November 15, 1939 - USDS, 860F.01/305).

them as such.[40] Their procrastination in granting to Dr Beneš the recognition of any Czechoslovak central organization, although on September 29, 1939 Halifax told Beneš that "His Majesty's Government would be ready eventually to recognize a central organization but for this purpose they would have to be assured that this clearly represented the Czech nation",[41] stemmed mainly from their fear of committing themselves, even indirectly, to the restoration of

---

40 Thus already Troutbeck in his F.O. report entitled "Our Attitude towards Czechs and Slovaks in Time of War" of September 1, 1939 stated: "...The indications are that Dr Beneš will at an early date (a) proclaim the independence of Czechoslovakia perhaps with himself as head of Government established for the moment in this country..." (BFO, C 13304/7/12, FO 371/22899).

Writing on October 4, 1939 to his Ambassador at Paris, Phipps, about his first two conversations with Dr Beneš, held on September 19th and 29th, Secretary of State Halifax set down this practice of always treating these two subjects as if they were in reality only one: "...while receiving Dr Beneš and his offers of support very sympathetically, I have been careful not to commit His Majesty's Government to any recognition of Dr Beneš' personal position or of the Czecho-Slovak Provisional Government which he claims is being set up..." (British Cabinet Document, 63/98, 4689).

41 Halifax' letter to Phipps of October 4, 1939 (see the previous note).

Czechoslovakia's independence within Dr Beneš' meaning of this term.[42] In the fall of 1939 the British Government was determined not to recognize, under any circumstances, any provisional Czechoslovak Government.[43] Dr Beneš was forced to temporarily abolish his plans for the creation of a Czechoslovak provisional government and accept the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee first after experiencing extraordinary difficulties by France on November 17, 1939, and after encountering further difficulties, by England on December 20, 1939.[44]

---

42 There is ample documentary evidence that even before the outbreak of the war the British were well conversant with Dr Beneš' objective of restoring the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic. Thus already Troutbeck in his F.O. report of September 1, 1939 (see note 40) noted that Dr Beneš would after the outbreak of the war press England to proclaim the restoration of Czechoslovakia's independence as one of its war aims and warned that it would have to be made clear what was meant by Czechoslovakia since in the absence of a direct statement to the contrary, "Dr Beneš would mean pre-Munich Czechoslovakia, as he is par excellence the exponent of the theory that the ancient Kingdom of Bohemia is indivisible..."

43 This information was given to Dr Beneš by Lockhart only on March 14, 1940 (see DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 96, p. 87).

44 It is impossible to deal within the frame of this study with all the historical data concerning the whole subject of all the enormous difficulties encountered by Dr Beneš during the period before July 21, 1940. But even then his difficulties were not over - he and his provisional government was only a second-class entity in comparison with all the other exiled Allied governments which were stationed during that time in England. Only the most fundamental aspects of this drama or those which have remained hitherto unknown, and which affect Dr Beneš' political behaviour, are dealt with in this study. For the detailed study of this period, see: Křen, J., V emigraci (this work must be read with great care because of its pro-Communist and pro-Soviet orientation, and the reader must not forget that during that period the Communist traitors attacked Dr Beneš that he had collaborated with Hitler - see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 143); see also DHČP, British Foreign Office documents and the US State Department documents of this entire period.

The irony of the British recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee lies in the fact that it was a preventative measure - it was

---

The best legal work is Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, pp. 64-101. Of interest at this point is the Czechoslovak-French Agreement of October 2, 1939 regarding the reconstitution of the Czechoslovak Army in which Táborský saw "the most significant legal act relating to the Czechoslovak cause, from the outbreak of the war to the recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee," (Táborský, E., Ibid., p. 67); this agreement (a) re-established an autonomous Czechoslovak Army fighting under its own standards and making an oath of allegiance to the Czechoslovak Republic; (b) the completion of this Army was to be effected according to Czechoslovak laws and recruitment and enlistment were carried out by the Czechoslovak authorities; (c) the agreement was signed by Daladier (Prime Minister, and at that time also Foreign Minister and Minister of War) and by the Czechoslovak Minister in Paris "in the name of the Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia." The French Government thus openly acknowledged that it did not consider the so-called Government of "the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia" and the Slovak Government to be truly governments as understood within the meaning of international law, and by the conclusion of this agreement, it expressed its recognition, in principle, of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government (this Government had neither been established nor recognized, and in its place was subsequently instituted, and recognized by France and Great Britain, the Czechoslovak National Committee to which was transferred the function of executing this Agreement).

That the British who were absolutely opposed to any formation or recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government (see the previous note) were annoyed by this agreement, the copy of which was sent to them by Beneš on October 3, 1939 (Beneš' letter to Sargent, BFO, C 15647/7/12, FO 371/22899) demonstrated Phipps' explanatory telegram 751 of October 6, 1939 and Roberts' note of October 7th to the effect that "...the French Government have nevertheless recognized the "provisional government of the Czechoslovak Republic" by allowing Osuský to sign an agreement with them on behalf of this government..." (BFO, C 15880/7/12, FO 371/22899). In his F.O. Minute of October 23, 1939 Roberts summarized the situation concerning Dr Beneš and the "Czecho-Slovak" Provisional Government and mentioned that on October 5th Phipps had requested the French Government not to commit themselves in any way to Dr Beneš without further consultation with England; (BFO, C 17299/7/12, FO 371/22899).

Dr Beneš had told the French press in Paris on October 6, 1939 that "he had come in the name of the Czechoslovak nation to express profound gratitude to Daladier and the French Government for the October 2nd Agreement..." (Phipps' dispatch 1385 from Paris of October 9, 1939, BFO, C 16221/7/12, FO 371/22899).

granted, in the form of an exchange of letters between Dr Beneš and Halifax, only after the British Foreign Office began to fear that in case of the dissolution of the Czech Government in Prague by the Germans, they would be forced by Dr Beneš to recognize the Czechoslovak Provisional Government.[45]

Křen noted this early recognition eliminated all the doubts as to the restoration of Czechoslovakia and the formation of the Czechoslovak Government abroad, that it produced an enormous impact in the Protectorate where its illegal press already talked about "the established and recognized Czechoslovak Government under Dr Beneš' leadership"... (Křen, J., V emigraci, pp. 73-74).

45 The basis of these British fears about the dissolution of the Prague Government by the Germans emanated from Beneš' information provided to Lockhart on November 30, 1939 in which he mentioned, i.a. that Dr Beneš expected a sensational announcement, in a near future, of the German discovery in the Protectorate of one of the cells of the Czech "Maffia" - the secret society for the restoration of Czechoslovakia - whose members were officials of the Czech Government in Prague, followed by a public trial and the dissolution of the Czech Government. Lockhart then wrote a sentence which truly reflected Dr Beneš' Macchiavellism (which was described by Smutný - see note 12 of this Chapter): "...Dr Beneš has always hoped that the Czech Government in Prague may be allowed to continue its activities until the time is ripe for the recognition of a Provisional Government abroad by the French and British Governments". - Dr Beneš' Macchiavellism was as thorough in its connotation as it was in its effect; this was, de facto, his only effective weapon in his frustrating, time-consuming and almost incessant squabbles he had waged with the British in regard to the recognition, first of a provisional, and then of a fully de iure recognized, Czechoslovak Government. The British reaction foreseen by Dr Beneš was immediate: Lockhart expressed it in his conclusion of his memorandum: "...Should the situation which Dr Beneš fears now arise, two consequences are inevitable: communications between the home Czechs and Czechs abroad will become more difficult and dangerous. We shall be faced with new requests to approve a Provisional Government on the ground that the chief objection to its recognition has been removed". Before writing his memorandum, Lockhart passed on Dr Beneš' information orally to Roberts on November 30, 1939 who immediately wrote his own memorandum which clearly expressed the British fears: "...If such a development were to occur, Dr Beneš and the Czech emigres would then have a stronger case than they have now for requesting recognition as a provisional government. I think, therefore, the quicker we can get our

Beneš was prepared to begin the struggle for the British recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government almost immediately after he had received from them their recognition of the Czechoslovak National Committee;[46] having felt, however, that the then existing political situation was not favourable for such an action, he concentrated his efforts towards achieving harmony among the Czechoslovaks abroad and between himself and Hodža[47] as well as towards making the Czechoslovak

---

exchange of letters signed, recognizing them merely as a national committee, the better. I am pressing the other Departments concerned for early replies to our recent letters". (Lockhart's note is of Dec. 1, 1939.)

In a note of December 1st, seen and signed by Halifax on the same day, Cadogan concurred with Roberts: "In the event contemplated, it certainly might be rather difficult to resist Dr Beneš' claim". On December 5th, Roberts stated: "I recently submitted a short summary of this. We are submitting the exchange of letters with Dr Beneš to the War Cabinet this week".

Of all the staff members of the F.O. only Kirkpatrick remarked on December 6th about his suspicion of Dr Beneš: "I suspect Dr Beneš of wishing to put pressure on us"..(All the above material is included in BFO, C 19603/53/18, FO 371/23013).

46 Beneš was extremely unhappy about the final text of the document recognizing the Czechoslovak National Committee by the French Government because Paris' intention to limit the activities of this Committee solely to Army affairs and had vainly tried to have it amended by Paris, and thereafter by London. (See Cadogan's F.O. Minutes of November 11, 1939 about his talk with Dr Beneš of the same morning - BFO, C 18322/7/12, FO 371/22900- and of November 13, 1939 in which Cadogan mentioned that "Dr Beneš pleaded that he should be allowed to put into his communication something... about the object of the Committee being to carry on the struggle for the liberation of the Czechoslovak Republic" but he refused and asked Dr Beneš to "adhere verbally to the Paris text" in his notification. After the French recognition Dr Beneš suggested to Ripka that the Committee should ask that the document be kept secret and not be published in its precise text because with so little "we can appear neither before the public at home nor, and especially, before the Army"...-Smutný's dispatch of November 13, 1939, providing Ripka with Beneš' instructions, DHČP, Vol. 1, No. 37, p. 65.)

47 During the entire first period of Dr Beneš' squabbles with the British in regard to the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government which ended by receiving at least their recognition of the Czechoslovak

National Committee at Paris, in which he was experiencing a consistent opposition towards his personality and tactics, a more harmonious and effective body.[48]

National Committee, the British had persistently kept telling him that before they would consider such requests, the Czechoslovaks abroad would have to be united and their leadership question definitely settled; (see F.O. documents of the entire period). Beneš knew that the British did not change their attitude and would point out to him, more than ever before, to the disunity among the Czechoslovak exiles and it was mainly for this reason that he concentrated his attention on this subject early in 1940.

48 Thus Smutný prepared a report entitled "J'accuse" in which he stated that the National Committee was mainly responsible for the moral and political stagnation of the Czechoslovak Action. "The National Committee is in a permanent opposition towards Dr Beneš. The people who confirm and write ten times every day that Beneš is our leader, practise only the contrary to that of what they say... The National Committee knows that Beneš holds the nominal responsibility for it. It knows that regardless of what foolishnesses it will commit, they will be corrected by Beneš and it also is aware of the fact that this Beneš will stop it in time before it commits some incorrigible foolishness which would discredit our cause here. However, by employing a permanent opposition towards Beneš' tactics, by its own tactic which emanates from the policy of inexperienced birdbrains, the National Committee caused the present moral and political decomposition and lack of success in our action... The National Committee is hiding behind democracy, that they have also the right to be heard. It is hiding behind that, that they in Paris must better know the internal situation, their own strength and that of those rogues from the National Committee such as Osuský to be in a better position to judge what is proper and tactical than Beneš. Unfortunately, in every case it is possible to note ex post facto that Beneš saw better, advised better and chose better tactics and that the National Committee did all that what was wrong.

"It is possible to freely and correctly criticize Beneš. He has his own human weaknesses as any other human being. He has unpleasant qualities which can distance him from some people, even make him unsympathetic... But against all of that stands the fact that it is the only political head amongst ourselves, the only man who sees further than the doorstep of the room in which he sits, the sole man whose work has a consistent line from which he does not deviate under the pressure of events, the magnificent tactician. This is being felt by our people who are convinced that their fate is well placed in Beneš' hands.

"The National Committee does not understand this reality - and if it understands it, it does not act accordingly. The National Committee is an adhesion, an incidential adhesion of the several individuals whom the fate and circumstances placed in a position before Beneš so that he would make

The second period of President Beneš' struggles for the eventual full recognition by London of a Czechoslovak Government in-exile was comparatively a brief one because Hitler's overwhelming victories on European battlefronts which climaxed with the fall of France and the necessity, for Dr Beneš, of taking a vigorous action to rescue the Czechoslovak Army fighting in France enabled Beneš to reach his objective much earlier. This period of Beneš' fight for the

---

out of them, in the eyes of foreign countries which needed some Czechoslovak representative body, his co-workers... to the great misfortune of our cause all the functionaries of the National Committee... are convinced, though in an uneven measure, and also at different intervals with a greater or smaller intensity, about their equality with God, respectively with Beneš, and even at times that they are more clever than Beneš..." (Smutný's devastating indictment of the National Committee "J'accuse", dated April 18, 1940, DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No 86, p. 106). - (Care has to exercised, however, about totally accepting these sweeping charges which were made by Smutný at the time when the spiritual devastation among the Czechoslovaks abroad caused by Munich and by Munich policy architects and exponents who at that time still occupied high positions in the political life of England and France, reached its zenith and provided Smutný with horrid spectacle - but his ruthless, sweeping charges demonstrate only clearly that even he fell victim to this legacy of Munich which engulfed also, and especially, Dr. Beneš himself, and Smutný's comparison, though indirect, between God and Beneš, made in the last sentence quoted here, is particularly untrue and unfortunate - note by author).

British recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government had begun, however, still under the old hostile English regime[49] and before Hitler was able to sweep away the anti-Beneš French Government in Paris, by Beneš' visit to Cadogan on

---

49 British F.O.'s hostility towards any Beneš' plans aiming at the unity among the Czechoslovaks by enlarging the hopelessly narrow powers and, in comparison with other exiled Governments, the astonishingly inferior status, of the Czechoslovak National Committee, reached at times almost pathological levels. Thus in his F.O. Memorandum 37 of April 16, 1940 Lockhart informed the F.O. that Dr Beneš had given him a draft of his new scheme for the reorganization of the Czechoslovak National Committee and the creation of the Czechoslovak National Council in which he had hoped to include all former ministers, senators, deputies and all other prominent Czechoslovaks who were abroad; Dr Beneš himself would remain outside and above both of these bodies; his position would be that of "the recognized foreign representative of the home Czechs in their struggle for independence". Although Dr Beneš' arguments were quite convincing and received Lockhart's wholehearted support concluding in a typical English cautious but still pleading note: "...A little encouragement would assist these ends without involving us in new committments", F.O.'s reaction was immediate and hostile: "There is a little too much emphasis on the ultimate goal of a Provisional Government for my taste..." (Roberts - April 18th); "Our best advice we can give to Dr Beneš is that the Czechs and Slovaks abroad will do no good until they sink their differences and act together". (Strang - April 20th). - The latter is a cynical remark - while the English kept on consistently frustrating any Dr Beneš' plans to achieve that unity they kept on, at the same time, saying that until such unity will have been achieved, F.O. would offer no help or encouragement - Note by author ; (BFO, C 5750/2/12, FO 371/24288).

One of the main reasons while Lockhart supported in his above memorandum Dr Beneš' plan was the fact that it provided a position of the Vice-Presidency of the National Council for Hodža and this would have brought to an end Beneš-Hodža political animosity. Lockhart who kept on his contacts both with Beneš and Hodža during the entire war period even during the times when these two political opponents did not talk to each other, "kept on bringing to the attention of the two of them that so long as there existed discord between Beneš and Hodža, it would provide the evidence of disunity in our camp and there would be no chance for the idea of a government"... (Smutný's note of April 24, 1940, DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 91, p. 110).

April 26, 1940 during which he stated that all the existing difficulties facing him and Czechoslovakia were created by the absence of any properly constituted Czechoslovak authority and that the only solution of this problem was the establishment and recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government abroad.[50] He submitted on that occasion to Cadogan his lengthy "Memorandum about the Present Status of the Action for Liberation of Czechoslovakia".[51] Cadogan who promised Beneš that his views would be examined, received a unanimous F.O.'s agreement that it was "premature" to consider such a proposal at that time and sent a month later his letter to Beneš to this effect.[52] While "the first six

---

50 For the details about this conversation see Cadogan's F.O. Minute of April 29, 1940; (BFO, C 6283/2/12, FO 371/24288).

51 This is a remarkable document written by Dr Beneš at the time when he was specially distressed by the hostility and lack of understanding of the whole Czechoslovak problem and his own personal dilemma in this drama. It presented clearly and concisely the then existing political situation in Czechoslovakia and in the exile, the legal status of Czechoslovakia and the arguments for the establishment and recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government; Dr Beneš pleaded his case well but it was made at that time to deaf ears. (For the entire text of this document see DHCP, Vol. 1, Doc. 93, pp. 111-116).

52 These items are attached to the document listed in note 50 of this Chapter.

months of 1940 were a testing period for Dr Beneš' nerves",[53] he was nevertheless greatly encouraged by the swiftness of, for England, militarily disastrous events - after the British fiasco at Norway they finally got rid of the architect and proponent of Munich par excellence - Chamberlain, and with the advent of Churchill to power, the F.O. had been forced to radically change its attitude towards Beneš and the Czechoslovaks. It is almost comical how the same proponent of Munich, Halifax who had written just a few short weeks earlier to Beneš that any idea of the formation and recognition of a Provisional Czechoslovak Government was premature, wrote on July 1, 1940 a Secret War Cabinet Memorandum in which he refuted all his previous arguments against, and adopted most of the earlier Dr Beneš' arguments in favour of, the formation and recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government.[54] On July 21, 1940 Halifax' letter to Beneš conferred on the Czechoslovak Provisional Government the British recognition,[55] followed two days later by Prime Minister Churchill's

---

53 Lockhart, R.B., "Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", p. 47.
This apparent set-back did not discourage Dr Beneš in his efforts and he wrote that "in May, June and July these verbal and written discussions (in regard to the recognition of a Czechoslovak Provisional Government - note by author) between the British Foreign Office and myself continued..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 103).
Dr Beneš had also stated to Smutný on April 30, 1940 the reason why he asked for, and spoke to Cadogan only about "a Provisional Czechoslovak Government": "...I want to ask for little in order that I would not scare them off; therefore also for a Provisional Government only, not for a Czechoslovak Government"...(DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 97, p. 118).

54 War Cabinet document, CAB 67/7, 4689, W.P.(G.)(40) 168.

55 See BFO, C 7646/2/12, FO 371/24289 - This volume contains the complete set of documents concerning the British recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government by a letter addressed by Lord Halifax to Beneš;

announcement on this subject to the House of Commons[56] and a day later by Beneš' famous broadcast to the Czechoslovak Nation.[57] The second period of Beneš' struggle for the full recognition of the Czechoslovak Government in-exile was successfully over.

The third period began for Beneš almost immediately after receiving the British recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government. Lockhart, who was at the same time promoted to the "British Representative with the Czechoslovak Provisional Government", noted that after the recognition of July 21, 1940, Beneš "began at once to make his preparations for his next advance: full recognition of a Czechoslovak Government which would represent the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak State from August 1938, and the annulment of the years after Munich..."[58]

---

besides this letter it contains the Record of Conversation between Halifax and Dr Beneš when the latter "expressed his profound gratitude for the above letter, a series of Parliamentary Questions on this subject by Mr. Mander, the latest being addressed to Prime Minister Churchill on July 23, 1940 and the Prime Minister's answer that the recognition of the newly-constituted Provisional Czechoslovak Government was granted in Halifax' letter to Dr Beneš on July 21, 1940.

56 Hansard, House of Commons, July 23, 1940, Vol. 363, Col. 614; also quoted in Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 301.

57 See note 34 of this Chapter.

58 Lockhart, R.B., "Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", p. 47.

President Beneš' next move, however, was to direct his attention to Washington and to make there, through his Minister Hurban, confidential enquiries whether the Czechoslovak Provisional Government could also be recognized by the United States.[59] The official attitude until that time towards the Czechoslovak National Committee was that "while the United States recognized the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington as the visible symbol of the existence of a state, the freedom of which had temporarily been suppressed, the United States could not well, as a neutral, recognize as the Government of Czechoslovakia a Committee formed outside the country and which had no constitutional continuity with previous governments".[60] While Beneš

---

59 Minister Hurban sent such enquiries on August 16 and 17, 1940 (USDS, 860F.00/959 and 860F.00/960 respectively).

60 This statement was made by the Chief of the State Department's European Division, Moffat to Hurban in Washington on February 14, 1940, when the latter had brought up the question of whether or not the U.S. would recognize the Czechoslovak Committee as the Government of Czechoslovakia (USDS, 860F.01/314). As the result of this conversation Hurban then advised Dr Beneš not to press this matter further for the time being; (see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 175).

Washington's policy was in the aspect of Czechoslovakia and its Minister in the United States consistent and beneficial to the Czechoslovak cause: although it contained the largest Slovak ethnic group in the world outside Slovakia, unlike England and Soviet Russia, the United States never recognized the "Slovak State" though it was subjected to many demands to grant such recognition and to exchange diplomatic representatives; see e.g. Steinhardt's telegram 311 from Moscow of March 19, 1940 which is important in the extremely cautious approach exercised in this matter by this U.S. diplomat in Russia. After having said that the Slovak Minister called on him, Steinhardt emphasized the fact that he "received him informally in conformity with the practice set forth in the Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol. II, pp. 675-676 "and that he would not return his call. The Slovak Minister solicited Steinhardt's good offices in transmitting to the State Department the desire of the Slovak Government for recognition by the Government of the U.S. Steinhardt who was later to become American

well understood that this would be a very delicate, difficult and time-consuming matter to achieve because of the United States' neutrality, he was encouraged by the unwavering American policy towards Czechoslovakia - "the legal continuity of the Czechoslovak State had never lapsed so far as the U.S. Government was concerned".[61] He was not, however, discouraged that the initial reaction of the State Department was not a favourable one.[62] He had complete confidence in his Minister at Washington, and Czechoslovakia's friends throughout the United States who would, acting on his instructions, eventually succeed in obtaining Washington's recognition.

Ambassador in the post-war Czechoslovakia (it is for this reason that the author deals in detail with this Steinhardt's personality trait - that of an overly cautious bureaucrat) replied that the question being a matter for determination solely in Washington, he was only able to report this request to his Government (USDS, 860F.01/326).

61 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 176.
Beneš was well aware of the fact that the Americans were keenly interested not only in the situation existing in the Protectorate which was supplied to them on the regular basis from their consulate in Prague by Linnell (see the USDS documents in the 860F.00/ series, notably Nos. 940, 946, 947, 950 and 951), but also in the developments affecting the Czechoslovak Cause abroad. Thus in his dispatch 5575 of July 11, 1940, Herschel Johnson (Counselor of the US Embassy at London) provided a detail information about Parliamentary questions and answers on the subject of the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government, particularly the exchange between Mr. Mander and Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs which took place in the British House of Commons on July 10th; (USDS, 860F.01/346).
In his telegram 2379 of July 24, 1940, American Ambassador in London, Kennedy informed Washington about Churchill's announcement of July 23rd in the House of Commons on the subject and emphasized Churchill's remark that "there may be certain differences of form but in principle there is no difference" in the relative position of the Czechoslovak Government and the Polish and other governments established in England; (USDS, 860F.01/345). Johnson sent on the same day in his dispatch 5669 the full text of Churchill's announcement as it appeared in Hansard for July 23rd; (USDS, 860F.01/351).

62 Moffat's State Department Memorandum of August 22, 1940 had recommended that the Government of the United States should not recognize,

President Beneš was not spared, however, even in the United States, of his "Calvary".[63] After a half-year period of waiting when Beneš decided that time was ripe for further move in Washington, Atherton of the State Department flatly rejected any idea of the U.S. Government changing its position regarding "the Czech National Committee".[64] This attitude displayed by the State Department presented such a distressing situation to Beneš that he immediately prepared an enormous memorandum to Secretary Hull, which was handed to him personally by Hurban on March 14, 1941.[65] At the same time Beneš' personal trait

---

at least for the present, "the Beneš Government as the Government of Czechoslovakia" (USDS, 860F.00/961).

63 See note 36 of this Chapter.

64 State Department Memorandum prepared by the Acting Chief of the Division of European Affairs, Atherton about his conversation of February 18, 1941 with the First Secretary of the Czechoslovak Legation in Washington, Červenka indicates that this meeting was a very unpleasant one, caused by the almost brutal manner of Atherton's behaviour; he consistently kept on talking about "the Czech National Committee" instead, as he well knew, for more than a half year there was in existence the, by Britain recognized, Czechoslovak Provisional Government. He also stated that Ambassador Biddle, who had been appointed to all the exiled Allied governments in England, had not been appointed to Beneš because "there was a lack of continuity surrounding his 'Government' or Committee at London, a condition which does not exist in connection with our relations to the other governments to which Mr. Biddle is accredited..." (USDS, 860F.01/374).

65 Minister Hurban felt that this Dr Beneš' 18-page document required a summary which he attached in the form of his own 2-page memorandum which emphasized Dr Beneš' most important points, among which was the thesis that before the organization and recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government, the U.S. Government's attitude was perfectly understood and fully appreciated by the Czechoslovak people. Since then, however, the negative attitude of the U.S. Government towards the Czechoslovak Provisional Government under the Presidency of Dr Beneš whose resignation, tendered under the extreme duress, was completely invalid,

of diligent persistence in achieving his chosen objective demonstrated itself in commencing a series of personal visits to the newly appointed American Ambassador at London, Winant, who "showed a very positive attitude towards us from the outset and helped Czechoslovakia very effectively in Washington".[66] Having thus secured not only the

---

has had the most unfavourable repercussions in the struggle against German domination. In his memorandum of conversation with Czechoslovak Minister Hurban which took place on this occasion, Secretary of State Hull wrote that he told Hurban that he and his associates would be glad to give the fullest consideration to these memoranda and assured him that the U.S. Government and people were just as friendly and cherished the same deep interest towards Czechoslovakia that they did towards "any other country in similar distress..." (USDS, 860F.01/367).

Secretary Hull had considered this Dr Beneš' memorandum so important that he kept a copy of it in his own personal papers. (Cordell Hull Papers, AC. 9681, II-15-H, - M, 3; Container 57, Folder 200, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress).

66 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 176.

President Beneš could not have been more correct about the new American Ambassador in London. After the disappearance of one of the foremost American exponents of the Munich-policy, Kennedy, from the London political scene, Winant, who knew and followed Dr Beneš' activities in Geneva (he had been Assistant Director, and later Director, of the International Labour Office at Geneva in the 1935-1941 period) was genuinely interested in helping Dr Beneš and Czechoslovakia in their fight for the liberation of their country, and his arrival in London meant for Beneš a heaven-sent opportunity to plead his case for the recognition of his government to a high-ranking American official bound to support these pleas in Washington; he was determined not to let such an opportunity pass.

Winant's sympathetic attitude is quite apparent from his description of the very first Beneš' visit which took place on March 28, 1941: he devoted to it two of his messages to Washington for the President and the Secretary. The first of these is his telegram 1271 of April 2, 1941 in which he summarized his "long talk" with Beneš which was almost entirely devoted to the problem of the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government. Having preferred to deal with this problem alone in accord with his main personality trait and recognizing the advantage of Winant's friendly attitude, Beneš suggested that because of the difficulty in communications, he would have preferred to hold conversations with the US Government in London; (USDS, 860F.01/370).

The second of Winant's messages was his painstakingly written lengthy dispatch 242 of April 10, 1941 with the four appendices provided by Beneš.

invaluable and wholehearted support of friendly, and in Washington's political circles influential, Winant but also an American base in London from which to conduct effectively his struggle for the recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government by the United States, President Beneš kept on pressing, at the same time, the British Government for the de iure recognition of his then Provisional Government.[67] His efforts in this direction would have been, however, totally hopeless because of

---

In it after having stated that "Dr Beneš was extremely anxious to secure the recognition of the U.S. Government" and that Major Morton, one of the principal personal assistants in the Prime Minister's office had mentioned that "Dr Beneš was in close and constant touch with the Government and people of Czechoslovakia over whom he had the greatest influence and that the Czechs were more effective than almost any other subjugated people in their passive resistance to, and sabotage of, the Germans", Winant concludes with his own plea: "...I personally feel very deeply about Czechoslovakia and hope very much that we might recognize the Czechoslovak Government in exile. This could be done on terms which would not unreasonably tie our hands at the Peace Conference. No government with which I dealt at Geneva seemed more genuinely eager than the Czechoslovak to pattern their way of life on American standards". (The appendices to this dispatch were: (a) Dr Beneš' letter to Halifax of July 9, 1940; (b) Halifax' reply of July 18, 1940; (c) Halifax' letter to Dr Beneš of July 21, 1940; (d) Dr Beneš' paper entitled "Political and Juridical Relationship of the Czechoslovak Republic to Great Britain" (this document was privately given to Eden); (e) Dr Beneš' memorandum submitted to General Sikorski "Exchange des Vues sur la Collaboration Polono-Tchécoslovaque après la Présente Guerre", - USDS 860F.01/377).

67 President Beneš' activities and events regarding the whole question of the recognition are admirably described in the US diplomatic communications from London. Among the most important of these are: (i) Biddle's report of April 24, 1941, signed by Winant that precise terms under which England would grant full recognition were being prepared by the British authorities (USDS, 860F.01/380); (ii) Secret and confidential telegram 1805 from Winant to President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull of May 7, 1941 that Dr Beneš told him that he understood that Churchill and Eden were favourable in principle to recognizing him as the legal head of the Czechoslovak Government and hoped that all the technicalities and details of signing formula for the recognition could soon be worked out with the F.O. Winant was told by the F.O. that while no definite commitment had been made, "Dr Beneš' request for

the almost insurmountable opposition of the Foreign Office staff most of whom resented as much his determined action as they did the fact that the events proved his own, and not theirs, prognostications correct, had it not been for the fact that besides Chamberlain, another Munich-policy architect, Halifax, had disappeared from his post and London political scene, and his successor, Anthony Eden, who met Dr Beneš on many occasions in the past,[68] was determined, in the like manner as

---

a more definite form of recognition in all probability would be met but there were certain difficulties which had not yet been satisfactorily worked out"... F.O. emphasized that they would not, in any formal recognition that might be given to Beneš' Government, commit England to any post-war frontiers. Winant then notes that "...while the F.O. has high regard for Dr Beneš, F.O. officials feel that he is a little too opinionated on the exact form of recognition", and continues by personally addressing Roosevelt, reminding him Dr Beneš' visit at Hyde Park on May 28, 1939, and pleading for the US recognition and stating that he himself "would like very much to be helpful in clearing up the difficulties, if any, which may stand in the way of some form of recognition". He concluded that Eden had expressed the hope that England and the United States "might go along together on this matter of Czechoslovak recognition"... (USDS, 860F.01/381); (iii) strictly confidential Johnson's telegram of May 30, 1941 that he was told by F.O. that "Dr Beneš has again recently pressed the British Government for de iure recognition and has presented a memorandum embodying many legal arguments therefor, some of which were described as specious". On May 26th the British Government wrote to Dr Beneš asking him for further assurances that formal recognition of his Government "would not be harmful to the cause which the British Government and Dr Beneš held in common"... (USDS, 860F.01/389).

68 Their most memorable visit, to which Dr Beneš kept on subsequently referring on frequent occasions, took place in Prague on

Prime Minister Churchill, to support the Czechoslovak cause but his unavoidable and prolonged absence from London caused to Beneš the most "irksome" delay.[69]

April 4, 1935; Eden himself referred to it on July 27, 1939 at the lunch given in Dr Beneš' honour by a group of British Parliamentarians, including Churchill. (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 81-83; for further details about the 1935 Eden's visit of Dr Beneš, see Kubka, F., op.cit., pp. 143-144; for the transcript of Dr Beneš' talk with Eden of April 4, 1935 see: German Foreign Ministry, Akten betreffend die Archive des ehemaligen tschechoslovakischen Staats, Captured German Documents, Ser. 2028 H, Roll 1143, Neg. frame Nos. 444408-418).

69 Lockhart stated this fact clearly: "...when Mr. Eden came back to the Foreign Office on 22 December 1940, the President's (Beneš' - note by author) hopes soared. Nor were they misplaced. From the first Mr. Eden was sympathetic to the Czechoslovak cause and soon put Anglo-Czechoslovak relations on a much happier basis than heretofore. Dr Beneš and Jan Masaryk were delighted. Unfortunately, just when all seemed set for full recognition, Mr. Eden was sent on a mission to the Middle East which kept him away from the Foreign Office for nearly two months. To Dr Beneš this delay was most irksome... He could not understand the slowness of the Foreign Office, and I had some difficulty in restraining him from making a direct appeal to Mr. Churchill over the absent Mr. Eden's head."... ("Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", pp. 48-49).

During the third period of Beneš' struggle for the full recognition of his Czechoslovak Government, Winant on the American side, and Churchill, Eden and Lockhart on the British side, were ardent and active supporters of the Czechoslovak cause as represented by Beneš but while Winant was only able to submit his pleas in high places in Washington in a similar way as Lockhart kept on doing in London, neither of them constituted the highest decision-forming element in their respective Governments as did Prime Minister Churchill and Foreign Secretary Eden, who having been the two highest-ranking officials of the British Government had the necessary political power to quickly and effectively translate their ideas and wishes into concrete realities, and they fully employed this power in the case of de iure recognition of the Czechoslovak Government: "...it was, ...on ... specific orders from Churchill and Eden that London (meaning F.O. - note by author) decided to extend full and definite recognition to the Czechoslovak Government abroad..."[70] Churchill's and Eden's supreme roles in this entire matter were aptly described by Lockhart who was able to participate in the day-to-day events of this drama:

> The plain truth was that, had there been no Churchill and no Eden, there would have been no Czechoslovak Government, no President Beneš, no Foreign Secretary Masaryk, and no gratitude from any Czechoslovak to Britain and still less to the United States who in the matter of recognition had lagged behind us all the way.[71]

---

70 Luža, R., op.cit., p. 224.

71 Lockhart, R.B., Comes the Reckoning, pp. 130-131.

The act of British recognition was actually sped up, and forestalled by several hours on July 18, 1941, by the Soviet Union which prior to Hitler's attack of June 22, 1941 recognized Slovakia, expelled the Czechoslovak Minister from Moscow and through the Czechoslovak Communists "attacked Dr Beneš violently as a lackey of the imperialists"[72] but which subsequent to that attack decided to make a complete volte-face in regard to Dr Beneš and his Government.[73] Moscow's recognition was accorded in the form of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Agreement which was signed on July 18, 1941, and not having been subject to ratification, became operative the same day; it was "...the first international agreement which, since 15th March 1939, has been concluded for the Czechoslovak Republic by its Government without the attribute of provisionality, so unpropitious in its political influence..."[74] The

---

72 Lockhart, R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", p. 48.

73 In his str. conf. telegram 3048 sent at 8 p.m. on July 17, 1941, Ambassador Winant reported that he had been informed by the F.O. that the Russians had, without consulting anyone, extended unconditional recognition of the Provisional Czechoslovak Government in London and had even gone so far as to pledge themselves to restoration of the pre-Munich frontiers of Czechoslovakia. He was also told by the F.O. that the Russians "would tend to force the hand of the British Government in the matter of formal recognition of the Beneš Government", but that they would not extend this recognition without certain reservations, especially with respect to future frontiers; while the exact time of this action was not yet known, the F.O. promised to advise him in advance; (USDS, 860F.01/396).
Only an hour later, at 9 p.m. (July 17, 1941), Winant sent another str. conf. tel., No. 3049 that he had just been informed by the F.O. that the Russians and the Czechs would sign the agreement the next day and that the British Government might therefore feel compelled itself to grant its full recognition, although with certain reservations, to the Provisional Czechoslovak Government on the same day, (USDS, 860F.01/397).

74 Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, p. 100. - For further details about this Agreement see ibid., pp. 99-100; also Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 156-157.

British recognition of the afternoon of the same day[75] was followed by the American recognition of the "Provisional" Czechoslovak Government on July 31, 1941.[76] President Beneš emphasized the fact that President

---

For the text of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Agreement of July 18, 1941 see: Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 157; Information Bulletin of the Embassy of the USSR, Washington, DC, of July 21, 1941, No 6, pp. 3-4, attached in USDS, 860F.01/400 1/2, dated also July 21, 1941.

75 The British recognition was accorded by Sir Anthony Eden's Note of July 18, 1941 to Foreign Minister Masaryk; for its full text see: Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 125-126; also Winant's telegram 3069 to President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull of July 18, 1941 (USDS, 860F.01/398). For its legal importance and impact see: Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, pp. 95-99.
For a very interesting background information concerning the whole drama of the British recognition and the role of Dr Beneš see Lockhart, R.B. "Some Personal Memories", in Opočenský, J., ed., op.cit., pp. 90-94. On p. 94 Lockhart described the emotionally-filled ceremony of July 18, 1941 in M. Eden's office, when even Eden "went straight to the point with the most friendly informality" and Masaryk's eyes filled with tears and was unable to talk so Mr. Eden had to help him, and upon leaving Eden's office Masaryk embraced Lockhart "warmly on both cheeks", and then continued: "...Then we set out to 9 Grosvenor Place to inform Beneš. I made him a little speech in Czech, greeting him officially as President of the Czechoslovak Republic. Then we handed him the recognition note. He sat down to read it without saying a word. He finished it carefully, pointed out a minor error in the last paragraph and then thanked me. There was no visible sign of emotion, but I had watched him while he sat reading with his legs crossed, and I had seen the top leg tremble violently..."

76 The U.S. recognition was accorded by Winant's note to Masaryk on July 31, 1941 handed to him on August 1, 1941 (for the full text see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 178), and was accompanied by an aide-mémoire which stated that this recognition did not "constitute any commitment on the part of the U.S. Government with respect to the territorial boundaries of Czechoslovakia or the juridical continuity of the Czechoslovak Government under Dr Beneš". (For the full text see Acting Secretary Welles' telegram 2857 from Washington to Winant in London of July 30, 1941 - USDS, 860F.01/400b). Roosevelt who considered this aide-mémoire to be an important document, instructed that Churchill be fully informed about its provisions at once (see Acting Secretary Welles' telegram 2849 to Winant of July 29, 1941 - USDS 860F.01/400a; Winant replied in his telegram 3384 of August 2, 1941 that after having been told about these provisions, Churchill was very happy - USDS, 860F.01/404).

Roosevelt's decision was made "when the United States were actually still neutral" and constituted "the last step needed for the re-establishment of the international legal, political and diplomatic pre-Munich position of Czechoslovakia in the whole world".[77] While he dismissed lightly the fact that this recognition was only for the "Provisional" Czechoslovak Government and stated that it was not even necessary to negotiate for a full recognition by Washington since "the

---

This recognition was preceded by President Beneš' pleading letter to Roosevelt of June 4, 1941 (for the full text see Beneš, E, Memoirs, pp. 188-190; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941, Vol. II, pp. 29-31; President's Personal File, (PPF) 5952 - "Dr Edvard Beneš", FDRL) which was handed to him personally by Czechoslovak Minister at Washington, Hurban on July 24, 1941 and sent by Roosevelt to the Secretary of State on July 25, 1941 (USDS, 860F.01/417) as well as by Roosevelt's reply to Dr Beneš of July 30, 1941 (see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 177; Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941, Vol. II, p. 33) which was presented to President Beneš by Winant on August 14, 1941 (see Winant's personal and confidential telegram 3648 to the Secretary of August 15, 1941 - USDS, 860F.01/416). British interest about the U.S. recognition of "Dr Beneš' Government" was displayed by British Ambassador at Washington, Halifax' visit of Acting Secretary Welles on July 30, 1941 and his inquiry on this subject "in the name of his Government" (Welles' memorandum of conversation with Halifax of July 30, 1941 - USDS, 860F.01/420).

77 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 178-179; he also stated that this Roosevelt's decision "was a final and decisive blow to the whole German action of that time against the re-establishment of Czechoslovakia and against the freedom of its people".

events themselves provided for this",[78] the fact is that this single word was subsequently destined for more than a year to cause him much annoyance and required him to exert pressure on Washington to discontinue its usage.[79] When American Minister Biddle had officially informed Masaryk on October 26, 1942 and Dr Beneš on the Czechoslovak Independence Day two days later that the United States accorded "Dr Beneš' Czechoslovak

---

78 Ibid.

79 This Dr Beneš' pressure took place not only in a direct form (see e.g. Biddle's dispatch, Czechoslovak series, No 37 of September 21, 1942 - Biddle who was American Ambassador to the exiled Allied Governments in London was also appointed to the "Provisional" Czechoslovak Government in London on September 17, 1941 - Foreign Relations of the United States, 1941, Vol. II, p. 34 - in which he informed Washington that Dr Beneš and Masaryk hoped that the United States "would drop the word 'provisional' in connection with their Government" - USDS, 860F.01/456) but also in his own subtle and skilfully conducted propaganda and good-will compaign directed at President Roosevelt; it took the form of numerous communations on very diverse subjects ranging from sending his message of condolence to Roosevelt upon the death of his mother (Dr Beneš' letter of September 9, 1941 - Roosevelt's letter of thanks of September 16, 1941 - PPF 5952 - "Dr Edvard Beneš", and sending, on a regular basis, Roosevelt greetings to his birthdays, to providing him with information showing the Czechoslovak Government in London in good light (such as e.g. reporting that he had declared on December 16, 1941 a state of war between the Czechoslovak Republic and the states which were then at war with the United States in his letter of December 20, 1941; Roosevelt's reply of December 27, 1941 demonstrated that Dr Beneš' letter had been effective in its aim of capturing Roosevelt's good will: the latter stated that Dr Beneš' message had moved him deeply, that the American nation "thus found at its side against the powers of ruthless aggression, comrades of the last war now joined in the struggle for our common victory. I greet you in the name of the American Government, in the association of our peoples in this cause for which the free nations of the world are willing and valiently devoting their splendid effort". - Ibid.) or obtained from his secret underground sources in Germany or in the Protectorate which he preferred to have sent to Roosevelt through Biddle (see e.g. Biddle's letter to Roosevelt of February 16, 1942 from London: "I am attaching hereto for your information the recent report (entitled "Report from Berlin, End of January, 1942"- note by author) which Dr Beneš received from, what he tells me, is a highly placed and usually dependable source in Germany. As his reports have hitherto

Government" full recognition, he was able to report to President Roosevelt how emotionally explosive impact was created by his news: while for Masaryk such reaction was quite natural, for Dr Beneš it was an extraordinary display.[80] The third period of more than three-

---

proven interesting and enlightening, I thought you might like to have this one, as well as those I have previously sent you..."-President's Secret Folder (PSF) - "A.J.D. Biddle, Jr.", FDRL).

These Dr Beneš' communications proved to be very effective to gain President Roosevelt's good will towards the Czechoslovak cause and also to increase his status as that of an expert on European affairs in general, and on German and Soviet affairs in particular.

80 Ambassador Biddle wrote Roosevelt that when he had informed on October 26, 1942 Masaryk (Dr Beneš was out of town) that President Roosevelt intended to address Dr Beneš as the President of the Czechoslovak Republic in a message on the occasion of Czechoslovak National Day on October 28th, Masaryk "leapt into the air like a boy, embraced me warmly and with tears in his eyes, stated with genuine earnestness that your action had touched him very deeply; that it was for him and would be for Dr Beneš and their fellow countrymen a source of real gratification... Subsequently, on Czechoslovakia's National Day, when Dr Beneš received all the Chiefs of Missions accredited to his Government, he made it a point to come across the room to shake my hand warmly and to ask me to convey to you an expression of his deep gratitude. As he went on to tell me how profoundly touched he and his associates were and how much this would mean to his countrymen in Czechoslovakia, I could discern that he was sincerely moved. As formerly in the case of Minister Masaryk, Dr Beneš did not attempt to conceal his tears. I never before saw him show so much emotion. I only regret that you yourself could not have witnessed how much your message meant to these two men and their associates..." (Biddle's personal letter to President Roosevelt of November 4, 1942, PSF "A.J.D. Biddle, Jr." FDRL.)

On November 16, 1942 Biddle informed the State Department of Public references of Dr Beneš to the discontinuance of use of the term "provisional" by the United States in regard to the Czechoslovak Government (Biddle dispatch, Czechoslovak series No 44, USDS, 860F.01/471).

years' exhausting struggle for the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government under his, since the 1935 election to the Presidency, legally uninterrupted leadership, had by that act come to a triumphant end.

Following the Soviet and British full, and the American partial, recognition of the Czechoslovak Government the last of which eventually became the full recognition, Dr Beneš, then already recognized President of the Czechoslovak Republic, concentrated his attention on the most difficult, complex and painful problem which constituted for him the very raison d'être: the annulment of Munich.[81] He stated this clearly: "...After the recognition of the Government and the Independence of the Republic it was necessary to erase from the history of the last years that event which had actually brought about this terrible war: the Munich Agreement and all its consequences..."[82] Having been obsessed ever since its occurrence, by Munich's evil spirit, he dedicated all his efforts towards its total destruction. It was an enormous undertaking for a single man, and there were many moments along the way towards this goal which would have discouraged even the strongest men;[83] yet Dr Beneš'

---

81 The annulment of the Munich Agreement was Dr Beneš' supreme objective: "...From September, 1938, sleeping and waking, I was continuously thinking of this objective - living for it, suffering on its account and working for it in every one of my political actions. In fact, it was already my only aim in life..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 197; for a complete history of the annulment of Munich see ibid., pp. 197-238; Ripka, H., The Repudiation of Munich, Czechoslovak Documents and Sources No 6, London, 1943).

82 President Beneš' broadcast to the Czechoslovak nation of August 8, 1942 in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 106.

83 DHČP during the entire period prior to the British annulment of the Munich Agreement document the continuous difficulties

sheer determination in the end prevailed, and the Munich Agreement was annulled by the four Great Powers which took part in it: Germany was the first of these Powers to destroy it by its occupation of Prague of March 15, 1939,[84] followed, after Dr Beneš had undergone his Calvary with the British, by Great Britain in the form of Sir Anthony Eden's speech in the House of Commons of August 5, 1942 and his letter to Masaryk of the same day,[85] by France by General de Gaulle's letter to

---

Dr Beneš kept on experiencing on this subject with the British. The best description of these difficulties was provided, however, by Dr Beneš' personal secretary, Táborský, in the entry in his diary of April 9, 1942 "when Beneš, then almost at the end of his proverbial patience, urged the matter in a talk with the British Ambassador, Philip Nichols: 'New negotiations about repudiation of Munich with Nichols. This time Dr Beneš entered into the matter in a very sharp manner. Again he repeated to him all the reasons for which he considered imperative that Munich should be liquidated in a proper manner between us and Britain". " If you do not want to grasp this", he said, "I shall have simply to state failure of negotiations and inform M. Eden and M. Churchill about it. I shall also have to consider whether or not to inform our friends of the Liberal and Labour Parties of this sad failure, in order to have it clear that we, Czechoslovaks, have done all that was in our power to have this blot erased, and that it was the British Government which not even at this stage of the war was prepared to repudiate Munich. Every Englishman has to be aware that Munich still lies between our nation and Britain and that it will not be forgotten unless it is repudiated. I am afraid that you, Englishmen, with your lack of political imagination and anticipation, do not realize what consequences for postwar Central Europe and European continental politics in general this attitude of yours might have' . What Beneš said on this and many other occasions was not bluff. He well knew that in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere the Communists were rubbing their hands in expectation of the profit they would draw from Munich and from Britain's reluctance to make good the wrong she had committed..." (Táborský, E., "Beneš and the Soviets", pp. 305-306).

84 This fact was noted by Prime Minister Churchill in his broadcast message to the Czechoslovak people on September 30, 1940; see also in this connection Lockhart's letter to President Beneš of November 11, 1940 (the full text of the former letter is in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 286, of the latter in Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 302).

85 For the text of the relevant parts of Eden's speech see Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 208; of his letter to Masaryk, Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 306-307. On September 2, 1942 Churchill sent a letter to Dr Beneš in which he had, inter alia, stated: "...You already know my attitude towards

the Czechoslovak Prime Minister Msgr. Šrámek of September 29, 1942[86] and finally by Italy through the Declaration of the Italian Government of September 26, 1944.[87] President Beneš' almost single-handed struggle against Munich had seemingly come to a triumphant conclusion.[88]

---

the Munich Agreement. Two years ago I said publicly that it had been destroyed by the Germans; (see the previous note - note by author), It therefore gives me particular satisfaction that our two Governments have formally placed on record their agreement that Munich can now be considered as dead between them..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 236, p. 286).

86 This was done on the day of the fourth anniversary of the signing of Munich - France of De Gaulle was at that time in 1942 lagging far beyond Czechoslovakia of Dr Beneš in the field of recognition: while Czechoslovakia had by then its fully recognized Government with President Beneš in its lead, De Gaulle's France had only the French National Committee. There were two other occasions in which France again repudiated its shame - Munich (for details see Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 234-237).

87 For the text see Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 316.

88 The emphasis in this sentence must be placed on the word "seemingly". While in regard to international law as an instrument governing certain relations between the four participants and affecting the existence of another state, the Munich Agreement was indeed repudiated, annulled and wiped out, but its malignant heritage was spread by Soviet Russia and its Communist agents throughout Europe in general, and Czechoslovakia in particular; the exploitation of Munich became one of the most important means employed by Moscow towards reaching its post-war imperialist objective of its domination of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe.

B. Quest For Post War External Security of Czechoslovakia

1. Idea of a Czechoslovak - Polish Confederation[89]

> ...It would be in the interests of Europe if in the region between Germany and Russia there were created a large political formation of a federative type, powerful from the military point of view, which would yet have great political, economic and cultural possibilities. Through co-operation between the Poles and the Czechoslovaks there would emerge a political unit with a sufficiently large population, and adequate industrial and economic wealth, a unit which could become an important factor in the post-war political equilibrium of Europe...[90]

At the time of Munich President Beneš had vowed that while he would not change the basic principles of his foreign policy, he would ensure that Czechoslovakia would never again be caught in an encirclement of hostile neighbours.[91] After Hilter's attack on Poland, he envisaged

---

89 Among the several works written on this subject, the following two are a must for obtaining all the relevant details: Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation - A story of the First Soviet Veto" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. IX, No. 4, January, 1950 pp. 379-395; Wandycz, P.S., Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers, 1940-43, Bloomington, Indiana, 1956. See also Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 147-149 (In note 10 (pp. 149, 164) he had stated therein that he intended to deal with the World War II Polish-Czechoslovak negotiations in detail in the next Volume of his Memoirs which was, due to his early death, never completed), and Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, pp. 136-141.

90 Beneš, E., "The New Central Europe", The introductory article in the new English edition (before Hitler's occupation published at Prague) of the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 1, April, 1940, p. 2.

91 For all the practical purposes Dr Beneš did not consider that the short, easternmost frontier with friendly Rumania broke this encirclement by hostile neighbours. Of his numerous statements to this effect perhaps the clearest was made by Dr Beneš to Molotov on June 9, 1942 in London when he wanted to ascertain the Soviet attitude towards the proposed Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. He wrote himself: "...I would like to ask him frankly if they (the Russians - note by author) had any objections to our making a confederation with Poland. I am declaring that we have this intention owing to our geographical position. We cannot have the Poles in opposition to us, hemmed in as we are on three sides by the Germans and the Hungarians.

two possible ways which he could follow in order to achieve this objective: (a) If, against all his expectations, Soviet Russia should not enter the war against Germany, Czechoslovak security had to rest primarily on some sort of Central European confederation, the nucleus of which would be a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation, the whole structure to be reinforced by friendship and alliance with the Western Powers and by the new successor to the League of Nations; (b) If he was correct in his prognostication and the Soviet Union should enter the war against Germany, then Czechoslovak security had to rest primarily on the Soviet Union, reinforced by closest collaboration with the Poles and perhaps some other nations in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the whole structure to be strengthened by amicable relations with the Western Powers and by the new successor to the League of Nations. While it becomes apparent from this analysis that Beneš' moves in foreign policy remained tentative as long as the Soviet Union remained neutral, he was not prepared to remain in the meantime inactive and to simply wait and see whether, when and under what circumstances Soviet Russia would enter the war: he was wrong once before about the French help to Czechoslovakia against Hitler, and could again be wrong about the Soviet Union's entry in the war - he was therefore determined to move in the direction of Poland as soon as practicably possible.

Otherwise the policy of the last twenty years would be repeated - and then catastrophe would again occur. Molotov fully agreed, acknowledging our difficult geographical position..." (From Dr Beneš' archives, quoted by Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", p. 389).

It was during his October 1939 trip to Paris, so signally unsuccessful in regard to the establishment of a Czechoslovak Government which would have received the recognition by the French, because of Daladier's Government strong anti-Beneš stand, that Beneš, on his own initiative met for the first time Polish Premier General Sikorski;[92] since no Czechoslovak Government in exile had yet been established and recognized by the Allies, Beneš thus had no mandate to conduct official negotiations and the talks did not go beyond their exchange of views. He discovered that General Sikorski "was bitterly outspoken about the guilt of Pilsudski and Beck, and frankly stated that the blame for the bad relations between Poland and Czechoslovakia lay on the shoulders of the then Polish Government..."[93] Having thus

---

92 Dr Beneš commenced these relations by his telegram to General Sikorski: "The formation of the Polish Government under your direction affords me the opportunity of expressing at this historic moment the feeling of sympathy and friendship of the Czechoslovak people and the certainty that Poland and Czechoslovakia will soon rise again free and independent in spite of the difficulties and misfortunes through which they are passing at the moment". General Sikorski immediately sent Dr Beneš a telegram of thanks. (Phipps' telegram 788 of October 13, 1939 from Paris informing the Foreign Office of these two telegrams which appeared in The "Temps" of October 12, 1939 in their full versions - BFO, C 16519/72/55, FO 371/23132). An unsigned author of the F.O. note of October 14, 1939 remarked at the bottom of Phipps' telegram: "The Czechs and Poles have always hated each other and it will take them time to heal the quarrel even in adversity".

Smutný's record for October 13, 1939 indicates that Dr Beneš had already visited General Sikorski, but does not state when; the latter returned on this day Dr Beneš' visit. Among other matters the two discussed the Těšín question of previous year about which Sikorski lacked sufficient details - Dr Beneš told him about Beck's ultimatum and gave him all the relevant documents; (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 10, pp. 38-40). Of interest is to note, as did Wandycz (op.cit., p. 37) that General Sikorski and the Polish Government seemed to deal from the very beginnings only with Beneš, and thus helped him to strengthen his international position at the expense of his opponents.

been confirmed in his expectations that the collapse of Beck's regime paved the road for a new era of Czechoslovak-Polish relations, he mentioned to Sikorski who visited him in his Putney home in London on November 18, 1939, the idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation. Since he was well aware of the fact that British reaction to his talks with the Polish Premier was favourable,[94] he described these talks and explained his ideas on the whole subject of Czechoslovak-Polish future relations during one of his regular visits to the Foreign Office;[95] his

---

93 Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", p. 382.

94 Wandycz, P.S., op.cit., p. 37.

95 Beneš talked about this subject with Leeper on November 22, 1939; it was an extremely important conversation in which Beneš revealed his concept of Russia's role in Czechoslovak-Polish future relations. After having mentioned that he had not attempted to enter into any detail with General Sikorski with whom he was on very friendly terms and with whose Government he felt sure he could work in close accord he stated that their recent conversations had been confined to two points: (i) detailed information about the events of September 1938; (ii) discussion of the principle of federalism between their two countries. There had been no discussions about the Czechoslovak-Polish frontiers and their future relations with Russia.

Beneš said that there were among the Poles two distinct views: optimists maintained that the Ukrainians, after some months of experience of the Soviet Rule would resist Russia and would be more ready to combine with Poland in a federal state; pessimists said Russia would succeed in destroying Ukrainian nationalism and that the Poles would find no means of combining with the Ukrainians at the end of the war - they believed this territory would be lost to Poland. Beneš who shared the view of Polish pessimists believed that the Russians who were more hostile to Ukrainian than Polish nationalism, would uproot it from the conquered territory in every way possible. The Poles also had not abandoned their dreams of reconstituting a federal Polish-Ukrainian-Lithuanian state. So long as they harboured these dreams of a Great Poland, it would be inopportune for him to discuss the precise future relations between Czechoslovakia and Poland. If a Great Poland were to be restored on federal lines, it would be difficult for Czechoslovakia to be closely associated with her, for it would inevitably mean that Russia would be hostile to Poland and would in all probability attempt to destroy her by

ideas in regard to Russia expressed already at that time formed the basis of his future negotiations with Poland and were destined to play such an important part in the failure of the idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation;[96] these ideas coupled with his persistent fear

---

bolshevizing Poland and Germany. In this spreading of the Bolshevik poison, Czechoslovakia would be included. He feared therefore that a Great Poland would not succeed in consolidating itself and might well prove a source of unrest to Europe by pushing Russia further west. A smaller ethnographical Poland would in his view not be an object of Russian hostility. With it, he would be prepared to enter into the closest relations. He would even advocate a federal connection between such a Poland and Czechoslovakia to include a common tariff, currency, General Staff and foreign policy. It would be a federation of two republics with two heads of State but with a joint Parliament.

Beneš was governed in his views about the future relations with Poland by considerations about Russia's attitude. Much as he detested Bolshevism he could not disguise the fact that in his own country strong russophil tendencies existed. His people could not be brought into a combination which would be directly and inevitably opposed by Russia which would then spread its Bolshevik poison also among them. If Russia were satisfied that small ethnographical Poland, united federally with Czechoslovakia were no danger to herself he had reason to think that she would favour such a bloc - she would see an advantage to her own security in having such a buffer state between herself and Germany. It was essential for Europe to have a line drawn which would mark the boundaries of Bolshevism. Stalin was mainly concerned with his own security. If it was threatened, he would protect himself by seeking to spread Bolshevism into Central Europe. If he felt safe against Germany, or combination of England and France with Germany, he would confine himself to his own territory in order to avoid dangerous complications. Poland and Czechoslovakia were in their outlook part of West European civilization and could be regarded as the eastern frontiers of Europe. If they could be reconstituted on lines acceptable to Russia, Russia would be separated from Germany and that in itself would help to protect Germany from the poison of Bolshevism. He hoped that Germany would be enabled, in the revolution which would follow her defeat in the war, to throw off the yoke of Prussia and form herself into a federation of German states. Some such federation offered the best hope for the peace in the future but if this were to be secured, it was essential that Russia and Germany should be separated and that Russia in self-preservation should not be driven into an attempt to spread her own form of revolutionary poison into the heart of Europe. Beneš impressed on Leeper the fact that he was speaking confidentially and that he had refrained from expressing these views to the Poles. He felt that events must be allowed to develop further before he could conduct any detailed conversations with them, for they would not abandon their ideas of recovering their former

of not antagonizing Moscow which were mainly responsible in the pre-Munich period for most, if not all, of the difficulties which Czechoslovakia had then to experience with its Allies in general, and with the Little Entente in particular, created during World War II fundamental and irreconcilable differences with the Poles and were bound to eventually cause an insurmountable obstacle in the negotiations: any agreement acceptable to the Poles was not acceptable to Moscow and thus to Beneš, and vice versa.[97] In the end, Moscow exercised its first veto and

---

territories now occupied by Russia until they were convinced that this was impossible. Events alone could decide whether this would prove impossible or not. (Leeper's F.O. Memorandum of conversation with Beneš of November 22, 1939, BFO, C 19148/72/55, FO 371/23132).

96 Beneš' most important point of the entire period of Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations was that the two countries had to agree on a common policy towards the Soviet Union. He envisaged that the Soviet Union would get involved, at a comparatively early stage of the war, in the war against Germany, and that it was therefore imperative for Czechoslovakia and Poland to "make our plans on this basis, come to terms with the Soviet Union about the military direction of the war and to regulate our conception of the whole World War II in mutual agreement"...(Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 148). General Sikorski's reaction when Beneš presented to him on January 26, 1941 the above view was clear: "What you are saying would be a catastrophe for us all". (Ibid). Sikorski who "considered himself to be in a state of war not only with Germany but also with the Soviet Union " (ibid) rejected this view. He thought that England would be helped by the United States and that these two Powers after their defeat of Germany, would alone decide the post-war questions, and Poland had to, therefore, deal only with them. When Germany attacked Russia, Sikorski expected that Germany would defeat Russia, and would in turn, be defeated by England and the United States. Beneš admitted that he did not succeed in convincing Sikorski that England alone first, and with the United States later, might not be able to control the course of the war without the Soviet Union, and Poland and Czechoslovakia, being located on the far side of Europe, could not win this war without the aid of Soviet Russia.

97 It must objectively be appreciated that Beneš was inconsistent in his attitude towards the post-War Czechoslovak frontiers on the one hand, and the Polish frontiers on the other: while he vehemently defended the pre-Munich Czechoslovakia, and in this stand he got, with the exception

prevented the realization not only of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation but also of any agreement between those two countries.[98]

The day following his talk in the Foreign Office of November 22, 1939, Beneš explained his stand on the then in England very popular idea of a European federation with which he agreed but urged caution and warned against its mechanical application.[99] In March, 1940, Beneš

---

of the Těšín territory, Sikorski's full support, he did not do so in regard to pre-war Poland, or at least, pre-Munich Poland. By directly asking Sikorski to reach an agreement with Moscow, he was indirectly asking him to agree to the loss, to Russia, of vast Polish territories in the East, by means of which only such an agreement could have in reality been reached. Instead of refuting this point of view, the Russo-Polish Agreement of July 30, 1941 had confirmed it: this agreement in which Moscow recognized that the Soviet-German treaties of 1939 regarding territorial changes in Poland had lost their validity, was signed by the Soviets only because of their desperate military situation which forced them to obtain, at any price, good will of the West so that they could obtain the necessary vast military material therefrom, and by the Poles only after having been more or less forced to do so by Churchill and Eden.

98 Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", pp. 392-393.

99 He did so in his address of November 23, 1939 given at Foyle's Literary Luncheon held at Grosvenor House in London. After having been introduced to more than a thousand guests by H.G. Wells who told Beneš: "We are not considering you to be a stranger. You are a world statesman, one of our recognized leaders. We are expecting from you that together with other world statesmen you will undertake your task in the reorganization of our world..." (Táborský, E., Pravda z vítězila, pp. 425-427). Beneš spoke about mistakes of the past and then went to the core of the problem: "...A solution for many European difficulties is being sought in the idea of a federation. I agree with this principle. I would only wish a thorough study of this idea and its careful application on solid and permanent foundations. A purely mechanical application, which would not take into account the real will of nations entering into such a federation could not but lead to another catastrophe, not in twenty, but in ten or even in five years. I, for my part, am on the side of those who will fight for the ideals of a real democratic federated Europe..." (Beneš, E., Building a New Europe, London, 1939, pp. 17-18).

For a summary of President Beneš' views on the subject of federation see: Beneš, E., "The Future of The Small Nations and the Idea of Federation" in the Central European Observer, Vol. XIX, pp. 151-152.

submitted to President Roosevelt's emissary Welles during his visit to London a lengthy document entitled "Czechoslovakia After the War, Her Claims and Plans" in which he had dealt, inter alia, with a Czechoslovak-Polish union,[100] sent to his brother Vojta in the United States political instructions in which he explained his views on the Czechoslovak-Polish co-operation,[101] and in the following months continued to emphasize his willingness to co-operate with the Poles.[102] But it was only after the fall of France and the British recognition of the Czechoslovak Provisional Government of July 21, 1940 followed by Poland on July 29, 1940 that the Czechoslovak-Polish negotiations initiated by President Beneš were able to resume on an official level.[103]

---

100 Lockhart's Foreign Office Minute of March 20, 1940 stating that during his visit to London, Welles did not see Dr Beneš but wrote to him asking for a memorandum on Czechoslovakia, with special reference to Dr Beneš' idea of its future. He then submits a copy of this 10-page Dr Beneš' memorandum which he had received for F.O. information, (BFO, C 4305/2949/62, FO 371/24370); see also Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation" note 10, pp. 382-383.

101 DHČP Vol. 1, Doc. No. 76, pp. 96-99.

102 See e.g. Dr Beneš' talks in Chatham House at Oxford of April 4, 1940 (DHČP, Vol. 1, Docs. Nos. 80 and 81, pp. 101-103).

103 For details about these negotiations see Wandycz, P.S. op.cit., pp. 37-39. Of the numerous British F.O. documents, the following, listed in chronological order, are of interest in this study:

(i) F.O. note from Sir H. Kennard (British Ambassador to the Polish Government in exile at London) of August 28, 1940 that "General Sikorski has noticed with satisfaction that Dr Beneš who in the past has not been very friendly to Poland, has greatly modified his attitude and is showing a more friendly spirit.". (BFO, C 9361/8531/12, FO 371/24292);

(ii) Lockhart's memorandum No 5 of September 12, 1940 that on September 6 and 10 General Sikorski and Dr Beneš exchanged visits and discussed at length Polish-Czechoslovak relations. Dr Beneš told Sikorski that he accepted an

President Beneš' memorandum to General Sikorski of November 1, 1940 constituted the most important document on the subject of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation: not only did it provide a detailed

---

arrangement with Poland as a preliminary condition to any Russo-Czechoslovak understanding and Sikorski replied that on that basis "we can settle everything". Sikorski said that Poland had to establish better relations with Russia and Czechoslovakia could help Poland to achieve this. Dr Beneš said that Poles must cease to flirt with Slovaks and Hodža (see Lockhart's memorandum No 1 of August 30, 1940 that Hodža, in spite of his acceptance of the Vice-Presidency of the Czechoslovak National Council, was continuing his subversive activities against the Czechoslovak Provisional Government and also his intrigues with certain Poles, such as Filipowicz - BFO, C 9401/8531/12, FO 371/24292 - note by author) and Sikorski replied that he had already warned members of his Government to stop that nonsense and had rebuked Filipowicz. Both Sikorski and Beneš had agreed that frontier disputes were minor issues and that fundamental difference laid in social structures of their two states: (BFO, C 9969/8531/12, FO 371/24292).

(iii) Lockhart's Note No 13 of October 7, 1940 in which he reported Dr Beneš' views on the restoration of Czechoslovakia and the reconstruction of Central Europe after the war; he stated, inter alia, that a federation between Poland and Czechoslovakia was a political necessity since it would enable the Western Slavs to resist German penetration and would prevent Russia from over-running Germany at the end of the war and carry the Bolshevik revolution to the channel coast. He thought that the Czechoslovaks would be able to help to improve Russo-Polish relations and the Poles would play the similar role in the Czechoslovak-Hungarian relations. Lockhart stated that he fully approved of this Czechoslovak-Polish federation which, if achieved, would set an admirable example to the Balkan states. All the subsequent F.O. notes were very favourable to this federation. (BFO, C 10776/2/12, FO 371/24289).

(iv) Lockhart's Note No 21 of October 16, 1940 that Dr Beneš had proposed to General Sikorski the establishment of a permanent Czechoslovak-Polish Committee of co-operation. Sikorski received the idea favourably and Dr Beneš "was reasonably optimistic of a happy future for the Czechoslovak-Polish relations..."(BFO, C 11203/8531/12, FO 371/24292).

(v) Lockhart's Note No 26 of November 1, 1940 that he was told by Dr Beneš that he had accepted General Sikorski's text of joint Czechoslovak-Polish declaration without change and stated that "in the past two months Polish-Czechoslovak co-operation made greater progress than expected. Attached is Mr. Mander's Parliamentary question to the Prime Minister of November 26, 1940 about the Joint Czechoslovak-Polish Declaration of November 11, 1940; Churchill's reply indicated that His Majesty's Government had "warmly welcome" this Declaration; (BFO, C 11838/8531/12, FO 371/24292).

(vi) Lockhart's note No 29 of November 5, 1940 enclosed a copy of Dr Beneš' draft proposals for the establishment of a permanent Czechoslovak-Polish Committee of co-operation, and all F.O. officials warmly approved in

explanation of Beneš' entire conception of this confederation, "but all that was achieved throughout the subsequent one and a half years, until the Soviets put a sudden end to further negotiations by their veto, was done on the basis of this document".[104] Of all of its provisions, by far the most important was the last of the three Beneš' prerequisites which had to be fulfilled in order that the Czechoslovak-Polish confederation could become a reality: it called for "good relations between Poland and the Soviet Union". Táborský described admirably this Dr Beneš' prerequisite:

> ...(it) was the crux of the whole issue. The settlement of the Polish-Soviet dispute and the establishment of at least a correct mutual attitude between those two rivals was for Beneš a conditio sine qua non of any kind of Polish-Czechoslovak Union... Unfortunately, this basic pre-requisite of the Polish-Czechoslovak union insisted upon by Beneš.. was never reached. The Poles, in spite of the odds against them, stuck to Polish-Soviet frontiers of 1939, while the Soviets were becoming more and more intransigent as the war progressed and the acute danger of defeat was being averted. Thus the whole edifice of the Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation was built on foundations of sand, though neither party realized it in the early years of the war...[105]

---

their subsequent notes its text; (BFC, C 11983/8531/12, FO 371/24292).

104 Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", pp. 382-383. For further details about the work done by the various Czechoslovak-Polish Committees and other bodies prior to Hitler's attack on Soviet Russia written by a member of the Czechoslovak Government in Exile who personally took part in the Co-ordination and Economic-Financial Committees, see: Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě v exilu, Vol. 1, Washington, 1965, pp. 72-84.

105 Ibid., pp. 384-386. Táborský quotes therein (pp. 384-385) Beneš' "realistic opinion of the Soviets" and underlines his idea that under no circumstances could the Poles and the Czechs allow the situation to develop in which they would have the Russians against them.

During the period preceding Hitler's attack on Russia all the developments which took place in the preparatory work towards the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation indicated that while there were some differences of opinion between the two parties, notably in their attitude towards Soviet Russia and the scope of the confederation, these were not considered to form insurmountable obstacles and both sides hoped that in the course of the war they would be diminished if not eliminated.[106] Beneš for whom the attitude of the Great Powers towards the Confederation constituted the decisive factor was greatly gratified by the continued strong British support[107] as well as by President Roosevelt's blessing.[108]

---

106 The differences in Sikorski's and Beneš' attitudes towards Russia have already been noted. In summary, the former, having been at war with both Germany and Russia, considered those two states to be as much enemies of Poland as Germany was of Czechoslovakia and wanted to establish a Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation as a nucleus of a greater confederation, created as independently of Moscow as of Berlin, which would be able to form a barrier against both German and Russian imperialism; the latter, on the other hand, stressed the point that this confederation had to have Moscow's good will and could not afford to face both hostile Germany from the one side and Russia from the other; while Sikorski was quite prepared to conclude all the necessary agreements with Czechoslovakia and present other states, including Russia, with some sort of a fait accompli, Beneš resolutely declined to go along.

In so far as the scope of this confederation was concerned, Beneš' scope was limited mainly to the economic field while Sikorski wanted to go much further, especially in the political field. (Sikorski's view was strongly supported by the British as having been "more realistic" (BFO, C 13276/8531/12 and C 13309/8531/12, both FO 371/24292).

Regardless of these differences, both Beneš and Sikorski went along having believed that the turn of events in the war would eventually liquidate these differences.

107 The clearest British statement on this matter was Churchill's answer to Mr. Mander given in the House of Commons on November 26, 1940 (see note 103(v) of this Chapter).

108 In March, 1941 when General Sikorski visited Washington, President Roosevelt congratulated him for "laying the foundation with Beneš for a Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation" (Ciechanowski, J., Defeat in Victory, New York, 1947, p. 19).

Hitler's attack on Russia opened a new Chapter in the history of Czechoslovak-Polish endeavours to bring into being their confederation. Stalin, desperate in his fears of suffering a devastating defeat instructed his officials to raise no objections to the idea of Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation.[109] Following the signing of the Russo-Polish Agreement of July 30, 1941, Beneš was jubilant, and considering that the realization of this confederation could "already be considered an accomplished fact",[110] decided that all the preparatory work of the mixed

---

109 Being always very cautious not to antagonize Russia, Beneš made inquiries, both at Moscow and London and received assurances that Moscow had no objections to the proposed Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation.

110 There were numerous occasions that President Beneš expressed this view in the late part of 1941 and early in 1942 before the Soviets began their campaign of attacks against this confederation; two of such examples, one written in an article, and one given as a lecture, suffice for the relevant illustration:

(i) Writing about the post-war organization of Europe in November-December, 1941, Beneš stated: "...Any attempt to work out the proper European organization in detail must take into account the following factors and consideratons:

1.....
4. Reorganized Central Europe. Its core will be a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation. The creation of this new political unit can already be considered an accomplished fact..." (sic!) (Beneš, E., "The Organization of Postwar Europe", Reprinted from the Foreign Affairs, January, 1942, New York, p. 5).

(ii) In a lecture given on November 10, 1941 he said that among the developments which would take place in Europe after the end of the war there would be:

"1.....
4. The reorganization of Central Europe, the core of which would certainly be a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation. The creation of this new political unit can be considered to-day as an accomplished fact..." (sic!)

(Beneš, E., "The Present War and the Future Peace", a lecture given at Aberdeen University of November 10, 1941, in Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Towards a Lasting Peace, London, 1942, p. 6.)

Czechoslovak-Polish Committees had to proceed with greater speed to complete their respective tasks and he himself devoted substantial portion of his time to this project which meant to him the end of encirclement of Czechoslovakia. The Czechoslovak-Polish Agreement of January 23, 1942[111] seemed to fully justify Dr Beneš' references about the certainty of the realization of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation -- its future seemed at that time to be unobstructed and bright.

Then came, after all their assurances of having no objection, in the form of a brutal Soviet intervention, an immense political double-cross, ranging from individual acts of threats and sinister remarks to the full weight of Moscow's first veto -[112] "The first Soviet veto was

---

111 For the text see Wandycz, P.S., op.cit., pp. 133-135.

112 This tragic story of the entire drama of Stalin's political double-cross of President Beneš was aptly told both by Táborský and Wandycz, though each of them came to different interpretations and conclusions, and need not to be dealt with in this study. Suffice it to state here that President Beneš' humiliation and bitterness were real, and it certainly was not any admiration of Russia, at that time, which forced him to abolish the entire project of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation for which he spent so much efforts and in which he honestly and genuinely saw a hope for the existence of future Czechoslovakia. But being a supreme realist he immediately saw the absolute hopelessness of this entire project in view of Moscow's veto and especially when he saw how little, if anything at all, had London and Washington done against this veto. His bitter remarks to Smutný of July 21, 1942 about Bogomolov's (Russian Ambassador with the exiled Governments at London) talk with General Viest in which the former had "sharply condemned our policy of rapprochement with Poland" and about Bogomolov's statement to Masaryk that he was instructed by Moscow to tell him directly that Moscow was against rapprochement with Poland, bear witness to this argument. Beneš then inter alia stated: "...That what the Russians are now doing to us, I do not like very much, they are already showing their cards. It is clear what they want to achieve, to divide us and the Poles and to go against the Poles... " (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 228, p. 278).

pronounced, the first act of political blackmail, the first one since the Soviets became once again allies of the west, was perpetrated. The best friend Stalin had among the leading allied statesmen of the war was the first to suffer humiliation at the hands of those whom he attempted to help..."[113] President Beneš tried in vain to persuade the Kremlin that such a political double-cross was neither in the interests of Czechoslovakia nor of the Soviet Union[114] by employing all the power of his arguments; Bogomolov stated to Feierabend that the Soviet Union had considered any effort aiming at the realization of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation "as a hostile act directed against itself".[115] Stalin

---

113 Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", p. 390.

114 Táborský quoted in part Beneš' conversation with Bogomolov in which the former stated, inter alia: "The world believes in confederations, in greater unions of states and the idea of a Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation had met with great sympathy both in America and Britain. How shall one explain now the sudden retreat? We must tell the British and the Poles the actual facts. You realize that this will be grist to the mill of those who oppose you and us"...(Ibid., p. 390).

Feierabend had also described his talk with Beneš about Bogomolov's visit of Beneš in July, 1942 in which he had officially protested against the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederaton: "...Beneš did not deny that he was surprised by Bogomolov's intervention. He requested Bogomolov to give it to him in a written form but the latter made a surprised face and asked why? Beneš explained to him that as a small state we could not afford to pursue a double-dealing policy, and if the Soviets wished to do so, he would inform Churchill and Sikorski about the Soviet stand against the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation. The President told me later that Bogomolov did not send him anything but Beneš nevertheless passed on the relevant information to Churchill and Sikorski..." (Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě v exilu, Vol. II, Washington, 1966, p. 66).

115 Feierabend wrote that Bogomolov made this statement to him on October 5, 1942, in a "violent, non-diplomatic manner"...(Ibid., pp. 66-67).

subsequently rejected Beneš' attempts to substitute the proposed confederation with a mere Czechoslovak-Polish treaty of alliance. Disheartened, Beneš informed the Poles and the English about these developments and hoped that Eden who had promised to take up this matter with the Russians, might somehow change Stalin's mind. This was a futile hope, however, and Beneš was soon to realize that "there was also no hope that the British or the American Government could overcome the Soviet opposition towards the confederation efforts of the nations in Central Europe. The British and the Americans were willing, because of the want of a second front, to politically retreat from Central Europe which was far from "the Seven Seas" and in which the West had no direct political interest..."[116] This realization forced Beneš to conclude that in such circumstances there just did not exist a sufficiently powerful force which was willing to apply pressure on Stalin to lift up his veto against the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation.[117]

---

116 Ibid., pp. 67-68.

117 Professor Václav Beneš (nephew of President Beneš who spent with him the war years in England) told the author that he was well conversant with this entire drama and emphasized the fact that Stalin's "first veto" was for President Beneš an especially painful and humiliating experience. He explained that the latter had well known that Stalin had been playing with him "a dirty game", and that had not really surprised him but what had shocked him was the evident disinterest of the West to prevail upon Stalin, especially after Sikorski's well-known pleas, to drop his veto in this case. Professor Beneš recalled what his uncle told him in the summer of 1942: "I am frightened to think what Stalin will do when his victory over Hitler is assured when he can do things like this (his veto against the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation - note by author) at this time when he still so desperately needs Western military aid and his final victory is far from being certain". (Author's interview with Professor Václav Beneš held at the University of Indiana at Bloomington, on March 2, 1971).

President Beneš' efforts to break the hostile encirclement of Czechoslovakia, so disastrous to it at the time of Munich, through a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation were thus destroyed by the Great Power in which he saw since Munich the most powerful Czechoslovak Ally against Germany's "Drang nach Osten". Having immediately begun to search for a suitable alternative, President Beneš came up early in 1943 with an idea of a tripartite alliance of Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Soviet Union; [118] by presenting this idea he had officially acknowledged, however, that his idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation was definitely annihilated by Stalin.[119]

---

118 For details see Táborský, E.,"A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation,"pp. 393-394.

119 Feierabend mentions that the members of the Czechoslovak Government in London were informed about the Soviet prohibition of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation only on December 8, 1942 during an informal meeting of the Ministers at President Beneš. "...Beneš informed us that it was necessary to abandon the idea of a Czechoslovak-Polish confederation because the Soviet Union was against it..." His speeches and articles of the late 1941 - late 1942 period reveal Beneš' volte face in this idea which constituted an extraordinary and almost unimaginable feat to perform for Beneš in such a fundamental policy, and caused him so much embarrassment especially among the British, and hostility among the Poles: while late in 1941 and early in 1942 he spoke of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation as an entity that could "already be considered an accomplished fact" (see note 110 of this Chapter), by the end of April, 1942, after he had already "smelled trouble" (Táborský, E., ibid., p. 388) from the Soviet side, he toned down his emphasis on this confederation, saying that the idea of confederation was basically sound and that " ...The members of our Government believe, for instance, that our projected confederation with Poland will benefit our Polish neighbours no less than ourselves..." and then emphasizing instead the point that it would be a mistake "to attempt to establish new international units without making the previous necessary arrangements with the great European allies, Great Britain on the one side, and the Soviet Union on the other, who are both vitally interested in the European Continent..." (Beneš, E., "The Future of the Small Nations and the Idea of Federation", a speech of Dr Beneš

---

at the Foreign Press Association luncheon on April 28, 1942 in Towards a Lasting Peace, Three speeches of President Beneš, pp. 26, 29). In his speech given only two weeks later, President Beneš did not even once mention the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation although he spoke about the role which Czechoslovakia would play in post-war Europe; instead he came forward with his idea that "we cannot even begin to decide the status of Central Europe until we have found, and applied, the just solution for the German problem..." (Beneš, E., "Towards a Future and a More Lasting Peace", a speech of Dr Beneš at a luncheon organized by the Liberal Social Council in the London National Liberal Club on May 12, 1942, in Towards a Lasting Peace, pp. 32-42). From 1943 on, Beneš spoke only of the Tripartite Czechoslovak-Polish-Russian Alliance - see e.g. Beneš, E., The Future of Europe, the University of Chicago Round Table, Interview with Quincy Wright of May 30, 1943, Chicago, 1943, pp. 14-16; Beneš, E., "Czechoslovakia Plans for Peace" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 23, No.1, October 1944, pp. 26-37.

2. Beneš' Dilemma : East or West? - Beneš' Answer: East and West

> ...in our cultural development... we have always taken deliberately a general and universal line... which includes not only the development and progress of the West but also the progress and development of the East.. we have instinctively expressed our age-old effort to avoid simply and slavishly imitating cultural and other values of a particular nation and to cultivate instead a general human, an explicitly universal culture and progress while clinging passionately and obstinately to our national forms...
>
> And so our answer to the question: West or East? is to say deliberately and plainly: West and East. In this sense - and in this sense only - did I sign and approve the treaty with the Soviet Union of December 1943, intentionally and consciously linking it with the Anglo-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942. At the time I firmly believed that this treaty would continue in operation after the war ended. Was I right or wrong?[120]

When President Beneš wrote these words and asked this desperate question in the Hradčany Castle in the summer of 1947, he was already able to see that his hopes in the post-war close East-West co-operation, on which he had based the entire future security of his country, were rapidly deteriorating. His desperation was greatly accentuated by the fact that less than a decade ago he had to witness a similar tragedy when all he had built, all in which he had believed, hoped for and desperately tried to preserve, had rapidly and inevitably been destroyed by the dictator from Berlin who was then able to get his way not so much because the West had feared him but because of the reality that there was another dictator at Moscow whom the West had feared more. Beneš' inability and unwillingness to dissociate himself and his country from the Soviet Union during the pre-Munich period had brought about the destruction of the First Czechoslovak

---

120 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 282; (Beneš keeps on wondering on the next three pages about his forecasts on the East-West post-war co-operation and repeats the question about his correctness on page 285).

Republic which was left alone to its fate by the West mainly because of its Soviet connections and pro-Soviet Beneš' stand.[121] In 1947 the rapidly growing tension between the East and the West left his country fully exposed to the whim of the dictator from Moscow and "the poison of Bolshevism" of which he had been so fearful during the war,[122] and, in the same fashion as it had happened nine years earlier in 1938, Prague found itself again completely alone to face this mortal danger. It was already noted that Soviet Russia was destined to be the curse of Beneš' entire political career not only during the era of the First Czechoslovak Republic and the Munich period but even more so during the post-Munich and the World War II epoch. The story of Beneš-Stalin relations during this latter epoch is a tragic story of Beneš' seemingly brave and brilliant diplomatic moves and tactical manoeuvres vis-à-vis Stalin based, however, on non-Masaryk-like, faulty and unwarranted philosophical concepts which, while in the short run did not clearly reveal their true nature at the time because they were screened by rapidly moving series of events and circumstances, in the long run they displayed unmistakably their character and were bound to inevitably gain supremacy in the development of the Czechoslovak-Russian relations and spell a new disaster for

---

121 See Chapters III and IV of this study.

122 Beneš had consistently referred to dangers of "spreading of the Bolshevik poison" to Europe in general and Central Europe in particular, in his talks with British Foreign Office staff (see e.g. his talk with Leeper of November 22, 1939 - note 95 of this Chapter).

Czechoslovakia.[123] The most fundamental truth which Beneš was never able or willing to see when there was still time to take it into account and amend his policy accordingly was the fact that there was no substantial difference between the goals of imperialist policies of Hitler and Stalin; to the two dictators, bent on world domination, Czechoslovakia presented, because of its key geographical position in Europe, the primary target. Had he grasped this reality he would have been unable to fail to conclude that any Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty without the co-signatures of the United States and England would provide Czechoslovakia with the same amount of security as was provided to countries such as Poland by treaties which they had earlier signed alone with Hitler; consequently he would not have committed such a fallacy as the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1943,[124] and his whole attitude towards the Kremlin's dictator would

---

123 There always existed a double danger for Czechoslovakia in having been closely associated in any form with Soviet Russia: first of all, in its whole philosophy the latter state represented evil - oppression of human liberties internally and imperialisms externally - and it therefore followed that any state associated with it would immediately become a part of that evil itself and would face a continuous danger that it would, in the end, perish by it itself; in the realm of the Realpolitik, Soviet Russia, as a Great Power, was always in the position to force upon small Czechoslovakia its will when it suited its purpose, and isolated Czechoslovakia was in no position to resist alone the power of Moscow.

Of the many works dealing with the tragedy of the Beneš-Stalin relations in the decade between Munich and the February 1948 Communist Coup d'état, the three following Táborský's works provide a solid basis for an understanding of forces, events and circumstances which made President Beneš act in the way he did (these works are listed in the chronological order in which they were written and published):

(i) "Beneš and the Soviets" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 2, January, 1949, (pp. 302-314).

(ii) "Beneš and Stalin-Moscow, 1943 and 1945" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 13, 1954, (pp. 154-181).

have drastically been changed. The reasons, which prevented Beneš from having followed such a course, require a careful analysis of his post-Munich political behaviour and the principal forces, events and circumstances which formulated his attitude towards Soviet Russia during the entire period of his second exile.

Following Munich by which his political personality was almost totally destroyed, Beneš stated that the annulment of Munich was his supreme, "... in fact, it was already my only aim in life...";[125] all his actions of that period must therefore be viewed from this plane. During his pre-Munich Presidency the preservation of the Czechoslovak Republic in its entirety was his supreme goal, his holy mission; afterwards his holy mission aimed at the restoration of the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic and the assurance that a new Munich would not, and could not, recur in the future. Munich was equally devastating on Beneš' attitude towards the West and although he had outwardly appeared to preserve a correct stand towards the two Western participants at Munich,

---

(iii) "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No. 4, July, 1958 (pp. 669-684).

124 His subsequent repetitious explanations that he had signed the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1943 only as a link with the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942 (such as the one quoted at the beginning of this Section of Chapter VI) and the corresponding need for justifying his own role played in this entire drama demonstrate clearly his growing uneasiness and concern about the correctness of his relevant actions. Just as he had incessantly been haunted in the post-Munich period by the doubts as to the wisdom of his decision to capitulate to the Munich Dictate, he was then being haunted by his vision of, for Czechoslovakia, disastrous developments, stemming from his signature of the Treaty with Stalin.

125 See note 81 of this Chapter.

England and France, even at the times when he had to undergo the greatest personal humiliation and mental stress,[126] he was inwardly extremely bitter not only towards those two Powers but also towards the United States in general and some of its diplomatic representatives in particular.[127]

---

126 Thus following Hitler's occupation of Prague, in his dispatch 377 from Washington of March 31, 1939, British Ambassador Sir R. Lindsay reported that while "the two or three utterances which Dr Beneš has made, have been dignified and restrained and in the nature of protest against the outrage of a fortnight ago... Jan Masaryk, on the other hand is reported from San Francisco as having expressed himself with a bitterness and injustice towards Great Britain and France which can only be excused on the grounds of the intensity of his own feelings..." (BFO, C4964/3955/18, FO 371/23081).

127 Only on rare occasions had Beneš made remarks which illuminated the true intensity of his feelings of this bitterness: In regard to France it was his remark that it was good that France fell and was occupied by Germany since he hated even to think about having to travel there, that best illustrated his bitterness towards the country which he had for so many years loved and admired (see note 42 of Chapter V of this study). His lengthy and irritating fights with the British for their recognition of the Czechoslovak Government and annulment of Munich had only reinforced Beneš' bitterness towards England but he was careful to express his true feelings only on rare occasions and usually to his closest associates. Thus when the English kept on persisting in following some of their tactical manoeuvres which were for Beneš especially irritating, such as e.g. their consistently delaying tactics employed throughout the second half of 1943 in regard to granting their approval to his trip to Moscow, his proverbial patience wore thin, he emphasized that he was not prepared to go along with them much longer, and Smutný quoted the usual remark, made by Beneš on such occasions which documented his true feelings of bitterness towards the British: "..'They cannot tell me what to do, I still have a score to settle with them', he keeps on saying this to emphasize that what they had politically done to us in Munich offers also an affront to his own person and therefore the need for settlement of this 'score'..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 316, p. 386).
Dealing with the same matter, Beneš told Smutný on August 22, 1943: "It is clear to me why the English had done this. (i.e. delaying his trip to the Soviet Union - note by author) It seemed to them that my trip to America was too much successful. They found out that Roosevelt

The greatest destructive effect of Munich on Beneš' political behaviour, however, reflected itself in his interpretation of that event in regard to the Soviet Union which was destined to bring about the second disaster to his country within a decade: he was convinced that Munich would not had happened if the Soviet Union had not completely been isolated by the West at that time. He felt that he might have unwittingly contributed to this Russian isolation by his relying too exclusively on the French security system and by not having formed, long before Munich, a wholly independent alliance with the Soviet Union in the East. Subsequent to Munich Beneš was therefore determined that he would strive to base Czechoslovakia's security in equal measure on both the Soviet Union and the Western Powers, working also for Soviet Russia's full inclusion in the concert of the Great Powers. In addition, he was equally determined to break Czechoslovakia's encirclement by hostile neighbours first by his abortive attempt to establish a Confederation with Poland[128] and, at the same time, by ensuring, through his own efforts, that

---

and Sumner Welles asked me for my views on Soviet matters and that Roosevelt entrusted me with some matters in Russia. They do not like this. It is the question of prestige. It is not sound that a member of a small nation should grow in such a manner. But I will never forget this and their turn will also come..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc.No. 298, p. 361).

In regard to other occasions when his patience with the British gave in, he would employ a warning coupled with undisguised threats (see e.g. note 83 of this Chapter). In regard to the United States Beneš' feeling of bitterness is evident in his writings: see e.g. Mnichovské dny, pp. 332-336; Memoirs, pp. 172-174; see also DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 73, p. 95.

128 See the previous Section of this Chapter.

Czechoslovakia would enjoy in the future a common frontier with the Soviet Union so that his country would acquire as a new neighbour a Great Power which would form the ideal constellation for its future security against new German threats.[129] Pursuing these goals, he was convinced that an understanding with the Soviet Union was essential to the restoration and security of the Czechoslovak Republic, and his own interpretation of the various Soviet acts aiming at the consolidation and increase of its power, such as the conclusion of the Ribbentrop - Molotov Pact, had demonstrated how little it varied from that given by the Russians and how dangerously was Beneš prepared to go to accommodate himself to the Kremlin views because they appeared to him also to reflect his own interpretation of the Czechoslovak interests.[130]

---

129 A common Czechoslovak-Soviet frontier was an entirely new concept in Dr Beneš' quest for post-war external security of Czechoslovakia. He described that for Czechoslovakia this was "one of the lessons of Munich" (Memoirs, p. 139); it stemmed from his memory of his unsuccessful attempts, prior to, and during the Munich crisis, to receive Rumania's permission for the passage, through its territory, of the Soviet troops coming to Czechoslovakia's aid (similar requests to Poland would have been at that time quite absurd due to the then existing political realities). Such a new frontier could have been achieved through Russia's annexation of Eastern Poland and/or of Rumania's Provinces of Bukovina and Bessarabia as well as, but not necessarily so, of Czechoslovakia's Ruthenia.

130 See notes 116 and 117 of Chapter V of this study; on July 12, 1941 Beneš told Smutný that before the outbreak of the war he was afraid that Chamberlain would agree with the Russians on the preservation of status quo. "That would had been for us an everlasting catastrophy. It was in our interest that Hitler be defeated... Russia through the agreement (Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact - note by author) and Chamberlain through his guarantee to Poland helped to save Europe by the fact that they got it involved in the war. I had had the only fear that there would have been no war and therefore did all within my means to prevent the occurrence of such a situation in which we would have been the only

On September 19, 1939 - only two days after Russia's invasion of Eastern Poland - when Soviet Ambassador Maisky returned Beneš' visit at his Putney home,[131] Beneš, having propounded his concept that after the war the Czechoslovaks had to be "neighbours of the Soviet Union directly and permanently", stressed to Maisky "the necessity of the Soviet Army reaching our frontier" and then, in an alarmingly glaring unstatesmanlike and certainly unconstitutional and totally unwarrantable manner had placed for the first time Ruthenia's future at stake when he had it offered in a subtle and indirect fashion to the Russians.[132] This event which Beneš himself had so carefully documented provided all his opponents with an irrefutable argument that Beneš was not a faithful student and follower of Masaryk in actions of this nature since they constituted his teacher's very anti-thesis.[133] Notwithstanding Beneš' numerous subsequent pronouncements to the effect that "the Ruthenian question would be solved by means of free voting after the war",[134] or that Czechoslovakia

---

victims..." Smutný thereupon summarized this Beneš' interpretation of the European situation in so far as it affected Soviet Russia: "Having signed on August 23 (1939) the Pact with Germany and thus having pushed it into the war, Russia earned in our circles an immense merit. Through the fault of all Europe, Czechoslovakia was the sole state which was forced to take infinite delight from such a horror as is the war. Without the war we would have ceased to exist..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, p. 243).

131 For the August 23, 1939 Beneš' visit of Maisky see note 118 - ibid.

132 No serious objection can be raised to this author's interpretation of Beneš' words in regard to Ruthenia used on this occasion which he documented himself (Memoirs, pp. 139-140): "...The question of Subcarpathian Ruthenia will be solved between us later and we surely will agree!.. However matters end we two (meaning Czechoslovakia and Soviet Russia - note by author) will surely agree on our common frontiers at the

considered Ruthenia as a part of its territory,[135] the damage inflicted by Beneš upon the Ruthenian cause on September 19, 1939 had been irreparable and greatly facilitated Ruthenia's conquest by Soviet Russia at the close of the war, although even Stalin himself, following several Soviet official assurances that Moscow recognized the pre-Munich frontiers of Czechoslovakia, told Beneš bluntly during the latter's 1943 visit of the Kremlin upon being asked about the status of Ruthenia: "Subcarpathian Russia will be returned to Czechoslovakia. We have recognized the pre-Munich frontiers of Czechoslovakia and that settles it once and for all".[136] In summary, on that fateful day Beneš while dealing with an Ambassador of the then Nazi Germany's Ally had committed an indefensible act by

---

end of the war without any noisy quarrels and without crises..." When these words are projected on the screen of the then existing political realities of the developing Soviet-Czechoslovak relations - the former having been an autocratic imperialist Great Power eagerly seeking inroads in Central Europe and the latter a small state, morally shattered by Munich and physically devastated by Nazi occupation and by the war - it becomes clear that the only agreement on Ruthenia "without any noisy quarrels and without crises" could only be that concluded on terms dictated by the Kremlin.

133 Of the many works dealing with the fundamental differences in the political behaviour of T.G. Masaryk and Beneš, one of the most interesting is: Polák, F., "Beneš a Masaryk" in the Zpravodaj, Chicago, May, 1967, p.4.

134 Beneš' statement made in Chatham House at Oxford on March 8, 1940 (DHČP, Vol. 1, Document 61, pp. 83-84).

135 Beneš' statement to Soviet Ambassador at London, Maisky, made during their talk on July 9, 1941 (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 198, p. 242; also Doc. 196, p. 239).

136 Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", pp. 166-167.

unconstitutionally dealing with the subject of Ruthenia and indirectly offering it, or at least admitting the possibility of using it as a barter in exchange for a common frontier with the Great Power which had just then concluded a Pact with Hitler and the imperialist plans of which were then under progress in the fourth partition of Poland. By doing so he not only jeopardized the future of the Ruthenians who looked upon him, and rightly so, since he was, both de iure and de facto, the supreme political personality of the Czechoslovak Republic, as their main protector of their rights of its citizens but had set a fatal precedent for accommodating further Russian demands.[137] Furthermore, even if the events of this disastrous day were put aside, Beneš' persistent requests of the Soviets for their assurances that Ruthenia would again form a part of Czechoslovakia after the war indicated his own feeling of insecurity about its future status.[138] There was only one

---

137 Viewed from an objective plane, this was very disturbing development in Beneš' political behaviour; while he did not even then cease to make claims of being a true student and follower of T.G. Masaryk, the distance between them grew continuously bigger until the abyss between them became unabridgeable. This phenomenon could only be explained by the observation how by Munich mentally and psychologically mortally wounded Beneš became on that day so totally overwhelmed by his concept of the indispensability of the Soviet Union for the restoration and future security of Czechoslovakia that he overruled all other considerations.

138 Táborský explained that ever since 1939 Beneš had "some doubts whether Ruthenia in fact could be recovered. He was certain that Hungary (which seized the territory in 1939) could not keep it but he was not sure whether the Russians as co-victors might not claim Ruthenia on ethnic grounds as they had done in eastern Poland..." He then summarized Beneš' stand in regard to Ruthenia: "...He definitely did not like the idea of giving up that territory and was ready to exert every effort to recover it and to retain it. On the other hand, he did not want to do

aspect of the Ruthenian future about which he was consistent and

---

anything that would alienate the Russians. He thought he must remain on good terms with the Kremlin, for otherwise Communists might deliberately create chaos and confusion in Czechoslovakia at the end of the war and might even establish a Communist dictatorship. Moreover, he did not see how he could insure his country's security without Soviet support should Germany become a threat once again. Thus, if the price of those good relations with the Kremlin had to be Ruthenia, he was prepared to sacrifice it..." ("Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 164).

The last sentence of the above quotation from Táborský constitutes a very grave judgement of Beneš and theoretically places him in the same category of men whom he had so greatly despised and so harshly judged - Chamberlain and Daladier; while these two men had been following, during the pre-war period, the policy of appeasement of Hitler, and had been prepared, and in the end they had done so, to sacrifice the existence of Beneš' Czechoslovak Republic, "if the price of those good relations with the Nazis had to be Czechoslovakia", Beneš, while having followed the same policy of appeasement, directed it instead towards Stalin. There was also a difference in kind of the victim: while Chamberlain and Daladier were prepared to sacrifice another state in order that they would, as they believed, preserve their own states, Beneš was prepared to sacrifice a part of his own state and was thus, de facto, not only defeating himself, his own sacred mission of the restoration of "Masaryk's Republic" in its entirety but also set up an extremely dangerous precedent which the Russians employed later in denying Czechoslovakia other parts of its territory, such as was the case of the Kladsko, Ratiboř and Hlubčice territories which Russia had forced Czechoslovakia to give to Poland. Beneš' inability and unwillingness to see that by appeasing Stalin he was bound, in the end, to reap the same harvest as did before him all those who had appeased Hitler, proves further how intensive had been the damage which Munich caused to his political personality and behaviour and how distant was he already at that time, on philosophical and ethical grounds, from his great teacher T.G. Masaryk. There was no justification for Beneš to inform Maisky that his stand towards Ruthenia was that it could belong only to Czechoslovakia or to Russia and that this matter would be agreed upon after the war only by "us" (meaning himself - note by author) and that nobody else had any right to take part in such an agreement; this was de facto from the Czechoslovak Constitutional law point of view a treasonable act which has also to be condemned on the grounds that it destroyed the democratic rights of the Ruthenian people to determine their own future guaranteed to them by the Czechoslovak Constitution.

Beneš' frequent attempts to justify his stand towards Ruthenia which confirmed his own uneasiness and doubts as to the wisdom of his course on this subject were irrelevant and immaterial and did not absolve him from his grave responsibility before the history: on one occasion he told

vehemently determined: it would never become a part of Hungary or Poland.[139]

Beneš' contacts with Maisky were closely watched by the British and resulted in Lockhart's stern warnings made in the fall of 1939 that "his reputation as a pro-Russian" caused him great harm in England;[140] subsequently Beneš had not visited Maisky for several months and felt obliged to ask the British for their advice on matters affecting his relations with Soviet Russia.[141] While he was for the time being forced

---

for example Smutný that at the post-World War I Paris Peace Conference it was the standpoint of the Allies that Ruthenia had not to become a part of Russia that this territory became a part of Czechoslovakia. He added that such a decision was possible to carry out at that time because of the Russian absence at that Conference; at the next Peace Conference Russia, as he hoped, would be present as a victorious Great Power and the situation would be quite different; (Beneš' talk to Smutný of July 12, 1941, DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 198, p. 242).

139 DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 198, p. 242.

140 Secret Foreign Office Minute prepared by Lockhart on May 17, 1940 (BFO, N 5717/5717/38, FO 371/24856).

141 Thus e.g. when the Soviet Government had sent in May 1940 a private message to Fierlinger (the former Czechoslovak Minister at Moscow) that "it would be glad to see him back in Moscow as a private emissary of Dr Beneš" (after having his legation closed by the Russians, Fierlinger left for Paris), Beneš asked Lockhart for his and his Government's advice on this matter. After his analysis of this matter Lockhart concluded that from British point of view he would be in favour of sending Fierlinger to Moscow but that he had little faith in Fierlinger's judgement and that Fierlinger was certainly not a big man. When Dr Beneš subsequently asked Moscow to accept Fierlinger as the representative of the Czechoslovak National Committee, Maclean of the Foreign Office wrote on June 20, 1940 that Moscow rejected such demand, and commented that this matter should "rest for the time being mainly because of Fierlinger's personality since he was always nothing else but a mouthpiece for the Soviet point of view and for ideas and whispers that the Soviet Government are trying to put about. There are already so many of these mouthpieces in Moscow and elsewhere and they make our task so difficult that I personally should be extremely reluctant to add to their number". - All the concerned F.O. officials agreed with Maclean. (Ibid.)

to abstain from any open contacts with the Soviet Union, he continued to view political events, such as the Soviet-Finnish war, as developments which fitted his interpretation that the Soviet Union "was consistently and undeviatingly pursuing its aim of wishing to protect itself against Germany both territorially and strategically... (it) was ceaselessly preparing for war and trying to guard itself against all possible eventualities to which war might give rise..."[142] Following closely his policy of non-antagonizing Russia, he shrugged off the closure, by the Soviets, of the Czechoslovak legation at Moscow and the recognition, by them, of the Tiso Government.[143] During the entire August 1939 - June 1941

---

142 Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 145-146.
For his stand towards the Soviet-Finnish war and other acts of Soviet aggression which was appraised as that ranging from benevolent tolerance to whole-hearted approval, Beneš was subjected by many scholars to very severe criticism: Lansing wrote that "Such a flagrant Russian imperialism as the attack on Finland elicited no condemnation from Beneš and, on the contrary, Beneš deplored Russia's expulsion from the League of Nations. Soviet seizure of the Baltic states and Bessarabia was bypassed by him without comments. In Beneš' point of view these Soviet aggressions weighed little compared to the disturbance they were creating in Russo-German relations..." (Lansing, A.E., op.cit., p. 154). Cernicek, attacking Beneš' "positive policy towards the Soviet Union which remained unreciprocated" stated that it led to "actions or statements in which the Czechoslovak leaders, as representatives of a small nation which had fallen victim to imperialist policies of a great power, condoned and even applauded when the Soviet Union treated its small neighbours in the same fashion, and excused this with the 'necessity of defence'. This became manifest during the Soviet war with Finland. While the vast masses of the Czechoslovak people fully sympathized with small Finland, the Czechoslovak leadership in London took the opposite stand. Ripka, writing in 1944, even took pride in the fact that Czechoslovakia (i.e. Beneš) had failed to sympathize and morally support Finland in its struggle against the Soviet odds and pressure: "I need only recall how strongly our attitude contrasted with that of many others during the Soviet-Finnish war (Ripka, H., East and West, London, 1944, pp. 35-36)",(Cernicek, A.D., op.cit., p. 160).

143 Beneš was obviously uneasy when he wrote about this episode and rather ineffectively attempted to provide some plausible excuse for

period when the over-all Soviet policy was clearly detrimental to Czechoslovak interests, Beneš never staged any open denunciation of the Kremlin. He always counted upon, and from the beginning of 1941, his "political calculations became an absolute conviction"[144] that the participation of Soviet Russia in the war against Germany was inevitable and only a question of time, and that its good will was an absolute necessity for the restoration of Czechoslovakia.

There were numerous factors which brought about and affected Beneš' policy towards Soviet Russia in the post-Munich era: the most important of these was undoubtedly Munich and Beneš' claim that the Soviet Union was "at the time of Hitler's direct attack against Czechoslovakia the sole European Power which kept its word and wanted already in 1938 to bring about Hitler's downfall and to free Europe from Nazi danger";[145] the

---

these Soviet hostile actions: "...I gave much attention to the way in which the Soviet Government emphasized the 'insignificance of these various formalities', - the description envoy Fierlinger told me had been applied to the recognition of Slovakia, the abolition of our Legation, etc. when he left Moscow..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 145); he had also stated that he "expected that this change of Soviet policy would prove only temporary and provisional. Therefore we did not protest. We waited patiently for the day when it would be possible for us to return to our joint policy and to renew our friendly diplomatic relations. That day came more than one and a half years later after Germany attacked the Soviet Union in June, 1941"(Ibid., n. 11, p. 98).

144 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 147.

145 Beneš, E., Nová Slovanská politika, Praha, 1946, p. 45. Táborský wrote that at the time of Munich, "Beneš was, of course, fully aware of the abstract character of the Russian promises, and that was why he saw no other way out than capitulation. Nevertheless, he never forgot that while Chamberlain and Daladier were working to break down his resistance, the Russians at least made a gesture of willingness to help, and no other country did even that..." (Táborský, E., "Beneš and

other very influential factor was his interpretation of the Slavic problems and the new Slavic policy in which he foresaw the post-war Soviet Russia as a democratic Great Power which would ensure that all other Slavic states would also follow the democratic way in harmony and co-operation with Western Great Powers.[146] When outlining his policy towards Moscow, Beneš had also placed a great weight on the traditional Czechoslovak feeling of friendship towards Russia[147] but

---

the Soviets", p. 305).

On September 29, 1943 Beneš told Feierabend that he did not trust blindly the Soviets but that he was to them extremely grateful that they had behaved in an exemplary fashion during the Munich crisis; (Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, Washington, 1966, p. 87).

It was only after World War II, when excited Beneš told Herben, on August 22, 1945 that he had diplomatic documents to prove that the Soviets had betrayed Czechoslovakia in the same fashion as had done Daladier and Chamberlain and that their willingness to come to help was only the usual Communist trick"...'I am going to prove it! I am going to expose this deceit of the Soviet diplomacy and the legend of our Communists!' shouted the President with his fists clenched above the head, in the manner I had never seen him before in my life..." (Ibid., p.134).

146 The tragedy of Beneš' concept of the new Slavic policy was the fact that it was, in so far as Soviet Russia was concerned, wholly based on his tactical considerations and wishful thinking, rather than on the existing realities. While he had quite correctly exposed the truth that "it is in substance of all the Slavic nations that if they take part in anything on the side of a physical, brutal power, they are defeated and become its victim" (Beneš, E., Nová slovanská politika, p. 44), he unfortunately did not apply this maxim to Soviet Russia victimized by physical, brutal power of foreign-bred tyranny of Communism which presented in itself the very anti-thesis of all traditional Slavic values which he kept on emphasizing in this and his other works dealing with problems of Slavic politics (see e.g. his voluminous Úvahy o Slovanství, London, 1945, 259p.).

147 Thus in his memorandum of November 1, 1940 to General Sikorski explaining in detail his conception of the Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation, he wrote that "Il y a une sorte mystique russe chez les Tchécoslovaques" which could even become stronger at the end of the war (Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", p. 384).

without offsetting it by making sufficient allowances for his country's hostility towards communism which he believed, especially after the dissolution, by Moscow, of the Comintern,[148] would gradually become in Russia less and less pronounced in proportion to the rise of Russian nationalism and democratization. While in his messages home he often issued warnings to Czechoslovak underground leaders about the dangers of Communist subversive activities aiming at their conquest of Czechoslovakia, these warnings alone had not provided a sufficiently secure barrier against such Communist activities;[149] many Czechs became utterly

---

148 Feierabend spoke with Beneš in Chicago on May 23, 1943 about the dissolution of the Comintern: the latter stated that the Soviets had acted in good faith and that by having done so they would eliminate much of the suspicions that had until then existed in the world of their intentions and that he himself would be more believed when he insisted that the Soviet Union had no intention to bolshevize its neighbours. When Feierabend asked if the dissolution of the Comintern was not only a tactical manoeuvre, Beneš smiled and added: "You are an Agrarian whom the Soviets cannot please regardless of what they are doing"..(Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, p. 83).

On May 30, 1943, President Beneš was interviewed by Quincy Wright (professor of international law at the University of Chicago) in the most important political program of the period in the United States carried out by most of the American radio stations, the University of Chicago "Round Table". Having been asked about the significance which he attached to the dissolution of the Comintern recently announced by Stalin, Beneš replied: "I consider the dissolution of the Third International a very important act in international policy for the advancement of international understanding. It will dissipate many suspicions existing on both sides"..(The University of Chicago "Round Table", May 30, 1943, No. 271, pp. 7-8).

149 In his message of September 1, 1939 he wrote: "...It is evident that the Soviets are expecting a social revolution to take place, in accordance with the spirit of their policy. Therefore we shall have to be careful concerning this..." On October 4, 1939 Beneš warned that "Russia will want to join in against Germany at a given moment with the thought of preparing revolutions and insurrections...." On August 2, 1940 the warning in his message was especially clear: "It is necessary to resist

convinced by Munich that the West could never again be trusted and turned to the East where they saw a new hope for the future of their tortured country, unable or unwilling to see the deadly dangers of Russian Communism.[150] They were greatly confirmed in this conviction by observing the immense difficulties which President Beneš was experiencing in having England and France to declare that they considered Munich and its consequences void and null - Táborský saw in this difficulty one of the factors which pushed Beneš towards dependence upon the Soviets.[151]

---

the exaggerated Sovietophile feelings and Communist propaganda. The Soviets will adopt a brutally egoistic policy and will change it whenever it suits their purposes. The aim of their policy will always be dual: primarily, the defense of their own territory and their own interests by using other states and nations, including Czechoslovakia; secondly, their ultimate revolutionary social aims... Our cooperation with them... remains and must continue. But always remember these facts and be careful..." (Quoted by Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 675: he added, therein, that he would be able to cite many more such warnings which Beneš sent in his messages to Czechoslovakia both before and after the German invasion of Russia).

150 The author was told by Dr Eduard Táborský during his interview held at Austin, Texas on March 7, 1971 that President Beneš was literally "bombarded", especially after Hitler's attack on Russia, either by requests of the Czechoslovak people at home to visit Moscow as soon as possible or by their inquiries why he did not go there already; even many of the prominent Czechoslovak personalities in London had held at that time the same opinion. There are many documents (in DHČP, Vols. I and II covering that period) which indicate that on occasions Beneš was exposed to great pressures to pursue an even more active policy towards the establishment of the closest Russo-Czechoslovak relations than he was willing to follow.

151 Táborský's observation is an excellent one: furthermore, had England and France repudiated Munich immediately after Hitler's invasion of Prague, the Communists would have lost immense source of propaganda material which they employed so skilfully and effectively among the Czechoslovaks at the time when they were especially exposed and

Hitler's attack on Russia made possible the establishment of an East-West Anti-German Alliance which Beneš had been advocating for so many years, and in which he saw the only guarantee for the restoration and preservation of Czechoslovakia because, as on so many occasions before, he was carried away also in this case by his overly optimistic personal belief that this Alliance would continue unabated after the end of the war and would form the basis of a new World Order. Yet the establishment of such an Alliance depended entirely on Churchill's reaction to this new situation. Beneš stated that he "was particularly anxious that the British reaction to this great event should be the right one, in line with conditions on the Continent and especially with the Allied and our own aims and interests and also with the interests of the Soviet Union itself".[152] When Churchill had announced that the British would provide Russia with all the help they were able to extend and would ask all their friends to do likewise, President Beneš was

---

vulnerable to such a propaganda because the disaster of Munich was still a vivid all-encompassing national tragedy and their bitterness towards the West was overwhelming; (Táborský, E., "Beneš and the Soviets", p. 305).

152 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 152; Beneš had admitted that "On Sunday 22nd, (June 22, 1941 - note by author) when the crossing of the Soviet frontier by German armies was reported, we in London were all in a state of extreme tension and expectation as to how Great Britain and the United States would react..." (Ibid., p. 154). - Smutný was told on June 23, 1941 by Beneš: "...I was nervous all day yesterday, not because I would not be composed in regard to Russia, but I was nevertheless not certain what would be Churchill's reaction in his evening speech..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 193, p. 234).

jubilant;[153] he thought that he had himself played an important role in having Churchill arrived at such a decision.[154] In his important radio speech to the Czechoslovak people at home he emphasized the fact that by Hitler's attack on Russia, Europe arrived, after having suffered the three terrible years of tragedies and catastrophies, at the point where Czechoslovakia wanted to have Europe already in 1938 when it was yet possible to easily destroy Hitler, and that all the events subsequent to Munich confirmed the correctness of the policies he had been following during his Foreign Ministry and his Presidency both at home and in the exile.[155]

---

153 Táborský wrote that "...Beneš felt himself the luckiest man in the world when, on that sunny Sunday, June 22, 1941, war began between Russia and Germany..." ("Beneš and the Soviets", p. 307). - Beneš' reaction to Churchill's speech in his own words was that it had "dispelled all our apprehensions and uncertainty..." (Memoirs, p. 154), and that it "was of course much better than I had expected. He (Churchill - note by author) had very clearly formulated the standpoint of England and had shut mouths to all those who would have liked to talk about a separate peace or about leaving Russia to its fate. He had said that very well..." (Smutný's transcript of Beneš' remarks to him of June 23, 1941, DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 193, p. 234).

154 Beneš wrote that he had been providing the British Foreign Office with his "opinions and frequent items of information about the situation in Germany and Central Europe and on the possible trend of Soviet policy", that he was unable to say to what extent these opinions had swayed British circles when Russia was forced to enter the war but added: "...In any case they had a quite considerable influence..." He emphasized that he was on June 21 and 22, 1941, in uninterrupted contact with Lockhart and through him as an intermediary with the Foreign Office and with Prime Minister Churchill until the latter's speech of the evening of June 22nd; (Memoirs, p. 152). Beneš also noted that even after Churchill had delivered his speech, he "had to convince other British political and military circles time and again of the necessity of marching together with the Soviet Union in the interest of us all unconditionally and to the end..." (Ibid., p. 154).

155 Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 73-77.

Having attained, through Hitler's fateful step, his aim of involving Soviet Russia in the war on the Allied side,[156] Beneš concentrated his attention towards the establishment of a solid East-West war, and especially post-war, Alliance on which he decided to build the entire future of his nation. He attached a great importance to the Russo-English Treaty of July 13, 1941 by which the two Powers agreed, besides pledging mutual help against Hitler, not to sign either a separate armistice or a separate peace with Germany.[157] During the

---

156 Beneš had explained to Smutný on June 23, 1941 his thesis of events of June 22, 1941: "...Yesterday gives me a great satisfaction, even a personal gratification for everything I had to go through and suffer. Yesterday has completed the reparation of Munich, there has been created yesterday the situation which I had wanted to have at the time we should have gone in the war, and as I had well known, the only correct situation which should have existed. It is a splendid satisfaction to our policy, we had gone in a right direction. It was not our fault that the others had not understood in September, 1938 where had been their place. All of them had thought that they could dodge their obligation, their mission, they had not known what was Hitlerism and what were Germany's aims. I had not miscalculated, they had miscalculated. Hitler could have long time already been destroyed. Today they all finally are in the same front, Russia, England... Even the Russians have to be taught a lesson, I would not want their victory to be an easy one, it would then be impossible to manage to live with them and with Communism... And at the same time I also called them names because they were doing horrible things, rot. How much patience did all this require! Already in America, and even here. Here they kept actually doing everything to keep the Russians out of the war. And I was mistrusted, even in America because I kept on talking everywhere about Russia. I expected that they would have to get involved in the war, but it was not an easy task to hold the development of affairs in such a fashion, even among our own people that nothing irreparable would happen..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 193, p. 234).

157 This was a matter of extreme importance to Beneš. If before September, 1939 he had been filled with the fear of a second Munich and desired desperately the outbreak of the war ("I had consciously and everywhere worked towards the outbreak of the war. I gladly confess to this because otherwise we would have never gained our freedom. If Europe did not fight, the Republic would have forever remained occupied by

entire period between Hitler's attack on Russia and his trip to Moscow of December, 1943, Beneš kept on expressing in his talks with the British and particularly with the Americans his faith in the future democratization of Russia and its sincere willingness of lasting friendship

---

Germany... this time our nation would have died more quickly than after the White Mountain... Only the war can liberate us..." - Ibid., p. 235), he subsequently dwelled in a continuous dread of a premature peace which would fail to restore Czechoslovakia, worked for an expansion of the war in general, and for the involvement of Soviet Russia in particular. Beneš and his staff were constantly exposing Nazi peace offers and their underlying fear of the realization of peace through such offers was clearly evident from many of their statements (see e.g. Central European Observer, Vol. XVIII, No. 23, p. 322 and No. 25, p. 351). It was for this reason that President Roosevelt's third election on November 5, 1940 was greeted by Beneš with unrestrained joy (in his F.O. memorandum of November 7, 1940, Lockhart reports that "Dr Beneš was well pleased with Roosevelt's victory which he regarded as the turning point in the course of the war..." and that "on Dr Beneš' recommendations, virtually the whole of the large Czech vote in the United States was given on November 5 to Roosevelt..." - BFO, C12087/12087/12, FO 371/24292; Beneš referred to this Roosevelt's victory on many occasions, such as in his radio broadcast home on June 24, 1941: he claimed that this victory meant a certain defeat of Germany because Roosevelt would definitely help England against Germany by the employment of the United States military resources - Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 73); Eden's return to the Foreign Office was also greeted in the same vein since Beneš was certain that Eden would not conclude a compromise peace with Germany at the expense of Czechoslovakia.

Documents reveal the little known fact that during the period immediately preceding Hitler's attack on Russia Beneš had been undergoing severe mental depression and nervous tension caused mainly by his anxiety about the possibility of a peace between England and Germany; his fears were sparked when Hess parachuted into Scotland on May 10, 1941 in an attempt to offer England peace in return for Nazi hegemony on the European continent and when he had been informed that Winant had been bringing to Washington Churchill's message that the United States had to enter the war as soon as possible or that England would be forced to consider some kind of peace negotiations. On June 5, 1941 Smutný told Stránský that Beneš had only had one health and one set of nerves that he had been unable to go to London a day earlier because he had not felt well, had been exhausted from overworking that all had to be extremely careful about sparing his health because if Beneš were to die, the Czechoslovak cause would be lost. Smutný concluded that he considered it to be his mission to ensure that Beneš would be able to conclude his life task; (DHČP, Vol. 1., Doc. 181, p. 225). On June 7,

and co-operation with the Western Powers.[158] The climax of his efforts in this direction was reached during his visit of the United States and Canada in May and June, 1943 in general and of President Roosevelt in particular.[159] Beneš' inordinate preoccupation during this visit with persuading Roosevelt and the Americans in the sincerity of the Soviet Union led Feierabend to his famous remark that Beneš had then devoted more time to the Soviet Union than he had done to Czechoslovakia.[160]

1941 Smutný explained in detail to Beneš' personal secretary Táborský the state of Beneš' health: "...Beneš is healthy but somebody like myself who knows him for many years cannot fail to notice one serious fact. Dr Beneš has not today his nervous system so resistant and inaccessible to shocks as he used to have earlier. He reacts today to events in a much more sensitive manner, and his reaction is not full of optimism but he is inclined under the pressure of events to see in them the worse side which brings about a waft of pessimism which was earlier by Beneš utterly unusual. This is for example again evident in the last days when Beneš very much takes into consideration the German peace attempt which has begun by Hess' arrival and is now fully under way during Winant's journey to America..." (Ibid., Doc. 182, p. 225).

158 An entire study could be written on the highly controversial subject of Beneš' influence in the West during World War II in so far as his interpretation of Russian intentions was concerned and cannot even remotely be given justice in this study. It has to be pointed out that Beneš became a regular and certainly an important source from which the West drew its information on Germany, Central Europe and Soviet Russia. (See e.g. USDS, 760F.61/98, /99, /100; Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 183-187, 242-245; DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 198, p. 242).

159 See Beneš, E., President Beneš on War and Peace, Statements by Dr Beneš during his visit to the United States and Canada in May and June, 1943, New York, 1943; Address of H.E. Doctor Edvard Beneš to members of the Senate and of the Canadian House of Commons in Ottawa, Official Report of Debates of House of Commons, Dominion of Canada, 7 George VI, 1943, Vol. IV, June 3, 1943, pp. 3328-3333.

160 Feierabend who was Minister of Finance in the Beneš Government at London and who had also visited the United States at the time of Beneš' American visit though in another matter, summarized in a clear fashion his appraisal of Beneš' 1943 visit to the United States which has ever

By doing so, Beneš found himself in an entirely familiar milieu: he repeated his frequent performances at the League of Nations at Geneva during the period between the two world wars when he had been playing, or on occasions had at least been attempting to play, the role customary reserved to a representative of a Great Power and not of a country of Czechoslovakia's size. He felt it to be his task to convince the West in general, and Roosevelt in particular, that it was entirely fallacious and unreal to even consider the possibility of an attack, by the West, on the Soviet Union either after the defeat of Hitler[161] or after some

---

since been widely quoted by experts in Czechoslovak affairs: "...After what I had heard from Beneš in the United States and in the Government I felt that in his discussions with American representatives he had devoted more time to the Soviet Union than to Czechoslovakia, and that he had wanted some of them to confirm, and the others to inspire, in the confidence in Soviet declarations made to the effect that they wanted loyally to cooperate with all the states, the small and the large ones, and did not wish to interfere in their internal matters. It seemed to me that Beneš instead of taking care only of the Czechoslovak problems, dedicated too much time to international problems, that he wanted to be a bridge between the East and the West and, in the same manner as before the war, he wanted to play a greater role in world politics than the one which belonged to a representative of the Czechoslovak Republic. I had the impression that Beneš was mainly interested in persuading Roosevelt that the Soviet Union abolished the policy of world Communist revolution and was willing to honestly work even with the states of other political and economic system..." (Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, pp. 36-37).

161 The main reason for his stand was his ever-increasing fear that the intensified German propaganda about the danger of Bolshevism and the urgent necessity of saving civilization from this threat, could be successful in the West by finding support among the old enemies of the Soviet regime; (See e.g. Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 247-254).
Beneš' own evaluation of his 1943 visit of Roosevelt when this very subject had been dealt with, was given to Herben on August 22, 1945 who mentioned it in his letter to Feierabend of September 25, 1965: "...The President recalled with a certain shade of sorrow his visit of Roosevelt

kind of arrangement with the Germans following "an overwhelming Russian success."[162] During the entire period of World War II Beneš consistently

---

in the White House. And as though he would have repented himself, he repeated several times that Roosevelt had interrupted during the conversation many times his arguments, had confidentially taken Beneš by hand and had put to him an urgent question: 'You are, after all, the expert on Russia. Do you think that the Soviet Union will be so exhausted at the end of the war that we could by employing the Allied Armies, defeat not only Hitler but also Stalin?' In a little while Roosevelt had repeated this question in another form: 'Do you think that we could march across Berlin all the way to Moscow?' And then Dr Beneš was telling us again with a certain shade of apology that he had persuaded Roosevelt about the unreality of this idea and had assured him again at the same time that the Soviets were democratizing themselves, that they were establishing rapprochement with the West and that after the war they would loyally cooperate with the Western Democracies. 'So, as it is evident, I had completely persuaded Roosevelt', concluded Dr Beneš. Nobody from around the family table, as we subsequently told each other, had the impression that the President had been boasting himself by this sentence - on the contrary, we had the impression that he had been apologizing..." (Quoted by Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, Appendix 1, p. 134).

162 At the meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff held at Chateau Frontenac in Québec on August 20, 1943, Western military strategists discussed the possibility of repelling the Russians to stop their takeover of Europe if they suddenly began overrunning Germany and President Beneš' views played a prominent, if not decisive, part. Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, stated that in general, the Russians were in a stronger position than ever before because they had reserves available for further offensives in the fall, and that he did not believe there was any chance of the Germans achieving a negotiated peace with the Russians who had "too much to wipe off the slate".

General George Marshall, Brooke's American counterpart referred to the forming of a "Free Germany" movement within Russia. From reports he had received, it appeared that Russia was turning "an increasingly hostile eye on the capitalist world of whom they were becoming increasingly contemptuous". He then asked Brooke about his views on the possible results of the situation in Russia with regard to the deployment of Allied forces - for example, in the event of an overwhelming Russian success, would the Germans be likely to facilitate the entry of Allied forces into Germany to repel the Russians?

Brooke replied that he had in the past often considered the danger of the Russians seizing the opportunity of the war to further their ideals of international communism. They might try to profit by the chaos and

and unwaveringly followed his policy of resolute fighting against any German agreement with the West in regard to the cessation of hostilities prior to Hitler's attack on Russia[163] and subsequent to it, against any form of German-West agreement resulting in their mutual anti-Russian military campaign: he understood that to accommodate Germany, the West would again sacrifice his country in another, and even more disastrous Munich.[164] He did not trust the Western Powers that they had really

---

misery existing at the end of hostilities. He had, however, recently raised this point with Dr Beneš who had forecast the Russian order to international communist organizations to damp down their activities. Dr Beneš' view had been that since Russia would be terribly weakened after the war, she would require a period of recovery, and to speed up this recovery would require a peaceful Europe in which she could take advantage of the markets for her exports. While going along with Beneš' view, Brooke expected that there would be Russian demands for a part of Poland, at least part of the Baltic states, and possibly for concessions in the Balkans. He concluded that if she obtained these territories, she would be anxious to assist the West in maintaining the peace of Europe. (Minutes of Meetings of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, Cab. 88/113 (43), Minute 9 - "Military Considerations in Relation to Russia" - Vol. 3, pp. 127-128).

163 The British had perceived this Beneš' policy soon after the outbreak of the war. Minutes of the War Cabinet's meeting of December 11, 1939 indicate that the British Government noted that "...Ever since the early armistice proposals of von Papen which he proposed to the Dutch Minister at Ankara and which were contained in telegram No. 553 of October 3, 1939 from the British Ambassador in Ankara, by which Czechoslovakia would be restored with status similar to that of Luxemburg, the Sudetenland to remain German and Slovakia to be independent on the German model (contained in the Confidential Annex to Cab 65/36, (39) 8 of October 4, 1939), Dr Beneš fought consistently against any German-West agreements during the war..." (British Cabinet Papers, War Cabinet, Minutes of the Meeting of December 11, 1939, Cab 65/111 (39) 14).

164 The author was told during the interview held at the University of Indiana at Bloomington on March 2, 1971 by the nephew of President Beneš, Professor Václav Beneš, who had spent the war years in London with his uncle that he was told by him during that time on many occasions that he was very much worried by the possibility of such, for Czechoslovakia a disastrous

wanted to restore the pre-Munich Czechoslovak Republic after the war; only the Soviet Union kept on giving him repeatedly its assurances and declarations that it recognized Czechoslovakia in its pre-Munich frontiers - the West was not prepared to commit itself to such a course.[165]

In so far as purely Czechoslovak internal matters affecting his Government were concerned, Beneš' position vis-à-vis Moscow prior to his fateful trip there in December, 1943 was to ensure that no independent Czechoslovak Committee would be established at Moscow as was originally suggested to him and advocated by the Russians: this would have meant, de facto, an independent Communist Government of Gottwald not falling under Beneš' supreme authority and control.[166] When the Russians

---

agreement between the West and Germany which according to his information had already come on several occasions quite close to becoming a reality, and was still presenting a continuous threat. Professor Beneš felt that this fear caused his uncle to speak much more on behalf of Russia than he would otherwise had; in his idea of forming a bridge between the East and the West, President Beneš saw during the war period his most effective way of preventing a West-German anti-Soviet coalition and of successfully completing his mission of restoring the "Masaryk" Czechoslovak Republic.

165 Both England and the United States had consistently refused to grant Beneš their recognition of the Czechoslovak pre-Munich frontiers, and documents of the period reveal Beneš' frustrations, bitterness, mental depression and annoyance caused by this attitude of the West. Thus, e.g., he was forced, on the pressures of the British Foreign Office, to strike out in his radio broadcast home of July 26, 1941, dealing with the subject of the recognition of the Czechoslovak Government by the Soviet Union and England (Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 77-80), all the references to the Czechoslovak frontiers, and Smutný states in his note of July 27, 1941 that Beneš was very much upset by this British interposition (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. 210, p. 255).

166 In his conversation with President Beneš on July 9, 1941 Russian Ambassador at London, Maisky, suggested that "the Czechoslovak political affairs in Russia should be directed by a Czechoslovak National Committee".

ostensibly readily agreed with Beneš and never brought up again with him this scheme, he became further convinced that in so far as Czechoslovak affairs were concerned he would always somehow be able to manoeuvre the Russians into agreeing and going along with his proposals so long as they would not endanger their own security, and he was very careful not to give them any pretext to claim that his policy was contrary to their interests. This conviction coupled with his belief that Stalin was in general "a reasonable man who knew what he wanted"[167] and his interpretation of the importance of the future role of Russia in Central Europe[168] governed his attitude towards the Kremlin during the war. Yet

---

Beneš immediately rejected this suggestion and told Smutný three days later that Maisky's suggestion was only a trick by which Gottwald would have liked to form his own Government in Moscow (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc.No. 198, p. 241).

167 Beneš described Stalin in this way in his conversation with Smutný of July 18, 1941 (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 205, p. 252). His interpretation of Stalin "who knew what he wanted" was incorrectly based on the fundamental premise that Stalin was "a reasonable man" in dealing with other nations in general and with Czechoslovakia in particular: the latter because of Beneš' long-standing personal efforts to maintain friendship with Russia even during the most adverse periods when such friendship ran contrary to his own personal, as well as to his own country's vital interests.

Beneš' rare subjective remark made to Smutný in the above conversation is of interest in this study of his political personality: having described Stalin he added: "...It is, of course, an easy matter for him (Stalin - note by author) to conduct politics in Russia. O my God, how everything would have to keep on rolling if I had one-sixth of the globe behind myself. But how dreadful it is for anyone to conduct politics in this our terrible geographical position. We are forced to fight for everything, to suffer through everything, we are always exposed to the first strike. And we shall have the Germans around us always..." (Ibid.)

168 Shortly after Hitler's attack on Russia, on July 9, 1941, Beneš told Smutný that the whole future depended on the condition in which the Russians would appear after the war. For Czechoslovakia this fact was of

he felt that to be successful in containing the Soviets from meddling in the internal affairs of his state he had to ensure that Russian troops would not occupy Prague[169] and that Czechoslovak forces would join up the Russian drive in order to be at hand in Czechoslovakia at the time of

---

utmost importance and constituted the decisive factor of its security because according to his expectations France would be unable to play a leading role in European politics even after two decades, England would withdraw from Europe after five years and go along with the United States in other direction, and only Germany and Russia would remain in Europe. Since Germany would be devastated, Russia would play the decisive role in Eastern and Central Europe. He added that he was mainly preoccupied with seeing that the Russians would follow a good policy; (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 198, p. 241).

169 In a Secret Report attached to his letter to President Roosevelt of February 20, 1942, Ambassador Biddle deals in part with Dr Beneš' views on the future developments in Europe and the East-West relations and provides a hitherto unknown and astonishing information that "Dr Beneš said that in recent friendly and informal talks with Russian Ambassadors Majsky and Bogomolov he had stated his frank opinion that Russia would make a fundamental mistake if she were ever to move her troops into Prague. In the first place, the Czechoslovaks would react towards the Russians as they were now reacting towards the Germans. Moreover, through the tragic results of German occupation of Prague, he had pointed out the world had learned the full meaning of Bismark's statement that whoever mastered Prague would be master of Europe. The world had learned its lesson on this score - and it was well for them to bear this in mind, in case the Russians were ever tempted to occupy Prague. Indeed, he had stressed, the presence of Russian troops in Prague would no doubt eventually provoke a consolidation of world forces against her (Russia)..." (President's Secret File - PSF - A.J.D. Biddle Jr., FDRL, Report's p. 12, n.8; only Biddle's letter of February 20, 1942 was published in the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1942, Vol. III, pp. 108-110).

Smutný records that Beneš while talking to him on September 28, 1943 about Russian intrigues to discredit him in the eyes of the British in connection with his planned trip to Moscow while applying on him their own pressure to undertake this trip even against the British wishes, stated that it was clear to him that "Moscow was playing with us (the Czechoslovaks - note by author), that in reality it was afraid of a strong Czechoslovakia, that it wanted to weaken the Republic in order to be able to have it as its compliant instrument. But the Communists are going too fast and have revealed their policy too soon. They are able to be successful only in one case - if Soviet troops occupy the Republic and install the Soviet

Russian penetration in the last phases of the war followed by representatives of the Czechoslovak civil administration: he was not convinced that without taking these measures the Soviets would not take advantage of the situation and would not spread throughout his country their poison of Communism. He equally stressed the necessity of Western military penetration into Central Europe to act as counter-balance to the Soviets: he held that an Allied, not a Russian victory, was essential to ensure an Allied, and not a Russian peace.[170]

President Beneš' 1943 trips to the United States and Canada in May and June, and to the Soviet Union in December, constituted the

---

regime. However then the same thing will happen to them that happened to Germany; we will replace the German Protectorate with a Russian one, the Soviets will be hated as much as are the Germans and our future relations will be destroyed forever. Dr Beneš therefore hopes that the Russians would not take such a step. But Dr Beneš is certain that in every other case the Communists will lose by employing their tactics. He agrees that it will lead to a struggle, that all the other political parties will unite against them. If they want a fight, they will have it and they will lose it if Russia will not help them militarily..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc.No. 310, p. 379).

Beneš wrote that during his December, 1943 visit to Moscow he had asked Stalin in the presence of Molotov that "our own military units should always enter our territory with the Red Army; that the occupation of our territory should always be left to us provided our numbers were sufficient, that our internal order should be respected and that our territory should be progressively handed over to our own civil administration..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 263).

170 Ambassador Biddle's Secret Report attached to his letter to President Roosevelt of February 20, 1942, Section entitled "Dr Beneš' Views on the Necessity of an Allied, not a Russian Victory, to Insure an Allied, not a Russian Peace", pp. 11-12, FDRL.

It was for this reason that "what perturbed his (Beneš' - note by author) mind was the fear lest the war should be over before the Anglo-American forces had landed in Western Europe. He was an ardent "Second Frontier" because he hoped that the Anglo-American armies, together with

climax in his seemingly successful quest, during the period of his second exile, for the post-war external security of Czechoslovakia by incessantly doing all in his power to help in building up a lasting post-war East-West cooperation on which he based the future of his country as well as to ensure that Czechoslovakia would retain good will and friendship of, or at least, the assurance of the non-intervention into his country's internal affairs by either of the two Power Blocks.[171]

---

or even without the Soviet forces, would liberate Czechoslovakia..." (Lockhart, Sir R.B., "The Second Exile of E. Beneš," p. 54).

171 For details about events surrounding these trips see: The Czechoslovak Information Service, President Beneš on War and Peace, Statements by Dr Beneš during his visit to the United States and Canada in May and June, 1943, New York, 1943; Táborský's three works listed in n. 123 of this Chapter; Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 180-187 and 254-275; Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou; Polák, F., Jak došlo k nastolení komunistické diktatury v Československu, New York, 1968; Ripka, H., The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty, London, 1943; Klátil, F., ed., Po moskevské cestě, London, 1944.

Among the most important American State Department's documents dealing with these President Beneš' visits are:

1. USDS, 860F.001/127 1/2, /128 and /129 (covering the period of November 19, 1942 to March 25, 1943 and dealing with arrangements concerning this visit, including Roosvelt's invitation and Beneš' acceptance);
2. Memorandum on "General Policy of the Czechoslovak Republic" prepared on May 31, 1943 by Berle of the State Department from Beneš' talks with Roosevelt, Hull and Welles (USDS, 860F.00/1009);
3. Biddle's dispatch 61 from London of May 28, 1943 on Masaryk's report to the Czechoslovak State Council on the subject of Beneš' conversations at Washington (USDS, 860F.001/138);
4. Harrison's telegram 6871 from Switzerland of November 2, 1943 informing of Beneš' forthcoming visit to Moscow and a Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty to which British objections were dropped by Eden under Soviet pressure at the recent Moscow Conference (USDS, 860F.01/512);
5. Winant's telegram 15 from London of November 11, 1943 requesting to be informed whether or not there are any objections to Dr Beneš' plan to visit Moscow and State Department's reply of November 13, 1943 that it perceives no objection to Dr Beneš' plan (USDS, 860F.001/161);
6. Harriman's telegrams Nos. 2278, 2284, 2316, 2322 and 2353 from Moscow deal with Beneš' Moscow visit and indicate the importance which the United States attached to it (USDS, 860F.001/162-/168);
7. Winant's tel.1 from London of January 13, 1944 attaching Schoenfeld's report on Benes' trip to Moscow (USDS, 760F.61/124 - also 860F.001/177).

His political personality was at that time, as it had been the case throughout his entire political career and remains so even at the present time, a matter of bitter controversies: he has been either hated and harshly criticized or admired but there was no person who would have remained indifferent to him after having either met him or studied his political behaviour.[172]

---

172 The following two examples of contradictory reaction to President Beneš' political personality which took place during his 1943 American and Canadian trip suffice to provide a representative illustration of the two opposing camps on Dr Beneš:

1. American Assistant Secretary of State Breckenridge Long wrote in his diary about Beneš: May 12, 1943: "Churchill arrived yesterday, unheralded, and Beneš today with the fanfare indicating the head of a state - no matter how small. The ceremony is almost under my office window - guards at the side entrance to the White House, Marine band, motorcycle escort, saluting with arms, company formations and the national anthems. So I have it forced into my consciousness". May 14, 1943: "Dined with Beneš at the Czech Legation (or Embassy...) As a successor to Masaryk he is wanting in the scales - a scheming, unprincipled man. The people of Europe have no confidence in him - but he emerges as President of his state - in exile. Beneš is just a sample of what the difficulties will be when we come to settle the Central European questions - boundaries, refugees, "rulers", jurisdictions, official ambitions, factional disputes, racial distinctions and minorities!!

And there is no answer!!"

(Israel, F.L., ed., The War Diary of Breckenridge Long, Lincoln, Nebraska, 1966, p. 309).

2. Immediately following President Beneš' visit to Ottawa of June 1-5, 1943 which was described both by the Czechoslovak and Canadian officials as having been "such a great success" (Czechoslovak Minister at Ottawa Pavlásek's letter to Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs N.A. Robertson, No 1361/43 of June 8, 1943, Department of External Affairs, Canada, File 53-TQ-40C "Visit to Canada of President Beneš of Czechoslovakia" - this file which covers the period of April 7, 1943 to March 10, 1944 documents Dr Beneš' inordinate ability to work out flawlessly to the smallest details all the arrangements regarding his visit in order to ensure the greatest possible propaganda effect for the Czechoslovak cause, and in this aspect he was triumphant. The author was informed on April 26, 1973 in Ottawa by O. O'Brien of the Public Archives of Canada where this file is now being kept that Dr Beneš' war visit to Ottawa was one of more than 200 visits made by foreign dignitaries during the war, and each of

The Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty was the result of President Beneš' habitual and proverbial search for the security of his country by means of arriving at skilfully prepared formulas in solemnly signed treaties in accordance with the strict rules of the diplomatic protocol which he believed to be binding for, and followed by, all the signatories to such treaties; it was not the result of his blind trust of the Soviets of which he has subsequently and so frequently been accused.[173] Little

---

those visits produced a file; of all these files External Affairs asked the Public Archives to preserve only the five most important files and Dr Beneš' file is one of them) Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King "...began to feel he should go through another election. On Sunday, June 6, he wrote in his diary: 'I have come to have a great desire to go on with my life work - to play a larger part with the people - Dr Beneš' visit has been an inspiration!' (Dr Beneš, of Czechoslovakia, had just visited Ottawa and made a great impression on Mackenzie King). 'His life and work has brought that of grandfather's very close to me - their lives were much alike in what they represented of 'turbulent' effort for the rights of free men - they were both true patriots. My life should have been more expressive of those forces within myself and its real purpose. I have felt a certain return of health and with it a willingness to try one more political campaign!..!" (Pickersgill, J.W., The Mackenzie King Record, Vol. 1, 1939-1944, Toronto, 1960, pp. 564-565).

Having written these words in his diary and having received Dr Beneš' thanks for his reception at Ottawa, Mackenzie King personally prepared and sent on June 8, 1943 an enthusiastic telegram to Dr Beneš (addressed to the Czechoslovak Embassy at Washington): "I thank you warmly for the kind message you sent to me on your departure from Canada. Your visit was a real inspiration to us all. I shall treasure always as part of an enduring friendship its many recollections and find in them new hopes for the victory of the Allied cause. I send you, my friend, my every good wish. Kindest personal regards. W.L. Mackenzie King". (Department of External Affairs file 53-TQ-40C). - It should be added that a message of this friendly and warm nature was for Mackenzie King a highly unusual thing to do: it was brought about by the great impact which Dr Beneš' political personality left upon his own, and it is for this reason that the Canadian Department of External Affairs decided to preserve Dr. Beneš' file.

173 President Beneš stated on numerous occasions to members of his Cabinet and of his staff what he had told Minister Feierabend on

is known that Beneš vigorously opposed the attitude of most of the members of his Government who were in 1943 completely overcome by their anti-British feelings caused by Munich and by the British Government's position towards the Czechoslovak-Russian treaty that they lost all their sense of perception and having gone to the other extreme, saw in Russia Czechoslovakia's only salvation[174] that he had to keep on consistently

---

September 29, 1943: "...Do not think, colleague, that I blindly trust the Soviets... I very well know Great Powers and the Soviet Union is today an enormous Great Power. Great Powers always act from the point of view of their own benefit. Even the Soviet Union does not offer us a treaty of alliance because it likes us but because it is profitable to its policy. I do not forget that fact.- Do not worry in the least about our treaty with the Soviets. I have entirely thought it over. The Treaty is to our benefit..." (Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, p. 87).

"Beneš of Geneva", of diplomatic negotiations and agreements, of trust in treaties and of happiness when he had, or was about to have, a treaty promising security to his country in his pocket, appeared in him fully on October 27, 1943 when discussing the cessation of British objections to the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty, he stated: "...I am only now calm, when I have this treaty. Only when they will be reading it, will the people see to what all did Russia bind itself..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 336, pp. 406-407).

174 Smutný dealt in 1943 on several occasions with this phenomenon. On August 22, 1943 he noted that Dr Beneš took the British opposition to his trip to Moscow "too much personally" that it seemed to him that Beneš "had considered it to be a form of his own personal failure" and stated: "...The British stand drives all our people into a very pronounced pro-Soviet position. This is so not only because of the logical reasons but also because of (a) the fundamentally distrustful attitude of many of them towards England; (b) a certain form of defiance, if you are opposed to our conclusion of a treaty with Russia so out of spite we will demonstrate to you that we shall do exactly that, and (c) the fact that it is the predominant argument for the President - that we really have to do so in the interest of the state. But the majority of our people is terribly anti-British... For them, all what is from the East is a priori excellent, what comes from here, from the West, is worthless, insufficient, reactionary... The President who is also only a man like the others will never lose his awareness that Munich was his own personal defeat, personal humiliation, defeat of his personal policy. He therefore developed the theory

intervening in their activities and forbiding them to take actions which would have seriously impaired Czechoslovakia's and his own personal position in the West in general and in England in

---

that we can never again trust the Western Great Powers. He personally formulates it in a logical manner, and arrives at the conclusion that we must rest our policy 50% on the West, 50% on the East, not only 100% on the West. It is, in other words, that what all of us who are reasonable want along with him and what must truly be alpha and omega of all our future policy. But "Benešovci" (followers of Beneš - note by author) who are a class of blind epigones of all what Beneš has ever proclaimed, are unfortunately those who are mainly spreading mistrust to the West. They are passionate like our Drtina (who was in charge of the Czechoslovak Information Service in exile) who is incapable of eating a single spoon of soup without repeating the word Munich, if his soup in England seems to him to be badly salted by English salt. Everything what was caused by Munich is an evil reality but to look on the future through Munich means to prepare another Munich, the reverse one. That is to say, to lean only against the East means to surrender completely into the Russian hands..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No 298, pp. 361-362); In another document of October 17, 1943 Smutný deals with his attempt to explain to Drtina "what are in reality the affairs and what are Moscow's intentions and policy. He belongs to those who hate the British and the French, he is one of those who 'will die of Munich'. These are the people for whom Munich became something what they will not forget and the date when their political development had stopped. Poor Drtina's first reaction was: this is true, but - and now with pathos and hatred: 'we must not forget that it was the English and the French who got us into all of this, and that they themselves are not conducting the war. Our people see that only the Russians are fighting'. It is in this manner that all the Czechoslovaks who are leftist - and now they are virtually all of them - reason..." (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc.No. 325, p. 398). On October 8, 1943 Smutný reported that Foreign Minister Masaryk had told President Beneš that he was getting tired of all the pro-Soviet trend among the Czechoslovaks in England and added: "...All of them have full pants because of their attitude towards the Communists, everybody is fearful of them, I have in the office people who immediately notify about everything the Communists and the Soviet Embassy, I do not know in front of whom I can and in front of whom I cannot talk. The same situation exists in the State Council, the Soviet Embassy knows what was being discussed in the State Council earlier than you. In the Government they are beside themselves from the Communists, Stránský and Ingr told me that the treaty with Russia must be concluded even if we had to, because of that, part company with England and America. So I told Stránský that he was an ox; I am supposed to go with this policy within two weeks to America. So it is better if they tell me that now and

particular;[175] the only time he let his Government to have free hand by allowing Ripka to persuade him to do so, it passed on September 24, 1943 such an obtuse motion concerning the urgent necessity to conclude the Czechoslovak-Soviet treaty even against the British opposition that Beneš had a great difficulty to overcome the damage caused by it in the West and having been unable to undo it entirely, was placed in a position of considerable degree of embarrassment with the British before they finally waved off their opposition.[176] Finally, it is also little known that President Beneš had first offered to the British the same treaty which he later signed at Moscow because he had wanted to first

---

I will not go there than if they were to do this when I will be there..." President Beneš told Masaryk: "Just say all this in the Ministerial Council (now, today it has a meeting) in the same manner as you have just told me. And most of all remind them to make sure that all this would not be talked about throughout London this very evening"...(DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 317, pp. 387-388).

175 In accordance with his habitual and strongest personality trait, Beneš kept on doing most, if not all, of the most important work alone and maintained an extensive control over the activities of the Czechoslovak officials in exile; (See e.g. DHČP, 2 Vols., passim).

176 This particular case which caused Eden to tell Masaryk that it resulted in "ugly opposition in the British Cabinet" to Churchill and Eden, and especially to the Czechoslovak cause, annoyed greatly President Beneš because he saw that Ripka's and the Czechoslovak Government's endeavour to catch the fancy of the Communists and the Russians as well as the State Council's and Fierlinger's (Czechoslovak Minister at Moscow who betrayed his country and acted solely as a Russian agent) work got Czechoslovakia into a lost position at the English and did not receive any gain at the Russians. Beneš concluded on October 8, 1943 in this regard: "It is clear that it is not sufficient for me to give the Government an advice, the next time I must simply say no..." He also added that the State Council wanted again to discuss at its last meeting the Russian treaty but that he had forbidden them to do so; (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 317, pp. 387-388; for other details about this case see ibid., Doc. Nos. 312, 313, 316, 324, 325 and 326).

conclude a Czechoslovak-British treaty; he was, however, scorned in his efforts by London.[177]

---

177 Minister of Finance in the Beneš Government, Feierabend provided an excellent record of Beneš' reasoning behind his attempts to conclude not only a treaty with Moscow but also with London which he personally stated to Feierabend on September 29, 1943:

"I have always been for the system of European collective security and I have not abolished this idea even today. On the contrary I am for it more than ever before. I have sufficiently learnt my lesson about that by Munich. We had a treaty with France, we had treaties of the Little Entente, we had a treaty of arbitration with Germany but all of it was to us of no avail because there was no system of collective security. There were in Europe two Power Blocks and the one to which we belonged had thought that it could buy European security by sacrificing us. I certainly do not need to persuade you that I am for the system of collective security.

After all, I have proven that even now by my offer to the British. In order that nobody could object that I am in favour of power blocks I offered Great Britain the same treaty as I did the Soviet Union. I wanted to go to Russia with the British Treaty in my pocket. It would have been a proof to the world that I want to lean in the same manner against the West as against the East that I want to conduct that European policy which I have always been proclaiming. I do not want to be dependent only on the Soviets although I know that I shall live in the zone of their influence and that I shall be their neighbour.

I was convinced that the English would grab by both hands my offer but instead of that they do not want to even hear about it. I am almost certain that in the same way as in the past, they do not have even now any interest in our European Area. We are not situated on the sea, we are in the heart of Europe, we are for them a far-away and unknown country as it was said by Chamberlain. After all, you were able to read it many times in their reputable papers. The rejection of my offer is the last proof of this fact.

We have to take the British stand into account regardless of whether or not we like it. I know, you are an Anglophil and are in the agreement with the British stand. Policy, above all foreign policy, cannot, however, be conducted on the basis of emotions but on the basis of realities. Remember that once for all. My policy is being directed by this fact, and I have always been acting according to it. We have the possibility of concluding a treaty with the Soviets and we cannot and must not let this opportunity let go by. It will be the recognition, in a solemn form, of Czechoslovakia and such a recognition will also influence Great Powers. It will be at the same time the proof that the Soviets do not want to bolshevize their neighbours when they will bind themselves by an international treaty that they will not interfere in our internal affairs. In this way will be disarmed those who still keep on seeing in the Soviets a revolutionary who

Beneš' seemingly triumphant conclusion of the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty at Moscow in December, 1943 commenced a period of his "jubilant optimism" which was to last eight months.[178] During this entire period he had to counter hostile and sharp criticism of the Treaty emanating

---

wants to communize the whole world. However, the Treaty with the Soviets will also constitute our assurance because it will take a long time before it will be possible to establish after the war a new League of Nations with a system of collective security..."
(Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, pp. 86-87).

178 Táborský who employed these fittingly descriptive words, added: "...They were the eight happiest months in his life since the curtain began to fall in 1938. The Munich humiliation was wiped out, the Nazi empire was about to collapse and its Fascist jackal already lay prostrate.. Beneš' consistent policy of East-West collaboration had seemingly been vindicated by events, his country's future seemed fully secured..." ("Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 159). - Táborský also stated that "...If ever Beneš went overboard in his confidence in Stalin, it was after his visit to Moscow in December, 1943. Those three short weeks played a fateful role in Beneš' subsequent attitudes toward things Russian and definitely tinted his glasses with rose..." ("The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 675).

Beneš himself stated, inter alia, in his Fourth Message to the State Council on February 3, 1944 while talking about his visit to Moscow and the Treaty: "...I may therefore state that as between the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia all fundamental and important questions relating to their mutual relations have been settled to the full satisfaction of both parties, in friendly harmony and complete solidarity and friendship. I hope that you will take full account of this fact, which has great political significance for our future, and I hope more particularly that it will be noted with full satisfaction by our Czechoslovak people at home..." (Beneš, E., Czechoslovak Policy For Victory and Peace, London, 1944, p. 27).

In his telegram 2316 of December 23, 1943 Harriman reported that Beneš had told at a Moscow press conference that "he considered his trip to the Soviet Union the crowning step in Czechoslovakia's struggle for independence" (USDS, 860F.001/166). On December 29, 1943 Harriman reported in his telegram 2353 that Beneš, upon leaving Moscow, wired to Stalin expressing his confidence that "the cooperation of our peoples will constantly become deeper and stronger"...(USDS, 860F.001/168).

For the history of the origins and the end of British objections to the Russo-Czechoslovak Treaty see the Summary of the Proceedings of the Sixth Session of the Tripartite Conference held at Moscow from October 18 -

from the British and American conservative circles and, above all, from the Polish exiles, all of whom saw in his action a disastrous step leading to the Soviet domination of Central Europe.[179] This comparatively happy period of President Beneš' second exile came abruptly to

---

November 1, 1943, Meeting of October 24, 1943, 3 p.m., attended by Foreign Ministers Eden, Molotov and Hull and dealing with "Questions of Agreement Between Major and Minor Allies on Post-War Matters", prepared by Charles E. Bohlen of the American delegation(USDS, 740.0011 Moscow/10-1843) and the two attachments given to Bohlen on October 25, 1943 by Boris F. Podtserob of the Soviet delegation (USDS, 740.0011 Moscow/10-1943). For the importance which the United States and England attached to the Treaty see the entire series of the United States Department of State's documents, USDS, 760F.61/99 - /124, covering the period of June 28, 1943 to January 13, 1944.

179 All the relevant available documents of this period reveal that Beneš "was elated over his reception, the conclusion of the Treaty and the free and intimate character of his conversations with Stalin and Molotov", that he was "thrilled at the change in attitude of the Soviets as compared with his twenty years previous experience" and that " he was convinced from the manner in which Stalin expressed himself that he spoke with full sincerity and without reservation (American Ambassador at Moscow, Harriman's telegram 2264 to Roosevelt and Hull of December 18, 1943 about his "long talk with President Beneš held a day earlier, USDS, 360F.001/163) and that he tried to persuade the West that his trip to the Soviet Union had the same goal as his earlier journey to the United States and Canada and that "it would, however, be a mistake to think that by signing a treaty with the Soviet Union Czechoslovakia has severed her political, economic and intellectual links with the Western democracies. By this treaty Czechoslovakia has renewed the treaty already signed in 1935 and has completed and strengthened the ancient bonds of racial relationship; she has assured for herself the political and economic collaboration of Russia in the future. By signing a treaty with the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia has merely taken into account present and post-war needs and especially her geographical position with Germany on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other..." (Speech of President Dr Edvard Beneš on CBC, March 10, 1944, Czechoslovak Information Service, Ottawa, p. 2, Public Archives of Canada, File 53-TQ-40C (Box 71/69), Ottawa).

its end by a whole series of Soviet anti-Czechoslovak moves which constituted flagrant breaches of Stalin's pledges to Beneš and which "filled the latter's mind with uneasiness and gravely shook his faith in the former's promises":[180] these Soviet moves were caused by the growing rift between the Western Great Powers and the Soviet Union and Stalin's feeling that Beneš had already become of much lesser use to him than he was in 1943.

The first of these Soviet acts of treachery occurred in August, 1944 when Moscow carried out, behind Beneš' back, secret negotiations with the Commander-in-Chief of the puppet Slovak Army, General Čatloš who was willing to betray Slovakia to the Soviets: it did not succeed, however, because Czechoslovak Military Attaché in Moscow, Colonel Pika, who was a great and honest patriot,[181] was able to warn in time Beneš who

---

180 Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 169.

181 Colonel Pika was the most outstanding Czechoslovak representative at Moscow during the war who sincerely worked for his country and was able, on several occasions such as in the above-noted case, to spoil Moscow's treacherous actions; Stalin never forgot his gallant stand, and had him, after the Communist coup d'état of 1948 executed on June 21, 1949. (For an excellent documentary study on Col. Pika see: Texte und Dokumente, "Der Fall Pika" in the Osteuropaeische Rundschau, Vol. XVI, No. 11, November 1970, pp. 38-41; Vol. XVI, No. 12, December, 1970, pp. 38-41; Vol. XVII, No. 2, February, 1971, pp. 39-41 and Vol. XVII, No. 3, March 1971, pp. 47-49). Fielinger and, of course, the Czechoslovak Communists have by then long betrayed their country and worked exclusively for the Soviets, although Fierlinger reported cynically from time to time to Beneš from Moscow in the same vein as he did on October 21, 1943 that he thought "that in the existing circumstances I had done for our state all what was possible to do" (DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 329, p. 403). Fierlinger's World War II Memoirs bear the title "In the Services of the Czechoslovak Republic" (Fierlinger, Z, Ve službách ČSR, 2 Vols., Praha, 1947-48); this is de facto a giant misnomer and should correctly be

"greatly dismayed, lodged a sharp protest which indeed caused the Soviets to abandon the negotiations".[182] The second act of Soviet perfidy was of a much more serious nature: it was their refusal, despite Stalin's promises given to Beneš in December, 1943, to supply those who were taking part in the Slovak National Uprising in September, 1944, with sufficient arms and allowed the Germans to crush it in a

---

entitled "In the Services of the Kremlin, In the Pay of the ČSR". Both the British and the American documents reveal that Fierlinger's stand was well known to them: the former stated about him that "...he was always nothing else but a mouthpiece for the Soviet point of view and for ideas and whispers that the Soviet Government are trying to put about..." (F.O. note prepared on June 20, 1940 by Maclean and agreed to by all the concerned officials of F.O., BFO, N 5717/5717/38, FO 371/24856); the latter's State Department received a dispatch from its Embassy at Kuibyshev of May 5, 1942 to the effect that it was believed that "the Czech Minister (Fierlinger) and the greater part of the Czech legation in Kuibyshev could almost be characterized as Soviet agents... evidence was accummulating to the effect that the Czechoslovak legation is spending a good deal of its time in serving the interests of the Soviet Government in such matters as reporting everything that is heard from other diplomatic colleagues..." (USDS, 861.00/11951).

Beneš himself was well aware of Fierlinger's treachery but he usually labelled him rather as having been a foolish young student who thought that he knew everything and all others were fools. "He will never change, he will always remain 25 years old, over that he will never advance... How many times I had to keep on saving him from situations which would have ended his career. How many troubles had he caused me already..." (Beneš' remarks to Smutný of November 1, 1943, DHČP, Vol. 1, Doc. No. 336, p. 406). Yet Beneš was not prepared to dismiss Fierlinger from his post because he was afraid that the Soviets would have interpreted such an action as a hostile act; Professor Beneš told the author in an interview held at Bloomington, Indiana, on March 2, 1971 that President Beneš on several occasions seriously considered taking this drastic measure but after having thought it over had always decided against it, arguing that he had to do all the work himself anyway and would always make sure that he would not give Fierlinger an opportunity to cause any more serious damage to the Czechoslovak cause.

182 Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 170. Táborský added that "the explanation offered by the Soviet Ambassador Lebediev on September 5, 1944, was not very comforting. 'The negotiations were led by the Communist Party' the Soviet Envoy told Beneš

similar way as they had crushed the Warsaw uprising a month earlier while the Soviet army was standing idly by.[183] Furthermore the attitude displayed by the Western Great Powers in this case was particularly alarming to Beneš who vainly tried earlier to get them involved in matters affecting Czechoslovakia so that the Soviets would not be the only Great Allied Power taking part in military operations on the Czechoslovak territory:[184] it officially confirmed for the first time his worst

---

blushingly. 'The Soviet Government had nothing in common with that!..!" (Ibid.)

183 Beneš who worked on the final draft of his Memoirs and had them published at the time of continuously growing tension in the Czechoslovak-Soviet relations during 1947, was painfully careful not to offend the Soviets by writing the truth about the collapse of the Slovak National Uprising: he only casually mentioned that "certain difficulties existed on the side of the British and the Americans in giving aid to the revolt..." (Memoirs, p. 253).

There is an excellent study dealing with the subject: Toma, P.A., "Soviet Strategy in the Slovak Uprising of 1944" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XIX, No. 3, October 1959, pp. 290-298. The Communists tried elaborately and eloquently but equally unconvincingly and unsuccessfully to hide and distort the truth that the Soviets did not want the Slovaks to free themselves from German domination by their own efforts but wanted themselves to occupy Czechoslovakia so that they would be in the position to impose a Communist regime and their own domination upon the Czechoslovak state; "the Soviets preferred an uprising liquidated by the Nazis to one helped by the West..." (Toma, P.A., op. cit., p. 296). Among the most important of such works published in Communist Czechoslovakia are: Holotík, L., ed., Slovenské národné povstanie roku 1944, Bratislava, 1965; Husák, G., Svědectví o Slovenském národním povstání, Praha, 1970; Jablonický, J., Z ilegality do povstania, Bratislava, 1969.

184 Into this category falls mainly President Beneš' desire early in the spring of 1944 to enter into civil affairs arrangements with the American, British and the Soviet Governments. A copy of a draft entitled "Scheme of Arrangements to Operate when the Allied Forces Enter Czechoslovak Territory" was handed over to Russian Ambassador Lebediev on March 14th, to British Ambassador Nichols and American Chargé d'Affaires Schoenfeld on March 17th (USDS, 860F.01/524). The English submitted on April 15, 1944 an Aide-Mémoire to the Americans informing them that they understood the

fears that not only the eastern part, but whole of his country was placed in the Soviet sphere of military operations and influence.[185]

---

reasons why Beneš wanted to enter into such an agreement with the Soviets but that "for geographical and practical reasons His Majesty's Government do not think any parallel Anglo-Czechoslovak agreement is called for at the present" and rejected as hypothetical Beneš' request for assistance in transporting the Czechoslovak Government representatives by British aircraft to liberated Czechoslovak territory. They also expressed their hope that the Americans would take a similar line and suggested that their two Governments should concert together in the future; (USDS, 860F.001/535). On April 15, 1944 Soviet Ambassador at Washington, Gromyko, asked Secretary Hull for comments about Beneš' draft to which the Soviets agreed save one amendment of its own which was to prove to be of paramount importance in subsequent developments - they substituted the word "Allied" in Beneš' draft with the word "Soviet" and placed the word "Allied" into parenthesis; Secretary Hull replied on April 20, 1944 that the United States had no objections (USDS, 760F.61/132). On May 2, 1944, Hull informed Schoenfeld that he was advising the Czechoslovak Embassy that "there is no present need for a United States-Czechoslovak agreement concerning civil affairs administration in Czechoslovakia" (USDS, 860F.01/524) and the British Embassy was informed to this effect on May 3, 1944 (USDS, 860F.01/535). Thus Beneš' attempt to have agreements with all the three Great Powers ended in failure; as in the case of the Treaty of Alliance, he ended only with an agreement with the Soviets; (USDS 760F.61/134, /135 and /136).

185 The story which appears from the American and British documents on the subject of the Slovak National Uprising is particularly pathetic and distressing to an objective observer: Following urgent requests for military aid, so desperately needed by the Slovaks fighting Germans in Central Slovakia, made by the Czechoslovak authorities to the three Great Powers on August 31, 1944 (USDS, 860F.20/8 - 3144), the representative of the British Chiefs of Staff proposed at the meeting of the Combined Chiefs of Staff of September 7, 1944 "to proceed with caution until more is known of Russian intentions, observing that Slovakia is in Russian sphere of operations..." and suggested that "...all air operations in support of the Slovak rising should properly be carried out by the Russians..." (British Cabinet Papers, Cab 88/31 - 669, pp. 99-100). In a memorandum of September 22, 1944 the United States Chief of Staff wrote that they "concur with the opinion of the British Chief of Staff that all air operations in support of the Slovak rising should properly be carried out by the Russians..." and recommended that all action be withheld pending receipt of information in regard to Russian intentions; (Cab 88/31-669/1, p. 101). Following further desperate appeal to the Americans, the British as well as the Soviets by Masaryk on October 24, 1944 (USDS, 860F.24/10- 2444; Cab 88/31-669/2, p. 102), the British Chief of Staff

This completely unexpected turn of events presented Beneš with an entirely new situation and an extremely alarming development.[186] He tried so consistently and vigorously to ensure that Czechoslovakia's after-war policy would lean 50% on the East and 50% on the West and that its territory would be liberated by Armed Forces of all the three Great Powers and until the fall of 1944 he was convinced, having been under the influence of his proverbial optimism that he would succeed. Then,

---

replied on November 3, 1944 that "these requests were examined in the greatest of sympathy and in close consultation with the F.O." and pointed out that experience had shown that "large-scale risings of the civilian population are almost certainly doomed to failure unless they can be rapidly and effectively supported by advancing Allied land forces. In the case of Bohemia and Moravia (sic!) such support can only come from the Soviet forces... it would, of course, be out of the question for us to undertake air operations in a theatre of imminent Russian land operations without fully coordinating these with Russian military plans..." (Cab 88/31-669/3, p. 102). Stettinius informed Schoenfeld on November 18, 1944 that in so far as the help to the Slovak Uprising was concerned "it was considered that geography left only the Soviet forces in position to do it", the Czechoslovak Government was informed to this effect on November 17, 1944 (USDS, 860F.24/11-1744). A day earlier this pathetic case was officially closed by the representative of the British Chiefs of Staff who wrote that they had just been informed by the F.O. that they had received no reply from the Russians and believed that the Russians had no intention of replying the British approach and subsequent reminders in this matter. The F.O. had accepted the military arguments against British assisting the rising as decisive and had so informed the Czechoslovak Government. "As the rising has now collapsed and the Czechs are inclined to attribute its failure to lack of Russian support, the F.O. consider it undesirable to press the matter any further"..(Cab 88/31-669/4, p. 106).

186 In his interviews with Ministers of the Czechoslovak Government Feierabend, held at Washington on September 17, 1967 and with Majer, held at New York City on November 14, 1970, the author was told that they well remembered how "extremely agitated" was Beneš during and after the collapse of the Slovak National Uprising, and Majer said that Beneš had told him at that time that he had seen another Munich in the offing and had been unable to perceive an effective remedy unless the West changed its stand and became interested in Czechoslovak affairs.

suddenly, he was forced to witness that he was already written off by the West and left alone to Stalin in a very much similar fashion as he was left by the West to Hitler in 1938.[187] Seeing the Soviet performance in regard to the Slovak National Uprising he realized that the Treaty and all the agreements with Russia he had in his pocket and about which he was so jubilant less than a year ago were nothing but pieces of paper and the interpretation of their provisions left at Stalin's discretion. Yet Beneš had to bear a great deal of blame for this attitude of the Western Great Powers because he had unwittingly provided them with an alibi for keeping hands off Central Europe in general and Czechoslovakia in particular: after all, it was he who kept on promulgating in the West, even during the most inopportune and adverse times for him to do so because of Russia's open acts of aggression and co-operation with Hitler, his thesis about the democratization of Russia and the ability of the West to trust Stalin's assurances that he wanted to sincerely cooperate with Western Democracies. Furthermore, Beneš had always vigorously opposed any idea advocating military campaign against Russia; if this was truly so as Beneš kept on saying during the entire period of his exile, then the West was in turn

---

187 In his Memoirs where he was extremely careful not to antagonize Moscow, Beneš wrote that he knew absolutely nothing about Czechoslovakia having been placed at the Teheran Conference into the Soviet sphere of operations and to emphasize this fact he underlined the following sentence: "As I have already mentioned, we were not told anything of these plans at the time either by the Soviets or by the Western Powers. The extent of these arrangements only became clear to us at the time of the Slovak revolt..." (Beneš, E., Memoirs, pp. 252-253).

justified to tell Beneš as well as themselves that they did not need to get involved in Czechoslovakia's affairs since according to his own thesis, the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty and other agreements between the two countries coupled with Beneš' friendship with Stalin, were sufficient guarantees for a secure and bright Czechoslovak future after the war.[188]

"The worst breach of faith (by Stalin - note by author) which occurred between the two journeys Beneš made to Moscow (the 1943 and 1945 journeys - note by author) was, however, the rape of Ruthenia".[189] The cynical manner in which the Soviets staged their usurpation of Ruthenia had on Beneš devastating effects[190] which were further enhanced by his own inner feelings of guilt because he himself well understood how greatly he had contributed to this development, though to others he attempted emphatically to refute his personal responsibility.[191] The

---

188 The development of "hands-off Czechoslovakia" policy by the Western Great Powers which had its origins at the Teheran Conference (for Beneš' explanation see his Memoirs, pp. 252-253) posed to Beneš his greatest dilemma which he was never able to solve and which relentlessly haunted him until his grave. He was signally unsuccessful even at the time of his own discovery of this Western policy during the Slovak National Uprising; it was completely illogical for Beneš after having promulgated for so many years his thesis about Russia to suddenly expect that the West would get involved into controversies and fights with Russia on Czechoslovakia's behalf because it was only then that the fallacy of Beneš' stand towards Russia became evident and his country had to begin paying for it.

189 Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 171. For by far the most outstanding account of events which took place in Ruthenia during the Soviet seizure see: Němec, F., and Moudrý, V., The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Toronto, 1955. (Němec was the Chief Czechoslovak Government Representative sent to Ruthenia to set-up a Czechoslovak administration in accord with the Czechoslovak-

Soviets who had long before prepared their plans for the annexation of Ruthenia to the Soviet Union and had considered it a fait accompli at least a year before the event took actually place,[192] did not expect, in view of Beneš' earlier pronouncement made to them on the subject any serious difficulty. Furthermore, late in 1944 and early in 1945 they did not need to worry about his reaction though ostensibly Stalin's personal letter to Beneš of January 23, 1945, attempted to clear the air of "misunderstanding" about Ruthenia.[193] Beneš' pathetic

---

Soviet Agreement on this subject but was de facto interned by the Soviets upon his arrival to Užhorod and prevented from performing any of his functions).

190 His cousin, Professor Václav Beneš emphasized this fact several times during his talk with the author at Bloomington, Indiana on March 2, 1971.

191 See notes 132 through 139 of this Chapter which deal with this phenomenon. For an interesting personal account of Beneš' answer and explanation which he gave to Táborský on the day when Stalin's letter was received claiming that Beneš had said in Moscow in 1943 that he had been "prepared to cede the Subcarpathian Ruthenia to the Soviet Union" see note 69, Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", p. 173.

192 The best testimony of this fact was given by Molotov's lapsus linguae made at the Sixth Session of the Tripartite Conference of the Soviet, British and American Foreign Ministers held at Moscow on October 24, 1943. Having reviewed the history of the Soviet-Czechoslovak negotiations aiming at the conclusion of a treaty "of mutual assistance directed against any recrudescence, after the war, of German aggression, "he attacked British objections in regard to such a treaty and said that neither the Soviet nor the Czech Governments nor their respective public opinion could understand why the British should have any objection to a treaty of this character which was between "two countries with a common frontier for their immediate security". (Summary of the Proceedings of the Sixth Session of the Tripartite Conference, held at Moscow on October 24, 1943, drafted by Charles E. Bohlen of the American delegation, USDS, 740.0011 Moscow/ 10-1843).

193 See Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", pp. 173-174.

reply of January 28, 1945 revealed a shaken and desperate man whose state of mind in regard to Soviet Russia was, as correctly described by Táborský, a plain "let's save what we can".[194] The ever increasing number of developments which in their totality spelled for Czechoslovakia, as envisaged and worked for by Beneš, mortal danger, included: the continuously growing gap between the West and the East even in the most fundamental questions, the alarming developments in the Soviet-liberated regions of Eastern Europe, the appearance of a Soviet-sponsored "Government" of Poland at Lublin[195] which indicated to Beneš the absolute necessity of returning home via Moscow[196] and the German offensive in the Ardennes which destroyed his expectation that the Americans would liberate at least Bohemia and Moravia - these

---

194 Ibid., pp. 174-175.

195 For a story of brutal threats and pressures applied by the Kremlin on President Beneš in January 1945 to force him to grant his recognition to the so-called Lublin Committee, while the British Government requested him not to do so and the American State Department declared that "the recognition of the Lublin Committee is a matter solely for the Czechoslovak Government" see USDS, 860C.01/1-845, documents dated January 8 and 12, 1945. The last document, Schoenfeld's telegram 6 of January 30, 1945 reported that he had been informed by Masaryk that the Czechoslovak Government (meaning, of course, President Beneš - note by author) had decided to recognize the Lublin Government as the Provisional Government of Poland "as a result of severe pressure by the Soviet Government" (USDS, 860C.01/1-3045).

196 Writing on Beneš in February 1949, Lockhart declared that early in 1945 "...If he did not return at once to his country he ran the risk - today one can say the certainty - of losing everything. If he went back, he would have to go via Moscow..." (Lockhart, R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", p. 58).

were for Beneš blows which put enormous strain on his mental and physical health from which he never recovered.[197] His vision of Czechoslovakia constituting a bridge between the West and the East and his plans of building his post-war country on a 50% Western and a 50% Eastern basis were irretrievably and rapidly withering away and it was at that time for Beneš by far too late to replace them with another alternative; he discovered the truth that his state would be unable to escape its geographical reality of being situated between its traditional enemy - Germany, and now visibly threatening Soviet Russia while the West would maintain its "hands-off" policy and stay aloof. Because of the poor state of his health earlier in 1945, his "via dolorosa to Moscow"[198] had to be twice postponed:[199] when he finally arrived there he was forced to witness with utter despair that in the place of one

---

197 Lockhart noted that at that time Beneš' "old optimism had diminished" (ibid., p. 59). Professor Václav Beneš told the author (see note 190 of this Chapter) that his uncle's health was at that time a matter of extreme anxiety to all those around him who knew him well and his personal physician Dr Klinger was genuinely alarmed by President Beneš' state of health.

198 Lockhart had used this fitting description of Beneš' third trip to Moscow (ibid., p. 59).

199 Professor Beneš provided the author with the details of these two postponements and stated that a day before his uncle finally left London, his closest associates thought that his trip would have to be postponed for the third time and were beset with anxieties that the Soviets would be offended by these delays, interpreting them as Beneš' tactical moves based on political considerations, and would actually not only withdraw their invitation to Beneš to come to Moscow and then to proceed to Slovakia but would actually install a new "Czechoslovak Government of Gottwald" based on the Polish "Lublin Committee's" model.
Václav Majer who was Minister of Nutrition in the Czechoslovak

defeated dictator - Hitler, there arose another - Stalin[200] and that his entire stand towards Soviet Russia was based on wishful thinking and hope, certainly as far as timing was concerned, and not on true reality. During his third and last visit of Moscow Beneš had to admit to himself and only to his closest associates that his relations with Stalin were not going to be relations with a friend but those with a cruel, cynical and ferocious master demanding, by employing a wide range of threats and political blackmail, absolute obedience of his commands and pursuing with ruthless determination his own imperialist goals:[201] in the circumstances Beneš thought that "there was no other course open to him but to fight a retreating battle, to give in

---

Government before the Communist Coup d'état told the author in New York City on November 14, 1970 that he had personally implored President Beneš on several occasions early in 1945 not to return to Czechoslovakia via Moscow: on the last of these occasions Beneš got very excited and raising his voice, shouted some angry words at Majer, and then suddenly broke down and started to cry: Majer said he would never forget the emotion-filled scene when Beneš, with tears in his eyes, told him that if he would only know of any other way of saving for Czechoslovakia as much as it was still possible, he would be the very first one who would not go to Moscow. Majer added that Beneš had presented him at that time with such overwhelming arguments in favour of his trip to Moscow that he himself became totally convinced that this was the only move left for Beneš at that time.

200 Beneš documented himself this fact when he told his friend Ivan Herben on June 12, 1945 and on August 22, 1945: "My life's task was to defeat Hitler. The task of your generation is to defeat that second dictator - you know well whom I mean". (Herben's letter to Feierabend of September 25, 1965, listed as Appendix I in Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, pp. 133-135).

201 Testimony given to the author by Professor Václav Beneš (see note 190 of this Chapter).

where he had to, prove again and again how loyal he had been and would be towards the Soviets, to try to pin Stalin down to his promises by professing trust in them - and for the rest, hope that Stalin would not want to lose the important asset of Anglo-Saxon cooperation by pushing events in Czechoslovakia too far."[202]

---

202 Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow 1943 and 1945", p. 175.

C. Quest For Post-War Internal Harmony in Czechoslovakia

1. Question of the German Minority

> ...I am unyielding in the matter of the transfer of Sudeten Germans. I demanded this action in London already in 1941. I argued that... this action was absolutely essential for the life of our state. I have carefully thought over how to accomplish that. I have always presumed that a certain number of our Germans could stay and would apparently stay in our state. Radicalism in this matter was by us however much sharper than I expected...[203]

The problem of Sudeten Germans in future Czechoslovakia was one of the foremost internal Czechoslovak matters which Beneš had to face after the full reinstatement of his political activities in London after the outbreak of the war.[204] His relations with Jaksch, leader of the Sudeten German Social Democratic Party in exile in Great Britain which began even before the war and lasted till 1943, were marred by their

---

203 Part of President Beneš' statement made in Prague on February 8, 1946 to the representatives of the glass industry from Kamenický Šenov (The Národní Osvobození - Organ of the Czechoslovak Society of Legionaries, Saturday, February 9, 1946).

204 During his first post-war visit of Czech Western borderlands undertaken from May 18 to 22, 1947, Beneš told members of the District National Committee at Karlovy Vary: "...I remember well that following Munich I came to England and began to talk about the solution of the problem of our state after the war, the first question which I put forward at the beginnings of our action in the exile already in 1940, was the question of the transfer of Germans from our country. I put forward this question in a direct manner and spoke about it clearly first with the English and then with the Americans. I did not talk with the Russians until last because I expected that they certainly would help us..." (Kettner, P., President Dr Edvard Beneš po prvé v našem pohraničí, Karlovy Vary, 1947, p. 23).

mutual inability and unwillingness to prevent a series of incidents which made impossible the establishment, between them, of a close, permanent and meaningful working relationship.[205] While Beneš' original ideas concerning the solution of the problem of the German minority in Czechoslovakia involved the transfer of a certain, limited number of Sudeten Germans, they were moderate in their scope and even took into consideration the possible loss of some portions of the Czechoslovak territory in order to get rid of additional number of these Germans;[206] due to the developments in Bohemia and Moravia which ruled out any coexistence between the Germans and the Czechs in the Historic Provinces, Beneš' ideas and proposals were gradually acquiring a more radical shape.[207]

---

205 Beneš dealt at length with the developments which took place in his relations with Jaksch in his Memoirs, pp. 94, 213-221 and 305-334; Jaksch's version appeared in his Beneš war gewarnt!, Munich, 1949, 90pp. passim. For the complete set of available documents and letters on this matter see: Prinz, F., ed., Wenzel Jaksch-Edvard Beneš, Briefe und Dokumente aus dem Londoner Exil 1939-1943, Cologne, 1973.

206 For an excellent history of the developments which affected, and de facto governed during World War II Beneš in his attitude and actions in regard to the transfer of Sudeten Germans, see: Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 223-263; DHČP, 2 Vols., passim, and Smutný, Vojtěch, op.cit., passim; Černý, B., "Dr Edvard Beneš und die Deutsche Frage waehrend des zweiten Weltkrieges" in Bosl, K., ed., Aktuelle Forschungsprobleme um die Erste Tschechoslovakische Republik, Munich, 1969, pp. 171-187.

207 Writing in September, 1941, Beneš explained, after having dealt with dangers of the new Pan-Germanism his own position on minorities, which of course, meant for him chiefly the German minority in Czechoslovakia: "...The problem of national minorities will have to be considered far more systematically and radically than it was after the last war. I accept the principle of the transfer of populations. Populations were exchanged, successfully and on a large scale, between Greece and Turkey after the war of 1922. The world courageously accepted this large-scale transfer, because it knew that the alternative would have been a systematic mass-murder of millions of people. If the problem is carefully considered and wide measures

In all his considerations of the solution of the problem of the German minority in Czechoslovakia, Beneš was compelled to be governed by the wish of the vast majority of the Czech people, by their "General Will" within the meaning defined by Rousseau,[208] to remove the Germans from the territory of the Czechoslovak Republic: this wish rapidly intensified as the time progressed and Nazi terror and atrocities against the Czechs grew more numerous and violent. Beneš was therefore mainly only an administrator, an executive of this "General Will" of his nation, and having been the tactician par excellence, he succeeded in translating this will into reality by skilfully obtaining the backing of the three Great Powers for this transfer. All the attacks directed at Beneš mainly by Sudeten Germans to the effect that he was the instigator and the most powerful motivating force behind the idea of the transfer of most, if not all, of the Germans from Czechoslovakia, are therefore unsubstantiated and unfair:[209] the most powerful, and actually the sole,

---

are adopted in good time, the transfer can be made amicably under decent human conditions, under international control and with international support..." (Beneš, E., "The New Order in Europe" in The Nineteenth Century and After, September, 1941, Vol. CXXX, p. 154).

208 For a concise explanation of Jean Jacques Rousseau's "General Will" see Sabine, G.H., A History of Political Theory, New York, 1953, pp. 575-596.

209 This matter was explained and documented in a work of President Beneš' Chancellor Jaromír Smutný in his: Němci v Československu a jich odsun z Republiky, London, 1956, 129pp. passim. For the typical attacks on Beneš for his stand on the transfer of the Sudeten Germans see: Nittner, E., Dokumente zur Sudetendeutschen Frage 1916-1967, Munich, 1967; Roennefarth, H.K., Die Sudetenkrise in der Internationalen Politik, Wiesbaden, 1961; Association for the Protection of the Sudeten German Interest, Documents on the Expulsion of the Sudeten Germans, Munich, 1953.

motivating force in this aspect was, as Luža had correctly observed, the Nazi policy of terror in 1938-1945 which "shaped the Czech national will to remove the Germans by transfer".[210]

---

210 Luža, R., op.cit., p. 222. - Of interest at this point is the fact that there exists a sharp controversy about the role which Beneš had played in the attempt on Heydrich's life which caused such immensely drastic and brutal Nazi counter-measures. Was Beneš indeed the instigator or did he at least know about, and gave his blessings to, Heydrich's assassination which took such an enormous toll among the Czech population?

On the one hand the three reliable authors argue that Beneš indeed well knew about, and approved of, the attempt on Heydrich's life. If they are right then Beneš would mainly be responsible for the Nazi massacres and terror which were sparked by Heydrich's death. (See: Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 209-210; Smutný, V., op.cit., pp. 207-210; Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě v exilu II, pp. 38-39).

On the other hand, Beneš himself had denied any responsibility for this act after the war (see Feierabend, L.K., ibid, p. 39), and the testimonies given to the author by Professor Václav Beneš at the University of Indiana at Bloomington on March 2, 1971 and by Professor Eduard Táborský at the University of Texas at Austin on March 7, 1971 support President Beneš' post-war contention: the former stated that he was with his uncle when he was told about the attempt on Heydrich's life and President Beneš' first genuine reaction was a very joyful one - he stated that it meant that the Nazis were fighting among themselves for power and that he was convinced that Heydrich was a victim of this Nazi internal power-struggle. The author considers that it would be unlikely for President Beneš to make such a statement to his nephew if he had indeed previously known about, and had approved of, such an act to be performed by Czechoslovak parachutists. Professor Táborský testified to the same effect and added that the only person among the Czechoslovaks in London who could have known about it would have been Chief of the Czechoslovak Intelligence at London Moravec. While Táborský recalled well the day when the two Czechoslovaks who took part in Heydrich's assassination, Gabčík and Kubiš went to see President Beneš before their departure from England, he was convinced that Beneš' only knowledge in the matter was that they were sent to the Protectorate to make contact with various Czech underground groups, to co-ordinate their activities as well as to assure the continuity of communications between the Protectorate and London.

2. Plans For the Post-War Political Organization of Czechoslovakia.

> ...I say quite openly that the path which Soviet Russia took after the last war is not the one which will be followed in Czechoslovakia. Our conditions are completely different from every point of view, and we shall not abandon our old method of evolutionary adaptation and our old policy of balance between the east and the west. Our geographical position does not permit us to change this century-old policy violently...[211]

The greatest and constant fear which haunted President Beneš throughout the entire period of his second exile in regard to the internal developments in his country following the defeat of Germany was that of a Soviet-instigated violent social revolution along the line taken by the Bolsheviks in, and subsequent to, the 1917 October Revolution.[212] While he kept on publicly proclaiming that such a disastrous event could and would not befall his country,[213] he took personally every precaution which he was capable of effecting to prevent the occurrence of such a national calamity by trying to ensure that during the highly unstable transitory period to its full independence immediately following its liberation from the Nazis, Czechoslovakia would not become a theatre of explosive political and social problems which could readily be exploited by Communist agents and traitors acting on behalf of the Kremlin.

---

211 Beneš, E., "Czechoslovakia Plans for Peace" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 23, No. 1, October 1944, p. 37.

212 Professor Václav Beneš testified to this effect during the interview with the author at the University of Indiana at Bloomington, Indiana, on March 2, 1971.
For documentary evidence see e.g. Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945", n. 10, p. 156.

213 See e.g. n. 211 above.

In the category of Czechoslovak internal political problems which were facing Beneš during the war, the most important ones which had the capacity of endangering the very existence of the state after the end of the war, were the minority and the Slovak questions. Having successfully effected the acceptance, by the Allied Great Powers, of the idea of the transfer, from Czechoslovakia, of "the greatest possible number of her German inhabitants",[214] Beneš strove for, though with much lesser success, the employment of the same criterion in regard to the Hungarian minority, modified by a parallel transfer of a smaller number of Slovaks from Hungary into Czechoslovakia.

The Slovak question was for Beneš predominantly an artificially created issue which was blown out of all of its proportions by Hodža and those other Slovaks who opposed his leadership of the Czechoslovak cause abroad.[215] Having been all his life a convinced and foremost representative of Czechoslovakism, Beneš' position during World War II was that there was only one Czechoslovak nation, that no one in the exile was competent of implementing any changes to this concept and that "question relating to internal political problems, particularly the problem of the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks, can only be solved by the constitutional

---

214 Beneš, E., op.cit., in n. 211 above, p. 36.

215 For a history of Beneš' stand on the Slovak question and of his relationship with Hodža, see: Křen, J., "Hodža-Slovenská otázka v zahraničním odboji" in the ČSČH, Vol. XVI, No. 2, 1968, pp. 193-214.

organs of the free Nation after the liberation of the State".[216] By having always followed this policy, Beneš performed during the war an outstanding service not only to the Czechoslovak cause but to the Slovaks themselves because the then so-called independent Slovak Republic was de facto an enemy state which declared war on the Allies[217] and was especially vulnerable in the latter stages of the war when it faced the real danger of being incorporated by the Soviets, as a Slovak Soviet Republic, into the Soviet Union:[218] first he had succeeded in

---

216 President Beneš' second point taken from his statement of six points on the Czech-Slovak question, issued through Czechoslovak Minister at Washington Hurban and published in the release No 147 of the "News Flashes from Czechoslovakia Under Nazi Domination", by the Czechoslovak National Council of America on August 24, 1942 and commented upon by E.O. Tabor, who expressed his complete agreement with Beneš, on September 15, 1942 (Edward O. Tabor Papers, MS 60-3, Ac. 11, 040, III-21-0, 3-4, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress).

217 This fact was recognized and admitted even by some Slovak Communists, such as Clementis who wrote in London on May 15, 1943 in an article entitled "President Beneš in America": "...The Slovaks can thank Dr Beneš for the fact that through his efforts it was demonstrated to the American public and Government that the Slovaks are Allies fighting in the indivisible unity of the Czechoslovak Republic..." He concluded his article by having issued a stern warning to the traitors of the Slovak nation who had declared war on the Allies; (Clementis, V., Odkazy z Londýna, Bratislava, 1947, pp. 42-44),

Of interest here is President Roosevelt's reaction to Bratislava's declaration of war on the United States: in his note to Secretary Hull of December 12, 1941 he wrote: "I see by tonight's bulletins that the Government of Slovakia has declared the existence of a state of war with the United States... It is my present thought that the United States should pay no attention to any of these declarations of war against us by puppet governments..." (PSF, State Department file, FDRL).

218 See Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin - Moscow, 1943 and 1945" n. 73, p. 175.

having Slovakia accepted by the Allies as an indivisible part of Czechoslovakia which was against its will forced by Hitler to break away from the Czech Historic Provinces and which was ruled by a few pro-Nazi traitors who were able to do so only because of determined German backing,[219] and then Beneš' political personality was the most determinant factor in spoiling all the Communist attempts to place Slovakia into the Stalin's Red Empire. He himself had always expressed his conviction that he had not "the slightest fear that any disagreement in principle would arise between the Czechs and Slovaks in the liberated Republic".[220]

During the war years Beneš worked out plans for the internal political developments in Czechoslovakia after the war by means of which he wanted to ensure that the process of transition from the servitude of the Protectorate to full independence of the Third Republic would be accomplished in an evolutionary and harmonious manner and would not be marred by revolutionary outbursts capable of consuming the whole country.[221] Among the several changes in the political

---

219 Beneš developed this subject in detail in his London radio broadcast directed to Czechoslovakia and given on the occasion of the commencement of the Slovak National Uprising on September 8, 1944 (Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 148-151).

220 Beneš, E., "Czechoslovakia Plans For Peace", pp. 34-35. He added that he felt sure that "certain measures of decentralization, freely determined by the Czechoslovak people in a democratic spirit of agreement, will remove once and for all every possible source of misunderstanding between Czechs and Slovaks..." (p. 35).

221 For details see Beneš, E., op.cit., in n. 211 above, pp. 33-37.

structure of post-war Czechoslovakia which he had considered to be essential for such a peaceful transition from the first to the second stage was a proposal which arbitrarily called for a reform of the Czechoslovak political parties and the reduction of their number in comparison as they had existed in the First Republic.[222] While this proposal, which encompassed both the political and social phenomena in its scope, was originally meant by Beneš to form a preventive measure capable of taking away from under the Communists solid grounds from which to launch their social revolution, it nevertheless radically parted from Masaryk democratic ideals and took a very dangerous road towards the Left since the political parties to be either drastically reformed or altogether eliminated were those of the Right or Right-Centre political course;[223] it furthermore constituted an antithesis of his own earlier definition of the role and nature of political parties in a

---

222 While Beneš dealt on many occasions with this proposal during the war (see DHČP, 2 Vols. passim) he described it most concisely in his very first speech delivered after his return to Prague; (Beneš, E., Speech Delivered by President Beneš on the Old Town Square, Prague, on His Return to Czechoslovakia on May 16, 1945, Prague, 1945, 21p.).

223 This proposal coupled with Beneš' decision to return to Prague via Moscow had been the main causes for the resignation of Minister of Finance in the Czechoslovak London Government Feierabend on February 12, 1945 who was the member of the biggest pre-Munich Czechoslovak political party, the Right-Wing Agrarian Party; (Feierabend, L.K., Soumrak československé demokracie, Washington, 1967, pp. 120-151).

During his interview with Dr Feierabend held in Washington on September 17, 1967 the author dealt with this Beneš' proposal to drastically reform or completely abolish the Right-Wing parties in post-war Czechoslovakia and asked whether or not he felt that Beneš' stand on this issue reflected his long-standing socialist views, his personality trait dating back from his student years of feeling hostility towards the rich and members of the upper-middle class most, if not all, of whom politically belonged to Right-

democracy[224] and violated his war-time policy that only the Czechoslovak people in the liberated Republic after the war were competent to deal with questions relating to internal political problems.[225] This idea instigated by Beneš proved to be a disastrous one for post-war Czechoslovakia since the Communists, after having radicalized it to suit their

---

Wing parties as well as his almost incessant political and personal struggles he had to wage with those parties during most of his Foreign Ministry and Presidency both at home and abroad. Dr Feierabend replied that while no documentation existed to prove this point beyond any doubt he certainly was inclined to agree with the author.

224 In his sociological study about the role and nature of political parties in general and in a democracy in particular which was published in 1912, Beneš stated in Chapter 6 that in a democracy there were the two following fundamental functions of political parties: "1. They are instruments for expressing the will of the people; 2. They are the organs for asserting the will of the people in the law of the society". He had then formulated a definition on this issue which demonstrated that in and after 1945 there was no more a true "democratism" in Czechoslovakia and that his proposal calling for a reform and the reduction of the Czechoslovak political parties from above was clearly an anti-democratic measure: "...Democratism should give to all the citizens the possibility of expressing and asserting their will. The realization of democratism is possible to carry out, however, only through political parties. Political parties then bring democratism into being in the first place by means of their organizations which provide the parties with directives, express the wishes and will of the people, pass resolutions on decisions, require these or those measures to be taken..." (Beneš, E., Strannictví, Brandýs nad Labem, 1912, pp. 210-211).

225 See note 216 of this Chapter. - Beneš kept on mentioning this policy during his entire period of exile in London - see e.g. his "Czechoslovakia Plans For Peace" where he had, inter alia stated that "none of the Czechoslovak émigrés has a right to make final decisions in matters which are the sovereign right of the people at home" (p. 35); also important is his last radio broadcast to his nation from London of February 16, 1945 (and repeated on the following day) in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, pp. 159-164.

own interests in the Program of the Košice Government, succeeded in forcing Beneš to accept its newly acquired form and thus to effectively destroy the true spirit of Masaryk's democracy of the First Republic.

To achieve peaceful solution of social problems in post-war Czechoslovakia, Beneš considered his policy of "the opening of the gates to a change in the social and economic structure of our national society in a socializing sense"[226] to be Czechoslovakia's most powerful safeguard against a violent Communist revolution: while he publicly abhorred, denounced and declared such a revolution as having been alien to the spirit of his nation, he nevertheless unwittingly helped to eventually bring it about by allowing and tolerating the implementation of various measures which were clearly of anti-democratic nature and thus enabling the Communists during the 1945-1948 period to effectively misuse the great authority he then enjoyed in the Czechoslovak nation by claiming to the Czechoslovak people that President Beneš' and their own goals were de facto identical ones and that they only slightly differed in methods and means to be employed for the achievement of these goals.

---

226 Beneš, E., Speech at the Charles University Faculty of Law's Granting of Honourary Degree on December 15, 1945 in the Spanish Hall at the Prague Castle, Prague, 1945, p. 60.

Chapter VII

Return to Prague - Towards a New Personal and National Disaster

A. Liberation of Czechoslovakia - A Pyrrhic Victory

1. Tragedy at Košice[1]

> ...Beneš explained in great detail his satisfaction with relationship that he had developed for Czechoslovakia with the Soviet Union. He outlined also the agreement he had reached with the Czech Communist Party for their joining a national front government when Czechoslovakia was liberated. He does not intend to change his government until he returns to Prague at which time an election will be held...[2]

President Beneš kept on emphasizing during the latter stages of the war the point that he did not intend to effect any changes in the composition of his government before his return to Prague when an election would be held. Yet the above admission of having made an agreement with the Czech Communists for their joining a national front government after the liberation of Czechoslovakia contravened sharply his proclaimed policy that decisions affecting internal matters of his country could,

---

1 Košice is the largest city in Eastern Slovakia where was promulgated on April 4, 1945 the new coalition government of the National Front whose program was elaborated in Moscow by the Czech Communists. Contrary to Beneš' earlier promises, it did not contain any representative of the Czech Home Resistance.

2 President Beneš talking privately in London with American Ambassador in the Soviet Union, Harriman, on May 27, 1944. Harriman also explained in detail the policies of a national front government which would then be organized under Beneš' leadership and concluded: "...Beneš seems confident that this program will get support of the Czechoslovakian people and that he can hold together the national front government for the first phase of the reconstruction period. He is completely satisfied that the Soviet

and would, only be made by the people at home after the end of the war and not by their representatives in the exile.[3] Having already arbitrarily decided at a much earlier date that the pre-Munich Czechoslovak political parties would greatly be reduced in their numbers[4] he left in the Spring of 1945 London for Moscow, still hoping that he would somehow manage to preserve the existence of his government until the Czechoslovak people at home would have the opportunity of expressing their true wishes in free democratic elections.[5]

Union is sincere and will be loyal to the undertakings reached. He believes the Communist Party in his country will become more and more nationalist in its policies as time goes on; (Harriman's telegram 2064 from Moscow of June 9, 1944; USDS, 760C.61/2339).

3 See Chapter VI of this study, passim. For the Communist records of President Beneš' discussions with the Czechoslovak Communists during his 1943 Moscow's visit see: Král, V., ed., Cesta ke květnu, Praha, 1965, Vol. 1, documents 1-3, pp. 35-68.

4 The earliest documented Beneš' reference to such a reduction was made in his broadcast from London to Czechoslovakia of April 30, 1941, where he had inter alia, stated: "...We shall have in the liberated Republic, of course, not only new social, but also political, conditions. We shall have new party formations and shall eliminate from our future political life all that had been unhealthy in our former party and especially coalition system, and what had justly been criticized. There is no return to all that. New conditions in the Third Republic will require only a quite limited number of political parties. This will not be any totalitarianism, but it will on the contrary constitute a healthy and very limited party classification..." (Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 72).

5 Czechoslovak Minister of Nutrition in the Third Republic, Majer, told the author at the Fifth Congress of the Czechoslovak Society of Arts and Sciences in America, held at the New York University on November 13-15, 1970, that he was urging (and in reality, as Majer stated in confidence, begging) Beneš, not to return home via Moscow before his delayed departure from London; the President who "was on the verge of tears, extremely depressed and looked to be physically completely worn out", replied that he had no choice, that it was "too late for any other alternative" and that he was "the only person left, capable of averting the disaster of a complete

The events which took place both at Moscow and Košice in March and April 1945 confirmed President Beneš' fears of imperialist aims of Moscow; having been left during that period virtually powerless at the various meetings with the Soviets and the Czech Communists, he was forced to give in to their demands in matters which, above all, included the formation of the National Front Government at Košice, the program of which had been prepared at Moscow, and in which the Communists obtained all the key portfolios.[6] In the like manner as it had happened at the

---

Communist dictatorship and having some hope of preserving some democratic institutions in post-war Czechoslovakia, surrounded by "the Red ocean". Majer and other witnesses of the drama of Beneš' departure from England in March, 1945, agree that Beneš was at that time in a very poor mental and physical disposition and that his fear of the future of his country, because of the ever-increasing Kremlin's threats and Western disinterest, was undoubtedly the main reason for his "weak stroke" (Feierabend, L.K., Soumrak Československé demokracie, p. 145) - this ailment was diagnosed by President's nephew Prof. Václav Beneš as the first appearance of the Menière illness - which had delayed his departure from London by two days (from March 9 to March 11, 1945 - for an excellent account of this drama see Feierabend, L.K., ibid., pp. 144-147).

6 Táborský, who personally attended some of the crucial negotiations in Moscow in March 1945 regarding the formation of the new Czechoslovak Cabinet, gave an excellent account of the ruthless behaviour of the Czechoslovak Communists: "...Gottwald and his associates completely dominated the proceedings, pressing home the tremendous psychological and political advantages accruing to them from the Red Army's control over Czechoslovakia and the overt Soviet support of their cause. When the delegates of the other parties arrived in Moscow, the KSČ leaders presented them with a neatly mimeographed thirty-two-page copy of their complete "program of the government of the National Front of the Czechs and Slovaks". This document, although filled with Communist sophistry, was forced upon the democratic negotiators with only minor changes. The KSČ leadership confronted the non-communist parties with a ready-made list of the new Cabinet..." (Táborský, E., Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960, Princeton, 1961, pp. 13-14); among the numerous works which had been written about the tragedies of Moscow and Košice and the subsequent events leading to the Communist coup d'état of February, 1948, the best ones describing to some extent Beneš' role are: the above mentioned Táborský's work, Feierabend's last two volumes of his

time of Munich, during the latter stages of World War II and the subsequent era, Czechoslovakia has again been left alone to face open aggression of an imperialist and totalitarian Great Power: for Beneš, however, the latter event constituted an incomparably greater personal tragedy which brought about with such a devastating thoroughness the rapid deterioration of his health and his untimely death - while he was correct in his prognostications about the former event, this was not the case in regard to the latter tragedy; yet the Western unwillingness to participate or at least take actively some interest in the Czechoslovak affairs was the most prominent factor which enabled the Soviet Union to set the stage for its future conquest of Czechoslovakia.

Táborský stated clearly that under the circumstances then existing in other European countries "liberated" by the Red Army, where the acts

---

Memoirs: Soumrak Československé demokracie (see n. 5 above) and Pod vládou Národní fronty, Washington, 1968; Stránský, J., East Wind Over Prague, London, 1950; Josten, J., Oh, My Country, London, 1949; Lockhart, Sir R.B., What Happened to The Czechs? London, 1953; Skilling, H.G., "Revolutions in Prague" in the International Journal, Vol. IV, Spring 1949, pp. 119-136; Bolton, G., Czech Tragedy, London, 1955; Zinner, P.E., "Marxism in Action - The Seizure of Power in Czechoslovakia" in the Foreign Affairs, V. 28, No. 4, July 1950, pp. 644-658; Korbel, J., The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948, Princeton, 1959; Ducháček, I., "The Strategy of Communist Infiltration: Czechoslovakia 1944-48" in the World Politics, Vol. 2, No. 3, April 1950, pp. 345-372; Beck, C.F., "Can Communism and Democracy Coexist? Beneš' Answer" in The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. XI, No. 3, October 1952, pp. 189-206; Chalupa, V., Communism in a Free Society: Czechoslovakia 1945-1948, Chicago, 1958; Chalupa, V., The National Front in Czechoslovakia, Chicago, 1958; Skilling, H.G., "Revolution and Continuity in Czechoslovakia 1945-1946" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XX, No. 4, January 1961, pp. 357-377; Kubát, D., "Communist Use of the Czechoslovak Parliament Since World War II" in the Slavic Review, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 1961, pp. 695-700 and Ripka, H., Czechoslovakia Enslaved, London, 1950.

of Soviet aggression were met by mere Western Powers' diplomatic protests and reminders of promises given at Teheran and Yalta, "the hapless Beneš and the disheartened leaders of the democratic parties were at the mercy of Stalin who had thrown his full support behind the Czechoslovak Communists and given them an almost limitless power of political blackmail. The Czechoslovak Communist leaders knew that Beneš had to comply with their requirements or risk a complete communization of Czechoslovakia while he remained deadlocked in Moscow in interminable negotiations".[7]

---

7 Táborský, E., Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960, pp. 13-15.

2. Abandoned by the West, Prague Occupied by the Russians

> ...In May 1947, I revisited Czechoslovakia... I had several long talks with President Beneš... He was still obsessed by the failure of the Americans to liberate Prague, harped continually on its adverse effect, and said that he had never understood the decision which compelled General Patton to inaction...[8]

During the last several months of World War II when President Beneš was already disturbed by the increasingly hostile attitude of Soviet Russia, his attention was directed towards the rapidly advancing American Armies in the hope that they would liberate much of the Czech Historic Provinces and, above all, Prague, so that the Soviet Army would be prevented from enabling the Communists to entrench themselves in positions of strength throughout the country. His emotions and expectations ran high when he received the news about the US Third Army's crossing the Czechoslovak border.[9] On the other hand, the Czechoslovak Communists

---

8 Lockhart, Sir R.B., "The Czechoslovak Revolution" in the Foreign Affairs, V.26, No. 4, July 1948, p. 635. - The same author wrote in Jan Masaryk (London, 1951) that during his talks with President Beneš and Jan Masaryk in 1947 "The failure of General Patton to liberate Prague rankled and was regarded by both men as a cardinal error on the part of the Western Allies..." (pp. 51-52).

9 Táborský presented an excellent description of this event: "...I shall never forget the deep emotion with which Beneš, who always hated to bare his feelings, received the news of Patton's armies crossing the border into Czechoslovakia. 'Thank God, thank God' he said when I rushed in to tell him that Patton was at long last on Czechoslovak soil. Unable to control his excitement he began to pace his study, and to judge by the expression in his eyes he was already visualizing the beneficial political consequences of this event. Then he rushed into the adjoining room to share the good news with his beloved wife. 'Hanička, Hanička, the Americans have entered Czechoslovakia', I heard him to say to Madame Beneš in a voice still quivering with emotion, 'Patton is across the border!' In a few minutes he was back, instructing me to send Patton a telegram of congratulations and welcome..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 680).

became greatly disturbed that the American liberation of Prague would prevent the implementation of their subversive and imperialist plans aiming at the destruction of Democratic Czechoslovakia and their own usurpation of power.[10] It truly was to President Beneš "the bitterest disappointment"[11] when General Patton's armies were subsequently ordered to stop their fast advance which could have easily liberated not only Prague but the whole of Bohemia and western regions of Moravia.[12]

Eisenhower's incredibly short-sighted and fateful decision to accommodate the Russians in their requests that Patton's army be stopped at the Karlovy Vary - Plzeň - České Budějovice line[13] which

---

10 Communist Minister of Information, Kopecký, described President Beneš' "pleasant feeling" and the Communists' "gloomy reflections" when they kept on receiving news about the American advance in Czechoslovakia, on their way through Slovakia, from Košice to Bratislava, in the last days of World War II: "...During the trip of the President's convoy, Personal Secretary Dr Drtina kept on continuously bringing to the President fresh news about the fact that the American Army had already reached Plzeň and was advancing further towards Rokycany... Beneš was therefore advancing towards Bratislava with a pleasant feeling that the American Army was advancing in Western Bohemia and that they would perhaps reach Prague. We (i.e. Czechoslovak Communists and other traitors - note by author) were advancing towards Bratislava with gloomy reflections that it was, after all, impossible for the Americans to come to Prague. After all, if this event were to take place, it would have meant that we would have been unable to go to Prague occupied by the American Army. It would have meant that the Košice Government would have to remain in Bratislava or in Brno and that the Czechoslovak Republic would have remained divided..." (Kopecký, V., ČSR a KSČ, Praha, 1960, p. 384).

11 Ibid., p. 680, *(n.9)*.

12 For details about this Eisenhower decision, so tragic for the future of Czechoslovakia, see: Chandler, A.D., ed., The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower - The War Years, Baltimore, 1970, 5 Vols.

13 Ibid., Documents No. 2462 (p. 2662), No 2464 (pp. 2663-4), No 2482 (pp. 2679-80) and No 2496 (p. 2693).

blatantly disregarded Prime Minister Churchill's[14] and the British Chiefs of Staffs communications that "there would be remarkable political advantages derived from liberation of Prague and as much as possible of Czechoslovakia by U.S.-U.K. forces"[15] as well as Marshall's naive comment in regard to liberation of Czechoslovakia that "personally and aside from all logistic, tactical or strategical implications I would be loath to hazard American lives for purely political purposes",[16] the

---

14 Churchill had sent on April 30, 1945 a communication to President Truman informing him that "There can be little doubt that the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of Western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in near-by countries. On the other hand, if the Western Allies play no significant part in Czechoslovakian liberation that country will go the way of Yugoslavia..." - On May 7, 1945 Churchill sent another communication directly to Eisenhower to the effect that "I am hoping that your plan does not inhibit you to advance to Prague if you have the troops and do not meet the Russians earlier..." (Churchill, W.S., The Second World War - Triumph and Tragedy, Boston, 1953, Vol. 6, pp. 506-507).

15 Chandler, A.D., ed., op.cit., Doc. No. 2462. For the British documents on the subject of the desirability for the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of Czechoslovakia by the Anglo-American forces, see British Cabinet Papers, Cab 88/36, 805/10, p. 216; Cab 88/36, 805/20, p. 241 (includes memorandum by the Representative of the British Chief of Staff in the Combined Chiefs of Staff of April 27, 1945, entitled "Plan of Campaign in Europe - Operations in Czechoslovakia") and, Cab 88/36, 805/24, p. 249. The most detailed and illuminating documents on the subject are contained in the US Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, Diplomatic Papers 1945, Vol. IV, Washington, 1968, pp. 420-557.

16 Ibid. - This was a completely irrelevant remark, demonstrating Marshall's ignorance of the reality existing at that time: no American lives would have then been placed in jeopardy by advancing into Czechoslovakia since all the German troops stationed therein were only too eager to surrender to the Americans and, by so doing, to prevent their capture by the Russians of whom they feared so greatly.

West allowed Czechoslovakia to fall under "exclusive Soviet control and left Beneš to battle it out alone against overwhelming odds".[17] "General Patton's cancelled race for Prague stands out in history today as the most striking episode in the process by which the Western democracies, after winning World War II, lost the peace through political miscalculation".[18]

The vacuum created in Central Europe in general, and in Czechoslovakia in particular, by the defeat of Nazi Germany, was left entirely at the end of World War II to the Soviet Union to fill; since "the betrayal at Munich reduced France to a second-class power"[19] the

---

17 Táborský, E., op.cit., (note 9 above), p. 681. - Táborský also presents irrefutable arguments that the West placed Beneš after the war in an almost untenable position against the combined forces of the Soviets and the Czechoslovak Communists: "...The reluctance of the Anglo-Saxon Powers to assume adequate responsibility and to assert their proper influence in Central and Eastern Europe undermined the main foundation on which Benes built his belief in Soviet good behaviour. By their refusal to supply weapons and to lend support to the Czechoslovak underground, America and Britain destroyed whatever chance Beneš may have had of gaining control of the major part of his country prior to the arrival of the Red Army. By deliberately halting their drive to the east they allowed but the narrow western slice of Czechoslovakia to fall under exclusive Soviet control..." Táborský had also correctly observed that had Patton continued to advance in Czechoslovakia and had he liberated Bohemia with Prague and a substantial portion of Moravia, "the Communists would have been denied the advantage conferred by the presence and active support of the Red Army and the N.K.V.D. in entrenching themselves in the most populous and most strategic areas of Czechoslovakia. It was from these positions of strength, in the police, army, central and local administration, workers militias, and the communications system, that they were able so successfully to sabotage Beneš' efforts to restore democracy in Czechoslovakia. It is not mere accident that the present line separating the Communist from non-Communist countries in Europe coincides closely with the wartime apportionnement of operational zones between the U.S.S.R. and the Western Powers..." (ibid., pp. 680-1).

18 Jaksch, W., Europe's Road to Potsdam, New York, 1963, p. 451.

19 US Ambassador at the Spanish Government located in Saint-Jean-

fact which was further accentuated by France's subsequent capitulation to Germany - and England had also paid dearly for Chamberlain's policy of appeasement by having its power and influence drastically reduced by the war, the United States was then the sole Great Western Power capable of successfully and effectively challenging the Soviet expansion into the Central European theatre. Yet Washington was totally negligent and delinquent in exercising this function of establishing therein an effective balance of power and in this failure to act lies a very grave accusation of the United States before the history: for Czechoslovakia and President Beneš it opened the way towards another disaster.

Early in May 1945, the Czechoslovak people realized to their horror that a New Munich was taking place - this fact was particularly clear to the people of Prague who were unable to understand the meaning of two senseless American terroristic bombardments of Prague of February 14 and March 29, 1945 directed mainly against the Czech civilian population just a few days before the end of the war,[20] and who witnessed their desperate calls for help to the West having gone on unheeded during

---

de Luz, France, Bower's comment about France made a few days after the Munich Conference; for details, see note 53 of Chapter V.

20 The Communists kept on successfully exploiting among the Czech population these bombardments of Prague. See e.g. their organ "Rudé Právo" of Thursday, February 14, 1946, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the first American terroristic bombardment of Prague: After having denounced it as an act of atrocity against the Czech people of Prague, of whom 701 were killed and 1184 injured during that attack, they pointed out the fact that "brotherly Soviet Russia had never bombed the Czechoslovak capital".

their Revolution of May 5-9, 1945 when hundreds of Czechs who were brutally massacred by the SS troops could have been saved by Patton's Army standing idly by literally at the doorsteps of Prague and when the Americans prevented, in a brutal fashion, the Czechoslovak pilots from taking off their airfields in Western Europe to fly to the aid of their desperately struggling capital, vastly outnumbered by the superiority of German arms and manpower. This New Munich's "psychological impact was devastating"[21] on the Czechoslovaks since they interpreted it as having been once again sold-out by the West, this time, however, to Stalin. Beneš, who understood at that time much better than anyone else in Czechoslovakia all the implications of these tragic developments, did not, however, give up yet his hope that Czechoslovakia would be able to successfully weather the oncoming storms incited by the Kremlin: he expected, on the one hand, that if his prognostications about the future developments were to be proven wrong and the East-West post-war co-operation were to completely break down, due to the Soviet threats and other acts of aggression, Stalin would, like Hitler had done before him, venture too far in some of his imperialistic moves and thus provoke resolute Western reaction which would strengthen democratic forces in Czechoslovakia and, on the other hand, he believed in the sound judgement of his people who would soon be able to see through the masquerade of false promises, threats, half-truths, tricks and other forms of subtleties of the Czechoslovak Communists, and would themselves eliminate the influence and power of these Moscow's stooges in the Republic who,

---

21 Korbel, J., op. cit., p. 128.

unfortunately, because of the Kremlin's pressures, had to be given so many prominent positions immediately after the war.

The key question governing Czechoslovakia's future was, however, entirely out of Beneš' control: "Would the history again repeat itself in that the West would adopt, in a similar manner as it had done in 1939, towards Hitler, a strong line towards Stalin only after Czechoslovakia had been swallowed by the Communists - would Czechoslovakia again, by its own sacrifice, have to provide a convincing demonstration that no co-operation with Soviet imperialism was possible?" Beneš' own answer to this problem was to ensure that Czechoslovakia would not take, on the international forum, a stand hostile towards the Soviet Union and thus provoking its ire and triggering his country's overrun by Soviet Communism; he expected that the Kremlin would, in return, refrain from interfering in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs.[22]

---

22 In his conversation with American Ambassador in Czechoslovakia, Steinhardt of December 23, 1946, President Beneš explained the reasons for his policy of acting internationally in concert with Moscow as it applied to Czechoslovakia's voting record at Paris: "...He (Beneš - note by author) then said he quite understood Secretary's irritation with voting record of Czech delegate in Paris, remarking that if Secretary had had to deal with Soviet Government as representative of small contiguous country he would appreciate necessity of doing voluntarily what Soviet Government was in position to coerce in absence of voluntary action. He added Czechoslovakia had been so dependent on good will of Soviet Union until comparatively recently that to have voted against Soviet Union on any occasion that Poland and Yugoslavia voted with Soviet Union would have been to invite serious reprisals and to have aroused suspicions which could not have been allayed for long period of time to come. Under circumstances Masaryk had deemed it preferable to vote with Soviet Union on almost every occasion that Poland and Yugoslavia had done so, convinced that United States was not harmed thereby whereas Czechoslovakia might benefit. He pointed out that as result of Czechoslovakia's voting record Soviets had scrupulously refrained from interfering in Czechoslovakia's internal affairs and that in consequence moderates were making

B. In the Shadow of Moscow - Beginning of the End of Withering Czechoslovak Democracy

1. First Symptoms of President Beneš' Personal Disaster

> ...Our activity abroad logically goes on even today, even at the time that we have returned home. The Košice National Government of Czechs and Slovaks accepted the principles stated in their program, which was formulated, it is true, in Moscow but which, in substance, comprised what was worked out in principle for years in London, Moscow and at home and was altogether accepted in the nation today as a whole, just because it was the spontaneous issue of the general world conditions and of ours...[23]

President Beneš' statements made to his nation on his return to Prague, after having virtually been held a prisoner by the Russians at Košice,[24] contained a certain degree of optimism but it was a sort of subdued, almost forced optimism, unlike the *one he had* been practising during the First Republic or even during his second exile. While he was elated by the fact that he enjoyed greater prestige than ever - it had grown "to such an extent, that the Communists, surprised to find him so popular, were

---

steady progress in leading country back to democratic ways. He argued that Czechoslovakia's return in near future to its pre-war standards of democracy made possible by non-interference by Soviets would in long run be of greater benefit to United States than meaningless votes at international conferences which changed no decisions..." (Steinhardt's secret telegram 2008 from Praha of December 23, 1946 to the Secretary of State - USDS, 860F.00/12-2346).

23 Charles University of Prague, Edvard Beneš, President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa, Speech given at the Charles University's Faculty of Law, on December 15, 1945, Prague, 1946, p. 63.

24 For details see: Korbel, J., op.cit., pp. 126-128. - circular 1020 of the British Diplomatic Documents distributed, on a confidential basis, to the senior Commonwealth countries, dated June 8, 1945, dealt

obliged to show respect for him"[25] - he saw a battle royal in the offing because the National Front Government, which he was forced to accept in order to be allowed by the Soviet Union to return to Prague, was conceived by the Communists "as a means of substituting the then unattainable aim of a one-party dictatorship by a concert, under its hegemony, of several political parties, without opposition resembling a one-party dictatorship, by a unity of political will born by a unified political movement organized in a group of parties excluding opposition and criticism".[26]

President Beneš' deteriorating physical health affected his political personality not only in so far as his earlier proverbial optimism was concerned but it gave him grounds for almost pathological fear that when the battle royal with the Communists would take place, he would be unable to provide his nation with that type of vigorous and courageous leadership which would then so desperately be needed;[27] due to

---

with President Beneš' conversation with British Ambassador at Prague, Nichols, of June 4, 1945. In it, the latter reported that Beneš "clearly resented the fact that from the date of his last visit to Moscow until a fortnight after the arrival at Prague he had been virtually cut-off from communication with outer world..." (Canadian Department of External Affairs - cited hereafter CDEA - 7121-40).

25 Ripka, H., Czechoslovakia Enslaved, p. 45.

26 Chalupa, V., The National Front in Czechoslovakia, p. 14.

27 This point was emphasized to the author by Professor Václav Beneš at Bloomington, Indiana, on March 1, 1971: he said that he had been shocked on many occasions, during the post-war period, by the bleak outlook which his uncle held for the future of his country as well as of his own political personality and which he had conveyed to him in their private talks. He also stated that ever since his return to Prague in

his own personality trait of always doing most, if not all, of the work alone, he had prepared for himself no successor to whom he would be able to entrust his office at the time when he would have to step down. The gravest dilemma he then had to keep on facing every day was the unwise and unjustified American unfriendly policy towards Czechoslovakia in regard to economic assistance coupled with the ever-increasing hostile and imperialist attitudes of the Soviet Union. Since his return home, he was, however, not only physically, but also mentally worn-out and lacked precisely that type of moral courage required from the political leader in his position, who, in the existing circumstances, alone remained capable of averting the forthcoming national disaster: soon after the end of the war he had obtained irrefutable documents proving that not only the West but also Moscow had betrayed Czechoslovakia in 1938 and that Stalin

---

May, 1945, his uncle's health had steadily been deteriorating and that only a complete abstention from all the activities of his office could have reversed, or at least contained, this process. However, due to the existing political situation in his country, President Beneš was neither willing nor able to take such a step. During his May, 1947 visit to Prague, Lockhart "accepted the view of Nichols (British Minister at Prague - note by author) that the preservation of a free Czechoslovakia depended mainly on the health of Beneš who was as energetic as ever but obviously suffering from strain". (Jan Masaryk, p. 53).

See also in this context Lockhart's speech given on the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of President Beneš in London on May 28, 1954 in Ústav Dr. Edvarda Beneše, 70. výročí narození Presidenta Dr. Edvarda Beneše, London, 1954, p. 9.

Lockhart had also observed during the same visit that in Czechoslovakia at that time "The two disturbing factors were the enigma of Russia's attitude and the state of Beneš' health... At that moment the general public had no qualms about President Beneš' health. It was known that he had broken down in the middle of a speech. But his withdrawal was attributed to overwork, and it was only in ministerial and diplomatic circles that one heard the suggestion that he was no longer the man that he had been..." ("The Czechoslovak Revolution", p. 637).

had no intention of coming to Prague's help at the time of Munich. This particular incident revealed the fundamental fault and weakness of Beneš' entire political personality and constituted the widest gap and an irreconcilable stand between him and the first Czechoslovak President Masaryk: unlike his great teacher who always based all his ideas and actions on solid, all-encompassing, philosophical and ethical grounds, Beneš' ideas and actions after Munich were more often than not based on a shallow mixture of political expediency, opportunism and wishful thinking: his concept of the two truths in regard to the documents on Soviet betrayal of 1938 - the absolute and the political truths - was so preposterous that it showed Beneš as a truly mentally worn-out, bewildered and insecure man haunted by utter feelings of guilt, doubts, despair, and fear of the Communists supported by the Soviets and their inevitable next moves against Czechoslovakia, coupled with the knowledge that the United States - the only power capable of challenging and stopping Soviet aggression - would idly stand by.[28]

---

28 Because of its gravity, Herben's testimony about Beneš' concept of the two truths has to be quoted in toto: it constitutes one of the most devastating indictments against Beneš' political personality, devastated by Munich:

"...The second topic of the discussion (during President and Mrs. Beneš' visit of the Herbens in their country's estate at Hostišov, on August 22, 1945 - the first subject was Beneš' visit of Roosevelt of 1943 - note by author) was Munich by which Dr Beneš was wounded for the rest of his life, as I had already noticed during our first conversation held in the Prague Castle in June 1945. This time, however, the President got so excited that I had prematurely cut-off his monclogue and led him out on fresh air into the garden. The two of us promenaded there alone and the President kept on repeating over and again that he had in his possession at that time diplomatic documents proving that the Soviets had betrayed us during Munich in the same manner as Daladier and Chamberlain, and that they had had no

2. A New Tragedy - The Loss of Czech Northern Territories

It was during the 1945-46 period that Beneš' lack of vigorous leadership and determined efforts on behalf of his nation's just and united demands for the recovery of the ancient Czech territories of Hlubčice, Ratibor and, above all, of Kladsko, the population of which was

---

intention whatever to provide us with any help. He had stated that their willingness was solely a pretence, it was only the usual Communist trick. "I will prove it! I will expose this fraud of the Soviet diplomacy and the legend of our Communists!" kept on shouting out the President with his fists clenched above the head in the manner I had never seen him before.

Because I knew that the President was suffering by hardening of cerebral vessels and I saw that he was extremely excited, I kept on trying to employ all the means towards calming him, especially by asking him questions which brought the discussion to another subject. But all these efforts were in vain. When the President kept on returning to this subject I put to him a direct question: "And why don't you then make immediately public these diplomatic documents when you have them in your possession?"

Beneš hesitated for a while, then suddenly became sober and replied with his typically diplomatic, cold and colourless voice: "You know, colleague, this is the absolute truth. But the political truth is something different. For the time being I therefore cannot do it".

...On August 22, 1945, I had asked myself in the Hostišov garden these questions:

1. Would have T.G. Masaryk been capable of saying in relation with something that there exist two truths, the absolute and the political ones?
2. How is it possible that the President who has in his coat-of-arms the motto "Truth Shall Conquer" and who is considered by the nation to be Masaryk's pupil and follower (and who himself claims to be such a person), how is it possible that he recognizes two truths - in accordance with the expediency of the existing political situation?
3. Is there any hope that this sick man would succeed in fighting a victorious struggle for democracy against robust and ruthless Gottwald and the Communist Party machine supported by Moscow?

Several days earlier I had signed a contract to become editor-in-chief of the "Svobodné Slovo" (Organ of the Czechoslovak National Socialist Party - note by author). By this talk with Beneš I truly was crushed. I nevertheless decided to fulfil my contract and to undertake the unequal struggle with the Communists, regardless of the fact, that the leader of democrats in the Prague Castle was a broken man, professing in this life and death

eagerly awaiting their unification with their mother-country[29] after more than two centuries of German occupation,[30] was mainly responsible

---

struggle two truths". (Herben's letter from Carmel-by-the-Sea, California, to Feierabend in Washington, D.C. of September 25, 1965 which appeared as Appendix 1 in the latter's Beneš nezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, pp. 133-135).

For an excellent comparison of the political personalities of T.G. Masaryk and Beneš where the author deals also with the above quoted relevant part of Herben's letter see the already cited: Polák, F., "Beneš a Masaryk" in the Zpravodaj, Chicago, May 1967, p. 3.

29 These feelings in regard to Kladsko were expressed by an author who devoted his life to the just solution of this question: "...Kladsko, its territory and its people, is awaiting the arrival of justice. It is hoping that now has already come the eagerly-longed for moment of its return home, into Bohemia... The Czech Provinces have their right and European obligation to become a fortress against an attack from the North-West, and that certainly has to be with its complete chain of defensive mountains with Kladsko, and as a matter of fact precisely with Kladsko as its main cope-stone..." (Davídek, V., Kladsko! Smutek i naděje České země, Praha, 1945, p. 27).

In his highly emotional speech to more than 100,000 Czechs of Silesia on Ostrá Hůrka in Háj near Opava, dealing with the ancient Czech territories in Silesia not recovered after World War I, Deputy Prime Minister David stated on Sunday, September 23, 1945: "...We will demand at the Peace Conference enlargement of Silesia (meaning the small portion of Silesia which Czechoslovakia was able to recover after World War I - note by author) by the territories which had formed in the past a part of Great Silesia which truly was the pearl of the Czech Crown. We demand from Upper Silesia the left bank of the Odra, also as a suburb of Ostrava, the territories of Ratibor, Hlubčice and Kladsko which constituted for centuries a part of the Czech state. In all these territories, in so far as these people spoke Slavic, it was the Czech, and not the Polish, language. This fact applies also to the Těšín territory which belonged 600 years to the Czech Crown... I am empowered to declare before the whole world in the name of the Republic that the Těšín territory was, is and will remain a part of the Czechoslovak state. It was ours, it is ours and it must forever remain ours..." (The Národní Osvobození - Organ of the Czechoslovak Association of the Legionaries, Praha, September 25, 1945).

30 All these territories were lost in 1742 together with Czech Silesia to Prussia. In so far as Kladsko was concerned, the Roman Catholic church considered its tearing off Bohemia to be only a temporary matter and even after more than two centuries of political separation and throughout the Nazi regime of the Protectorate, Kladsko never ceased to ecclesiastically

for the success of intrigues of the Polish Communists backed by Stalin's imposition of his will clearly favouring Communist Poland against Czechoslovakia, forcing Prague to sign a for Czechoslovakia disastrous treaty of "alliance" with Communist Warsaw, on March 10, 1947-[31] this was, de facto, Stalin's second veto[32] - and aided by the servile compliance of

---

belong to the Prague Archdiocese and the Archbishops of Prague paid Kladsko their regular pastoral visits throughout this entire period.

Like other Czechs of other parts of Bohemia, two of the most outstanding personalities of the entire Czech history - one representative of the spiritual, and the other of the political life, of the Czech nation - had so much loved Kladsko that they have been buried as they had wished, in the church of Our Lady in the city of Kladsko: the former, first Prague Archbishop Arnošt z Pardubic (1297 - 1364) of the Golden Era of Bohemia when its King Charles IV was also Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire and Prague its capital, was the only Czech who, because of his European significance gained by his vast accomplishments not only in the religious but also in political and cultural fields, came very near to having been elected Pope; the latter, King Jiří z Poděbrad (1420 - 1471) was the first European ruler who had seriously worked out, and proposed, a plan for the formation of a European union and a lasting European peace. He "made the first attempt at the constitution of a sort of League of Nations" (Beneš, E., Czechoslovakia's Struggle for Freedom, op.cit., p. 15).

31 In his telegram 190 from Prague of March 3, 1947, US Chargé d'Affaires Bruins informed Washington that he was told by Deputy Prime Minister Zenkl that the Czechoslovak Government had just received, through the Soviet Ambassador in Czechoslovakia, a personal message from Stalin asking Czechoslovakia to immediately sign with Poland a treaty of alliance similar to those Czechoslovakia already concluded with the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. (USDS, 751.60F/2-1547).

32 Stalin's first veto was used in July, 1942 against the realization of the proposed Czechoslovak-Polish confederation (see: Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation, A Story of the First Soviet Veto"). Beneš' responsibility for this Stalin's move lies in the fact that during his 1943 Moscow's visit he gave the latter the impression that Czechoslovakia did not want any parts of the then German territory. Táborský who was present when Stalin "invited Beneš to state what part of Germany he would like to have" wrote that Stalin "shook his head in disbelief when Beneš said that he did not want anything except possibly a straightening of boundaries at a few points... (and) pointed to the Glatz (Kladsko) region as an example of an area needing boundary rectification... Stalin promptly marked off that region for Czechoslovakia... (The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš," p. 677). In other work Táborský clearly stated that "Stalin even suggested himself

the Czechoslovak Communists.[33] This loss, the enormity of which has not yet fully been appreciated by the Czech nation, combined with the loss

---

that Czechoslovakia ought to take the Glatz region..."("Beneš and the Soviets", p. 310). In his telegram 4913 from Moscow of December 19, 1944, Harriman informed the Secretary of State that Stalin had, i.a. told recently De Gaulle that the Czechs might wish to expand their boundaries in the North somewhat in Silesia and added: "...Beneš in talking with me a year ago did not appear to be interested in taking German territory which would increase his problems..." (USDS, 760C.61/12-1944). Had Beneš vigorously and resolutely shown to Stalin that the Kladsko, Hlubčice and Ratiboř territories were of the vital importance to Czechoslovakia, Stalin might have not allowed Communist Poland to usurp them at the time when he still wanted to enable the Czechoslovak Communists to gain power through following the Parliamentary procedures and gaining popular support.

33 In order to gain more popular support among the Czechoslovaks who stood united on the question of the recovery of the lost Czech territories in Silesia, and not knowing that Stalin would ultimately decide against Czechoslovakia, the Czechoslovak Communists were initially among the most outspoken protagonists of the recovery of these three ancient Czech territories in general, and of Kladsko in particular. One of their most prominent members, then the Minister of Education and Culture, Nejedlý had very convincingly and vehemently described "the completely Czech character of Kladsko" in his introduction to a book prepared by the Association of the Friends of Kladsko, and concluded by an argument which Beneš should have used in his fateful meeting with Stalin in December 1943 when this subject had been discussed: "...It is therefore just and fitting to speak about 'Our Kladsko' which was ours and which has substantially remained ours. It was for this reason that there appeared already in 1918 calls demanding the annexation of at least that part of Kladsko to us. This question is appearing even today, and today in a much more pressing form because it is not involved only the historic claim for Kladsko, yes, not even only the annexation of those courageous Czechs of Kladsko to their original homeland. There is involved much more here: to renew the ancient original boundary of Bohemia. Bohemia was not and is not a fortuitous formation. The Czech mountains have always given to Bohemia that enviable stability which other countries without such boundaries are so badly lacking and which has allowed us not to be preoccupied with struggles for the boundaries but to divert all our national energy towards the improvement of the country inside. The tearing off Kladsko broke this wholeness of Bohemia in the North-West. The original boundary went here along the ridge of the Sovi Mountains, from the Krkonoše in a direct line to the Jeseník Mountains. And that also was there the only natural boundary of Bohemia, giving to the whole of North-West Bohemia its natural form and meaning. The return of Kladsko to Bohemia would only be the remedy of a historical

of Ruthenia had actually placed post-World War II victorious Czechoslovakia among the defeated states in so far as its territories were concerned.[34]

President Beneš, who on several occasions in the post-World War II period in talks with American diplomats, privately "expressed hope that in coming negotiations concerning Germany, consideration would be given by American Government to Czechoslovakia's claim to border rectifications[35]"[36] had not done so publicly because

---

injustice and a new safeguard of the policy aiming at the development of our national life within our nature - given and history - hallowed frontiers.." (Nejedlý, Z., Introduction in Svaz přátel Kladska, Naše Kladsko, Praha, 1946, p. 7).

During the post World War II - period Nejedlý wrote also numerous articles in the Czechoslovak press, demanding the return to Czechoslovakia of Kladsko and stating that "the annexation of Kladsko to Czechoslovakia is the historic and strategic right of the Czechoslovak Republic" (see e.g. the Národní Osvobození, July 4, 1945). All the Czechoslovak press of that period, including the Communist Organs, carried frequently resolution of the Czechoslovak workers demanding the return of Kladsko (see e.g. The Rudé Právo, August 21, 1945).

34 The few square miles of almost useless marsh, as was described to the author by knowledgeable witnesses the territory which Czechoslovakia obtained after the war with great fanfare from Hungary on the Bratislava's opposite bank of the Danube river, do not alter this tragic reality.

35 In his secret telegram 100 to the Secretary of State at Paris of April 26, 1946 (tel. 634 to the State Department, Washington) Steinhardt stated that he had received a personal letter from Czechoslovak Foreign Minister, Masaryk, dated April 24, 1946 that it was "of decisive importance to Czechoslovakia" that at the Conference of Foreign Ministers at Paris, Czechoslovakia's territorial claims against Germany be discussed in the event that 'German question' was on the agenda. These territorial claims were contained in the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry's memorandum "Rectification of the Frontiers of Czechoslovakia Towards Germany" (transmitted with the enclosed map to the State Department as enclosures to dispatch 814 on April 26, 1946 from Praha). Therein, Czechoslovakia asked for the annexation of the following areas: "Ratibor and Hlubčicko including the Oder River port of Kozlí (Cosel); Kladsko; Krkonoše sector and the areas of Hirschberg and Waldenburg; in the Žitava sector, the towns of Žitava, Hirschfeld and the German portion of the town of Saidenberg; the foreland north of the Krušnohorí

of his fear of offending Stalin because the "Soviets had already intimated they would not support Czechslovakia's claims".[37]

Of all the territories of the Czech Historic Provinces awaiting their return home from German subjugation, the post-World War II story of Kladsko was especially tragic, though not solely confined to it; soon after the war, Czechoslovakia was forced to officially lodge a protest to the effect that "the population of Czech nationality in the Kladsko, Hlubčice and Ratibor areas is being subjected to systematic oppression of all kinds on the part of the Polish state authorities" and then provided the details of the brutalities of the Poles against the Czechs.[38] Czechoslovak earlier

---

mountains; a small rectification along the Bohemia-Bavaria frontier which would include the town of Brod nad Lesy (Furth im Walde)" (USDS, 740.00119 - EW/4-2646).

36 Steinhardt's secret tel. 2008 from Praha of December 23, 1946 (USDS, 860F.00/12-2346).

37 Ibid. Steinhardt added that Beneš, talking about the negative attitude of the Soviets in regard to Czech territorial claims towards Germany, "was disposed to attribute their position to fact that they were having so many difficulties in Poland that they were not desirous of adding thereto. He is convinced, however, that if US and British support Czech position, satisfactory compromise can be worked out to which Soviets would not seriously object..."
It is interesting to note that at least on two earlier occasions when the Soviets were yet prepared to accommodate, or at least wanted to be presented with, Czech territorial claims towards Germany, and even encouraged the Czechs to do so, it was Beneš who had taken the negative stand: besides the already noted incident during Beneš' 1943 visit of Stalin, described by Táborský (see note 32 above), Ripka (Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Trade during the pre-Communist coup d'état period) described how in the immediately post-war period the Soviets supported Polish claims for the Odra-Nisa western frontiers of Poland in order that Warsaw "would be under an obligation to them" and were also seeking the means for tying Czechoslovakia to Russia as firmly as possible. Ripka asserts that it was in this context that "Moscow tried by unofficial hints to persuade Czechoslovakia to make demands on Germany for Lusatian territory. Some Slavonic Serbs or Wends remain in

representations in regard to the Czech Silesian territories[39] drew a sympathetic reaction at Washington, certainly in regard to Kladsko.[40]

Yet all the Czechoslovak efforts to liberate its ancient territories by attempting to present this problem to the attention of the First Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers in London in 1945, and in Paris the following year were,[41] however, of no avail not only

---

Lusatia and I provoked Czech Communists into making violent protest when, in July 1945, in agreement with President Beneš, I categorically opposed these designs..." (Ripka, H., Eastern Europe in the Post-War World, London, 1961, p. 59).

38 Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry's note of August 26, 1945 to the US Embassy at Prague and sent to the State Department by US Chargé in Prague, Klieforth, in dispatch 70 from Prague on August 30, 1945, (USDS, 860F.014/8-3045).

39 The virtually unknown history of Czechoslovakia's attempts to liberate Kladsko from foreign domination had begun on May 31, 1945 when the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Clementis (Foreign Minister Masaryk was at the UN Conference at San Francisco) sent a note to Klieforth to the effect that the Czechoslovak Government had been informed that Kladsko was placed under the temporary Polish administration. He then stated that Kladsko had always been Czech and that it was the intention of the Czechoslovak Government to take the control of the territory of Kladsko; in his subsequent note of June 13, 1945 Clementis informed Klieforth that the Czechoslovak Government would submit a proposal to the Allies for the rectification of the Czechoslovak-German frontier at Hlubčice, Ratiboř and Kladsko (USDS, 860F.01/6-1445).

40 Acting Secretary of State Grew stated his Government's stand in regard to Kladsko in telegram 32 sent from Washington to Klieforth in Prague on June 30, 1945: "...US favours Czech occupation of Kladsko in view of historic and territorial claims as well as ethnic and strategic considerations and will probably not object to permanent rectification favourable to Czechoslovakia..." (USDS, 860F.01/6-1445).

41 In his telegram 273 from Washington of September 29, 1945 Acting Secretary of State, Acheson informed Steinhardt in Prague that the Czech Government would present this problem to the attention of the Council of Foreign Ministers being then held in London (September 11 - October 2, 1945) "as a development which prejudices final settlement of frontiers as

because of the Soviet negative stand towards the Czech position and the resulting bitter attacks by Communist Poland[42] but also because of President Beneš' failure "to give his people the kind of leadership that the situation demanded"[43]: the sufferings of his countrymen inflicted

---

contemplated in Potsdam agreement", (USDS, 860F.014/8-3045). See note 35 above for the Czechoslovak position in 1946.

42 In his telegram 88 from Warsaw of April 29, 1946, American Ambassador in Poland, Lane informed the Secretary of State that Acting Foreign Minister Modzelewski regarded the Czechoslovak Government's decision that in the event that the German question be discussed at the meeting of Foreign Ministers at Paris to make a claim for territory in "southwestern part of Poland" as "unfriendly act" (760C.60H/4-2946).

43 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš, p. 682. This author is in complete agreement with Táborský that President Beneš was not "without blame" for the post-war developments in Czechoslovakia which led to February, 1948. Following the above quotation which was meant for general Czechoslovak situation but which is admirably applicable to the situation existing in the Czech northern territories at the end of the war, Táborský provides a fitting description of Beneš' "main mistake" upon his return to Prague in 1945: "...All of us who stood close to him at that time held the view that he should have been much more forceful in the immediate postwar era than in prewar days. I personally felt that for a while he should act in an almost authoritarian fashion, capitalizing on his tremendous prestige with the Czechoslovak people and the absolute, almost mystical trust they had in him. 'What will be needed in those chaotic days, Mr. President', I mentioned to him in one of the many discussions which we had on this topic, 'is not a Head of State who will stay above the parties, a sort of umpire over the political game, but a strong man who will nip Communist trickery in the bud'. 'Yes, you are right', he answered. 'This time I shall have to use all my authority and start stepping on Communist toes. People will be demoralized, their courage will be impaired, and I am afraid that there will be no strong democratic leaders. I shall have to take a much more active part in government than in normal times'.

But he did not. Although the tremendous ovation with which he was received on his triumphant return across Czechoslovakia to Prague showed that the bulk of the people revered him more than ever, Beneš quickly reverted to his old habit of negotiating, arguing and compromising, techniques that may be suited to a functioning democracy, but are not at all adequate to cope with the modern Machiavellis of Marxism-Leninism. Instead of taking drastic action at least against the worst abuses of power

on them by the Poles for the second time within a decade warranted his determined employment of all the means at his disposal which his nation was then uniformly ready to implement and which would have forced a change of position of the Kremlin and prevented Stalin's second veto.

---

by the Communist leaders, he preferred patiently to plead, warn, admonish - biding his time and hoping that somehow the slow pressure of public opinion would induce the Communists to mend their ways..."-

In the case of the Czech northern territories Beneš would have encountered no such opposition in 1945-46 from the Czech Communists since even they were in favour of their return to the Czech Historic Provinces.

3. Transfer of the German Minority

> I am unyielding in the matter of the transfer of Germans. I demanded this action in London already in 1941. I kept on demonstrating... that this was an essential matter for the existence of our state. I kept on thinking how to achieve this. I was always of the opinion that a certain number of our Germans could, and probably would, remain in our state. Radicalism in this matter was here sharper than I had expected. This attitude remains to a certain measure even now...[44]

President Beneš' role in the transfer of the Czech Germans has become since the war a matter of great controversy: on the one side he has been attacked for his allegedly anti-German attitude which governed all his ideas and actions and resulted in the radical implementation of the transfer after the war, while, on the other side, he has been defended on the grounds that he was neither anti-German nor vindictive but was instrumental in implementing the only effective and lasting solution of the centuries-old Czech-German problem within the Czech Historic Provinces.[45] The truth is that pragmatically-minded Beneš' stand in regard to the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia was governed by realities existing at the particular time: since its conception in London in 1940,[46] his idea of

---

44 President Beneš' address to the representatives of the glass industry from Kamenický Šenov (a city in northern Bohemia) given in the Hradčany Castle on February 8, 1946 (The Národní Osvobození, February 9, 1946).

45 For an objective explanation of this subject see: Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 187-322.

46 During his first, and the only, post-war visit in the Czech western borderlands (May 18-22, 1947) Beneš had given several speeches on the subject of the transfer of the German minority. In Karlovy Vary he had i.e. stated to members of the Regional National Committee: "...I

the transfer of the German minority had undergone, in its scope, dramatic changes, encompassing the whole range from one extreme - the transfer of only those nazists who had committed treason against the Czechoslovak state and perpetrated crimes against its citizens,[47] to another extreme - the transfer of almost all of the entire German minority;[48] among the main factors governing Beneš on this subject during the war were the ever increasing acts of cruelty perpetrated by the Germans against the Czechs in the Protectorate, and the inevitable violent anti-German Czech reaction. Beneš' inability to come to a workable agreement with Czech Germans in England, particularly with Jaksch,[49] falls in the same category as the transfer of Germans though this particular problem was further aggravated by Jaksch' own inability to comprehend the extremely grave deterioration of the Czech-German relations in the Protectorate and to present accordingly some realistic,

---

remember when I had arrived after Munich to England and began to speak about the solution of the problem of our state, after the war, the first question which I asked at the beginnings of our action in exile already in 1940 was the question of the transfer of Germans from our country. I had put this question directly and clearly, discussed it first with the English and then with the Americans. With the Russians I discussed it last since I expected that they would certainly help us... We had to get rid our country of the Germans, we were compelled to this by all what they had done in the Reich and in our country before and after Munich. Shortly - we had to carry out a national revolution..." (Kettner, P., et. al., President Dr Edvard Beneš po prvé v našem pohraničí, Karlovy Vary, 1947, p. 23).

Beneš had also written in 1941 on the problem of minorities: "...The problem of national minorities will have to be considered far more systematically and radically than it was after the last war. I accept the principle of the transfer of populations. Populations were exchanged, successfully and on a large scale, between Greece and Turkey after the war of 1922. The world courageously accepted this large-scale transfer, because it knew that the alternative would have been a systematic mass-

and to Beneš acceptable, proposals which would have eventually led to a compromise capable of being implemented after the war.[50]

---

murder of millions of people. If the problem is carefully considered and wide measures are adopted in good time, the transfer can be made amicably under decent human conditions, under international control and with international support..." (Beneš, E., "The New Order in Europe", in The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. CXXX, September 1941, pp. 150-155).

47 See DHČP, Vol. 1, Documents No. 61 (p.84), 105 (p.134), 115 (pp. 142-144) and 125 (pp. 173-4). Ripka presented these Dr Beneš' ideas in 1944 in the form of a book: in a forword to it, Gustav Beuer, a former member of the Czechoslovak Parliament wrote on November 16, 1944 that he approved of the expulsion of "all those Germans who have proved to be convinced Nazis, who committed gross offences against the state and who shared in the barbarous persecution and exploitation of the Czech people... such a settlement of the German problem as suggested by Ripka (who was only Beneš' mouthpiece - note by author) is appropriate for Czechoslovakia..." (Ripka, H., The Future of Czechoslovak Germans, London, 1944, p. 5). See also Seibt, F., "Beneš im Exil 1939 bis 1945" in Beitraege zum Deutsch - Tschechischen Verhaeltnis im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert, Munich, Vol. 19, 1967, pp. 143-156.

German diplomatic documents of the latter part of World War II demonstrate the importance which was attached by Berlin to President Beneš' pronouncements dealing with the future of the German minority in Czechoslovakia: typical is e.g. dispatch 1262 of German Ambassador at Buenos Aires, Meynen of September 3, 1943 (received at Berlin on November 11, 1943 - sic!) which informed Berlin that the local Czechoslovak Legation's circular letter publicized speech given by Dr Slávik, Minister of the Interior of Beneš' Government in London (who was expressing President Beneš' ideas on the subject - note by author) in which he had, i.a. stated that "all the Germans have to be punished without difference between Nazis in Sudeten and in the Reich and between Nazis and non-Nazis", and that the Czechs will not agree to any plans for autonomy of the German minority in their Republic which have been promulgated by Jaksch, (Capt. German Docs., German Foreign Ministry, Pol. Verschluss, Czechoslovakia, Vol. 14, Roll 1307, Ser. No. 2367, Neg.Fr.No. 489645). For Berlin's reaction and comments on the above dispatch, see G.For. Min's memorandum of November 12, 1943 (ibid., neg.fr.nos. 489646-7) and Pol. IV 5264g. note, also written at Berlin, of November 20, 1943 (ibid., neg.fr.nos. 489649-50).

48 See Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 267-300.

49 Jaksch was leader of the German Social-Democratic Party in Czechoslovakia who spent the war years in exile in England.

The solution of the problem of the transfer of the German minority to Germany, and to a lesser extent of the Hungarian minority to Hungary, became in immediately post-war Czechoslovakia "the most important matter - it is essential that the earliest possible agreement be reached... This problem unsolved presents the greatest danger to President Beneš' prestige".[51] Beneš devoted most of his energies during this period towards effecting this transfer as early as possible and did not hesitate to apply pressure on the Allies in general, and the Americans in particular, towards achieving this goal.[52]

---

50 President Beneš considered his relationship with Jaksch in England of such an importance that he had included some of the correspondence exchanged between them as Appendices of his Memoirs(pp. 303-334). For the complete correspondence and documents see: Prinz, F., ed., Wenzel Jaksch - Edvard Beneš, Briefe und Dokumente aus dem Londoner Exil 1939-1943, Cologne, 1973, 160p. - See also Jaksch, W., Benesch war gewarnt! Munich, 1949, 90p.

51 US Chargé in Prague, Klieforth's telegram 44 from Prague of June 28, 1945 to the Secretary of State. Immediately following the above quotation, Klieforth had made an interesting comment regarding President Beneš' position in this regard: "The possibility cannot be excluded that the situation affords opportunity for a dramatic leader with radical support to arouse the people and seek solution by force, on the model of similar action elsewhere in Europe after 1918..." (USDS, 860F.4016/6-2845).

52 In his telegram 1243 from Moscow of April 18, 1945, US Chargé d'affaires Kennan stated that "the desire of Dr Beneš to announce, upon his return to Czechoslovakia, the transfer of German minorities, was subject of note, dated April 11th from British Ambassador Sir Archibald Clark Kerr to Molotov. Kerr stated Beneš in London did not dispute British view that final decision on German minorities should await agreement on entire German settlement among major Allies. Churchill and Eden told Dr Beneš that the American, British and Soviet Governments had not yet achieved agreement on the German question and that if he felt he must issue a statement, it should be evident that it was no more than his proposal. Beneš had, however, on his recent visit here (March 17-31, 1945) told Kerr that he had received the assent of the Soviet Government to the expulsion from Czechoslovakia of about 2/3 of Hungarian and German minorities...

While President Beneš never wavered in his demand for the transfer of the German minority,[53] he denounced all cases of ruthless

---

Kennan concluded that "the British hoped that Russians could admonish Beneš not to act prematurely and drastically in matters which would complicate German issues which the Soviet and British Governments will have to deal with..." (USDS, 860F.01/4-1845).

In his secret tel. 42 from Praha of July 5, 1945, Klieforth transmitted message received from Clementis on July 3, 1945 that it was "Dr Beneš' and the Czechoslovak Government's desire to have the application for the transfer of the minorities placed on the agenda at the forthcoming meeting of Truman, Churchill and Stalin", (USDS, 840.4016 DP/7-545).

On August 2, 1945, Steinhardt reported in telegram 144 that during the lunch on August 1st, "Dr Beneš referred to the minority problem. He said he understood necessity for a schedule in connection with evacuation and that Sudeten Germans must be treated humanly. He pointed out, however, the imperative necessity that they be removed from Czechoslovakia as soon as possible. He said the position of the Czech Government would be materially strengthened if the American Government would 'formally agree in principle' to the evacuation, from Czechoslovakia, of the German and Hungarian minorities observing that the Russian Government has already given its formal consent..." (USDS, 840.4016/8-245).

Steinhardt's tel. 509 from Praha of October 31, 1945 dealt with further pressures applied by President Beneš on the United States in regard to the delaying tactics employed by the Americans in accepting Czech Germans as well as those German refugees from other countries of Europe who became stranded at the end of the war on the Czechoslovak territory, into their zone of Germany: "...Beneš said he understood the desire of the Allies for delay where so substantial a movement is concerned but as the political pressure for expulsion continues to increase, he was experiencing great difficulty in restraining irregular expulsions which were bound to take place on an increasing scale..." (860F.00/10-3145).

President Beneš kept on applying these pressures until the completion of the transfer of the German minority from Czechoslovakia - for details see Foreign Relations of the United States covering the relevant period.

53 Beneš' stand was emphasized in his speech in Tábor, on June 16, 1945: "In my speech of May 2, 1938, I called for tolerance, forgiveness... The world today knows the German answer to this appeal of mine; their answer spelt terror, treason, concentration camps for us Czechs... Can it, therefore, surprise anybody in the whole world when we say that we are determined to get rid of these Germans forever?..." (The Národní Osvobození, June 18, 1945).

On June 10, 1945, Beneš proclaimed at Lidice: "...It will not be long.. before we hear various apologies for the German fury and madness displayed

and precipitous evacuation, called the responsible authorities to order and issued a stern warning in this regard: "All our proceedings connected with the transfer must be carried out in a humane, fair and correct way and on a moral basis... All minor officials who act otherwise will be held responsible. The Government will under no circumstances allow the good reputation of the Republic to be soiled by irresponsible individuals...[54] When this transfer had been completed by the end of 1946, with only slightly over 200,000 Germans remaining in the Republic,[55] President Beneš' final solution of the German minority problem in Czechoslovakia became the reality.[56] Talking subsequently about this

---

in this second great war. And here let us remember that we owe it to ourselves, to our children and to our future generations to do everything to prevent these terrible bestialities from ever happening again... The crime of Lidice called to the whole world not for vengeance but for strict justice..." (Merhout, C., Lidice, Praha, 1945, p. 29).

54 President Beneš' speech given at Mělník on October 14, 1945 (The Svobodné Slovo, October 15, 1945).

55 For detailed statistical data see: Luža, R., op.cit., pp. 275-300.

56 In his excellent study on this subject, "Němci v Československu a jich odsun z republiky", President Beneš' Chancellor, Smutný, wrote in this regard: "...In the eyes of all Germans, Dr Beneš personifies the transfer of 1945, (should correctly read of 1945-46 - note by author). The transfer was an endeavour of Dr Beneš who saw in it not only an atonement for the injustice committed against the Republic in 1938 but also the consummation of 1918: only after the transfer, the Czechs and the Slovaks became true masters in their entire homeland..." In his Memoirs, (pp. 210-227) Beneš dealt at great length with the transfer of the German minority from Czechoslovakia and described his own role played in this drama, from the very concept of this idea during the early phases of the war, to its execution in 1945-1946 and proclaimed: "...A great and fateful chapter in our national history, one which had so often moulded our whole destiny - and which at least twice might have caused the destruction

accomplishment during his May, 1947 visit in Western Bohemia,[57] he had provided guidelines on the future position towards the Germans: the Germans must never return and the Czechs must always remain on guard against any possible German attack in the future.[58]

---

of our Nation - was thus finally closed. An unexpected outcome, this, of the Munich policy!..." (p. 223).

In his message to the nation on the occasion of the 326th anniversary of the Battle of Bílá hora (White Mountain, a hill near Prague, where in November, 1620, the Czech Protestants lost to the Imperial Army; this battle ended Czech independence for three centuries, and was the first major engagement of the Thirty-Year War), President Beneš had stated in November, 1946: "...Transfer of the Germans is an act of extraordinary historical importance in the sense that it remedies statesmanly and political errors of the entire millenium from the period of Saint Wenceslaus, and it especially signifies the political remedy of the Bílá hora. Besides its significance in the internal political affairs, in so far as its national aspect is concerned, it is impossible to overlook.. its European and world significance: the German minority was a continuous focus of frictions and disturbances which endangered not only European peace, but in our century they even twice jeopardized world peace..." (Smutný, J., op.cit., (n.56) pp. 89-90).

57 See note 46 of this Chapter.

58 President Beneš stated on this occasion: "...The Germans are away from our lands... we must never look or go to the past... The first sign of such step backward,.. would mean the return of the Germans, and this is, of course, something that none of us wants. And when I am hearing today how the Germans keep on saying that they will again return, that all is only idle talk and nothing else... It must be clear to us that the Germans cannot, and will not, return. I am not of anti-German sentiment, I am not an enemy of the Germans. My past activities confirm this fact. And I have always taught that it is necessary to get along well with a nation which has 70 million citizens. I am again speaking in the same vein. However, if the Germans were again to return to us, it would mean an exterminatory struggle directed against our entire nation. In this sense we must be always on guard.." Beneš then talked about the then existing European and world political situation and presented his own skeptical views about the future developments in Germany, by striking a note of warning: "..Peace with the Germans will then be concluded (Beneš was thinking in the terms of 2-5 years - note by author), and on the same day when they will sign Peace Treaty, the Germans will start to prepare plans for its destruction. Such plans will be directed, above all, against us. In the case of German attack we are

again the first ones to be attacked. Endeavours at reaching everlasting peace are beautiful. Even we are governed by such endeavours, but these are, above all, a wish, and we must be prepared for the eventuality that it will not be realized..." (Ibid., pp. 26-27).

Concluding his message in remembrance of the Bílá hora (see n. 56 of this Chapter), Beneš, after having dealt with the transfer, issued to his nation a stern warning: "Let us be aware that we are taking on a great national responsibility before future generations!" (Smutný, J., op.cit., in n.56, p. 90).

4. The Slovak Question

> ...In the Republic, the Slovaks are, and will be, fully endowed with equal rights and equal respects, in Slovakia they will themselves govern their own affairs in the same manner as the Czechs will govern the Czech affairs in the Czech lands, and we will mutually agree, in a reasonable and democratic fashion, on our common affairs. It would be unreasonable, if we would not want to appreciate that the Slovaks firstly contributed incomparably more to their liberation in this war than they had done in the first war, and, secondly, the Slovaks have nationally and politically, greatly matured and took fully their place on the side of those who fought in this war for freedom. It is with pleasure that I state and emphasize this fact...[59]

During the First Republic and the early years of his second exile, President Beneš never changed his stand of following implicitly T.G. Masaryk's concept of the Czechoslovak nation[60] - the official doctrine

---

59 President Beneš' speech in Bratislava, made at the end of World War II on his trip from Moscow to Prague, in Prezident opat medzi námi, Bratislava, 1945, pp. 162-163.

60 President Beneš' Chancellor Smutný provided an excellent description of this concept: "...In Masaryk's concept of the Czechoslovak nation there was the statement of irrevocable reality that both nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks, are only components of the existing higher national unit in which both of them had also been in bygone history the bearers of the common state idea. Masaryk therefore saw the natural evolution in the fact that in the moment when both nations, the Czechs and the Slovaks, have again been returning into a free and common entirety, they have also been returning into their original national unity. Both of them were in the new state and in the new national unity bearers, endowed with equal rights and equal respects, of the entire state authority and power, and of common responsibility. Masaryk embodied in the idea of the Czechoslovak nationhood his conviction about the community of our interests and about the unity of cultural premises. I see, though, in his idea the same, if not the greater, emphasis on statehood as on nationhood. It was also for this reason that all Czechs and Slovaks had gladly accepted his idea when they had given their approval to the First Czechoslovak Constitution. They understood that in unity would be the guarantee of a prosperous and safe development of both nations in the

of the First Republic - and rejected resolutely all attempts to split the Czechoslovaks into the Czech and the Slovak nations first, and into their separate states after. During the First Republic he saw in such endeavours the German, Polish and Hungarian tactics - the "divide et impera" policy of the three enemy states, directed at the weakening and destruction of his country;[61] in the subsequent epoch, he correctly interpreted them as a Communist device aiming either at separating Slovakia from the Czech Historic Provinces and incorporating it into the Soviet Union or at facilitating bolshevization of the whole country.[62]

Yet subsequently, during the latter part of World War II he was forced by the developments in Slovakia to moderate substantially his stand and to state that in the liberated Republic "there will not be, according to my judgement, any conflict on the subject whether Czechs and Slovaks are ethnically one nation or two nations. Such a conflict between us should not even exist... And I am declaring once for all that I will not enter into any controversy on this question with anyone..."[63]

Following the implementation of the Košice Program which endorsed the separate identity of Czechs and Slovaks, and the equality of the two

---

Republic..." (Smutný, J., et al., K slovenské otázce v Československu, Vol. II, London, 1952, pp. 3-4).

61 See Chapter III of this study, passim.

62 See Chapter VI of this study, passim; for details about discussions between President Beneš with the present members of his London Government, and the Communists, see Husák, G., Svědectví o slovenském národním povstání, Praha, 1970, pp. 546-557.

63 President Beneš' Fourth Message to the State Council in London of February 3, 1944, in Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 258.

nations in a common state, President Beneš persisted in refusing to regard the so-called "Slovak Question" as a difficult problem since "...in its main principles the relationship between the Czechs and Slovaks is already solved..."[64] and kept on sharply attacking attempts to create discords between the Czechs and the Slovaks: "...everyone who tries, consciously or subconsciously, to introduce discord between the Czechs and the Slovaks, who causes troubles and encroaches disturbingly upon our mutual relationship, works not only against our state, with the existence of which we are bound together by fate, but helps to revive nazism and fascism and works for their purposes, in their interests, and under their malignant influence..."[65]

During the early months of 1947 when the Slovak Question became one of the foremost issues of the Czechoslovak internal affairs, President

---

64 Beneš, E., "Postwar Czechoslovakia" in the Foreign Affairs, Vol. 24, No. 3, April 1946, p. 403.

Talking in this spirit in Topoľčianky he stated to the representatives of the Slovak Sokol on September 20, 1946: "...I sincerely welcome the unanimous decision of the Rally of the Sokol in Slovakia to support the united Czechoslovak Sokol Community. This is right, and cannot even be otherwise. The tradition of cooperation, friendship, mutual understanding and fellow-citizenship of the Czechs and Slovaks which developed during the First Republic in an exemplary manner precisely in the Sokol, is preserved by this correct decision and the interest of the state directly requires to continue in it in a consistent and purposeful fashion. We are - Czechs and Slovaks - on the same boat, we are joined by fate, we are dependent one on the other and are left to ourselves. We live together, we fall together. Consciousness of the fellow-citizenship decreed by fate has to be to every Slovak and Czech the guidance to his every action..." (Krejčí, A., President Dr Edvard Beneš Sokolstvu, Praha, 1947, p. 30).

In an audience given to the delegation of the Czech Catholic clergy - political prisoners - on November 15, 1946, President Beneš brought up, i.a. the Slovak question and said to them: "...Establish close and warm friendly contact with the Slovak Catholic clergy. Deepen the consciousness of Czechoslovak unity, of Czechs and Slovaks, on the basis of national

Beneš found it necessary to state explicitly that the establishment of an independent Slovakia was forever out of the question and condemned all those who were advocating such an independent state, that there had to definitely be a solution of the Czecho-Slovak problem since it could no longer be postponed, and that Czechoslovakia would not survive another crisis on this issue. He then concluded by issuing a warning that

> "Slovakia would never emerge from such a crisis as an independent state and would most probably become a part of Russia. I would not consider such a solution a happy one, either for the Czechs, the Slovaks or the Russians, or for the European situation as a whole. The Czechs can under no circumstances accept an independent Slovakia in the future. The Czechs with 70 million Germans as their neighbours cannot risk to deprive themselves of the neighbourhood of Russia and therefore could not agree to an independent Slovakia between themselves and the Russians..."[66]

The trial of the President of the former puppet "Slovak State", Tiso, aggravated further the already strained Slovak-Czech relations, and caused President Beneš to make efforts, though in vain, to save Tiso's life by

---

brotherhood and true Christian faith..." (Beneš, E., Zavazuji Vás, Brno, 1948, p. 134).

65 President Beneš' address to the Academic Dignitaries of the Slovak University given on May 2, 1946, quoted in Kuchynka, J., President Budovatel, Třebechovice pod Orebem, 1948, pp. 87-88.

66 President Beneš' address to the Czechoslovak Soviety of February 14, 1947 dealing with problems in relations between the Czechs and the Slovaks - (US Chargé d'Affaires Bruins' dispatch 1890 from Praha of February 21, 1947 - USDS, 860F.00/2-2147).

For further details see Diamond, W., Czechoslovakia Between East and West, London, 1947, p. 53; for the entire text of this speech see: The Národní Osvobození, February 16, 1947.

Of interest in this context are:
1. President Beneš' speech on the occasion of the First Anniversary of the Slovak National Uprising, given on August 29, 1945, (Beneš, E., Zavazuji Vás, pp. 25-37);
2. His article written in the Odkaz of March 27, 1946 (Ibid, pp. 79-80).

extending to him Presidential pardon.[67] During the subsequent period, developments which took place in Slovakia in general, and in the Slovak-Czech relations in particular, meant a serious set-back to the Communists and demonstrated that President Beneš' efforts were paying dividends; he was thus able to remark in November, 1947 that he was "pleased with the solution of the Slovak crisis".[68] Yet his satisfaction about this development was only of a very brief duration - three months later it was destroyed by the Communist coup d'état.

---

67 In his conversation with Steinhardt of April 3, 1947 Beneš had stated that Tiso would probably be condemned to death, and in this prognostication he was correct. (Tiso was sentenced to death on April 15, 1947 and executed three days later - note by author). He then said that he had polled the Cabinet which was at that time in favour of carrying out the sentence by a majority of one vote - he himself favoured grace but was bound under the Constitution by the recommendation of the Government and was therefore seeking to persuade one or two members of the Government to change their intended votes so that he would be able to extend Presidential grace. (Steinhardt's telegram 311 from Praha of April 3, 1947 - USDS, 860F.00/4-347).

68 President Beneš' remark to Steinhardt of November 20, 1947 - (Steinhardt's telegram 1564 from Praha of November 24, 1947 - USDS, 860F.00/11-2447).

5. The Post-War Czechoslovak Internal Order - Continuity and Revolution

> ...For the whole of the six years of my exile I meditated with great pains - I admit it openly - upon all these problems... How were we to keep to our national tradition and connect it organically with the evolution of the world, to pass from the existing continuity of law and connect it organically with the revolutionary law being newly created, to remain democrats and accept the necessary and morally and politically justified revolutionary, socializing measures, in a word, to go over, in a spirit of national unity, from a decaying liberal regime to a new stage in modern society in its socializing phase...[69]

One of the most fundamental problems which President Beneš had to deal with during the entire period of his second exile was how to effect, in post-war Czechoslovakia, a new Order which would incorporate two diametrically opposed concepts: "the continuity of pre-war law and the formation of a new revolutionary law".[70] Because of the particular

---

69 Beneš, E., President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa, An Address Given at the Ceremonial Conferment Upon Him of the Honourary Degree of the Faculty of Law of the Charles University of Prague, Held on December 15, 1945 in the Spanish Hall of the Prague Castle, Prague, 1946, p. 61, (to be subsequently cited as : "Degree Address"). Theoretically this speech, which should be read by every serious student of Czechoslovakia's post-war developments, is a masterly exposé, providing an excellent account of his ideas aiming at achieving harmony and unity of the political forces in his post-war country, spiritually and materially so extensively devastated by the effects of the German occupation and, above all, of Munich. On the practical grounds, however, this speech confirms even further Táborský's statement to the effect that Dr Beneš' political methods were "not at all adequate to cope with the modern Machiavellis of Marxism-Leninism" (see n. 43 of this Chapter) - Czechoslovak Communists, directed and aided by Moscow, striving at their complete usurpation of power in the Czechoslovak Republic.

70 Ibid., p. 43.

juridical and political position of his country subsequent to Munich, "he had emphasized, right from the very beginnings of our second struggle for liberation, both in the international field and in the internal political affairs, the legal continuity of our state".[71] While he had expected that the Republic would be restored in its pre-Munich form with the legal continuity of its Constitution and political institutions, he was prepared, at the same time, to accommodate the need for the implementation of some fundamental changes which would be in agreement with his own interpretation of "historically philosophical meaning"[72] of the dramatic evolution of the world since Munich, due mainly to the revolutionary character of the war.

---

71 Drtina, P., Právo a pojetí v díle Presidenta Dr Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1947, p. 20.

72 Beneš, E., Degree Address, p. 43. - Beneš explained therein how he had formulated problems of the present time: "...I refuse to consider the different events as separate and independent parts of the dramatic evolution of the world of today; I take them all as a whole and synthetically, and I try to find in them their historically philosophical meaning. The crisis preceding the First World War and then the war itself, the Russian Revolution... the second great World War, the fall of all the fascism in the world and the present endeavours to build up new democracies - all this is to me one single, big ensemble of events, each one connected with the other, each one fitting into the other and resulting from one another. Together they form the characteristics of our epoch... I have, for the whole of the thirty years of my public life, always pursued, in accordance with my philosophical and moral views, and convictions, right and justice, spiritual progress and social good. I have never been false to this and never receded one step. This knowledge is one of the dearest and greatest of my possessions..." (pp. 43-44).

President Beneš' concept of legal continuity which meant for him, on the one hand, "...above all, the juridical and true political restoration of all spiritual and moral values of democracy, and the continuation, under normal circumstances, of fundamental recognition of the system of law and freedoms which this regime had represented in 1938, and which it had to presuppose in some fundamental concepts even for the future", provided, on the other hand, for "the continuing amendment of legal norms in all those questions which would politically need changes after the war in such a way that these changes would courageously and resolutely be carried out on the basis of the former law, and the concept of continuity would not serve, therefore, as a maxim but as a method or an indication in what direction it would be necessary to go further, how would be undertaken the relevant changes and how far would an advance be made in such changes for the present time..."[73]

During World War II Beneš believed that after the war all countries would be forced, by general world developments, to move further on the road

---

73 Drtina, P., op.cit., pp. 23-24. - Drtina elucidated further these two points of Beneš' concept of legal continuity: "...In the first point these principles mean for Dr Beneš above all the persistence of the regime of the Republic itself and of the regime of Parliamentary democracy, and the establishment, in the quickest possible way, of a new, democratic representation of the people. In the second point he felt the need of changing, as far as possible, in the spirit of the former legislation that what had not proven to be good in the First Republic, and what would be enforced by the new situation as revolutionary changes. It was, above all, the question of Germans and Hungarians, and the new concept of our state as a national state, ... and especially one of the most important questions: to open gates for the change of the social and economic structure of our national society in the socializing sense..." (Ibid., p. 24).

towards better forms of political, social and economic democracy, each in accordance with its own conditions and traditions. Having thought that as a result of the stabilization of the Soviet revolution and the position of strength of Russia in world affairs, its political system could be expected to be gradually modified in a democratic direction,[74] he had nevertheless issued already in 1941 a stern warning to democratic nations: "Democracy, if it is to escape the totalitarian danger of the Left as well as the Nazi and Fascist poison of the Right, must deal resolutely with its own social and economic problems. The destruction of Fascism and Nazism... will create such grave disturbances that Democracy, if it wishes to prevent social upheavals and Communistic revolution from below, must have the courage to initiate and complete vitally important changes in social and economic structure... political democracy must be completed by economic and social democracy..."[75] Since, on the one hand, the Soviet regime "is necessarily developing and will continue to develop towards greater and greater individual freedom within the framework of the socialistic state"[76] and thus towards democracy, and, on the other hand, Western democracies would move towards socialism, the two different political systems, mutually exclusive in their extremes, were bound to eventually meet in the centre: the former would be representing a form

---

74 See Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, passim.

75 Beneš, E., "The New Order in Europe", pp. 153-154.

76 Beneš, E., Degree Address, p. 53.

of democratizing socialism, and the latter a form of socializing democracy: in this development he saw the fulfilment of his traditional policy aimed at the East-West co-operation.[77]

Because of its pre-Munich high juridical, political and social standards,[78] Czechoslovakia's position in the post-World War II period was, according to Beneš, in the forefront, among democratic countries, in courageously and resolutely moving further towards implementing, in an orderly fashion, revolutionary changes directed at a greater measure of social and economic democracy.[79] In December, 1945, he still believed in the correctness of his prognostication made three years earlier that "the

---

77 Beneš' statements to this effect are legion: early in 1944, e.g., he had stated that "according to my judgement it is possible to take for granted the friendly cooperation between the Soviet Union and the United States until the end of, and after, the war". (Šest let exilu, p. 233).

78 In December, 1945, Beneš stated that after World War I "Czechoslovakia created a legal code in keeping with the general state in Western Europe... In many respects however, she even then stood in the forefront of the States of Europe, and her legal institutions in their matureness far excelled the Central European average. Her democracy owing to its quality transcended all the other regimes and was at the same time the soundest and strongest..." (Degree Address, pp. 57-58).

79 See Beneš, E., Degree Address, passim. At the military parade of the Czechoslovak soldiers who had fought abroad during World War II, held in Prague on August 21, 1945, President Beneš said: "...You are certainly asking us on your return what type of a Republic we are building. We answer: We are trying and will be trying to build such a Republic about which we were all dreaming during the time of our struggle: a better, a more just, a more beautiful than how was able to develop our Republic before this war. The example to us will be the great spiritual models of the Great World Democracies, both of the East and of the West. We are doing this in our own way and according to our tradition..." (Kuchynka, J., op.cit., p. 94). In his address given at the Congress of members of the Czechoslovak Armed Forces, who had fought abroad during World War II, held in Prague on March 10, 1946, President Beneš said: "...All our ideas, views and plans we had inserted, following the discussion, held at Moscow

development in our country will follow our own path, the Czechoslovak path, without intervention and without decision from abroad, whether from the West or from the East".[80]

During the 1945-1946 period when Czechoslovakia "has begun her postwar tasks with courage and enthusiasm, President Beneš wrote that his country is and will remain an independent, democratic and progressive state, with a pacific policy. She will follow in the tradition of her first President, T.G. Masaryk".[81] For a while it seemed that his statement

---

in March, 1945, into the Košice Governmental Program. In accord with this program, we are building the restored state and are trying to make it better and more perfect than had been our original Republic, although we are preserving and fulfilling the great ideals on which was built the Masaryk's Republic. We are now deepening these ideals in accordance with the world developments and in complete agreement with the sentiments and demands of the Czech and Slovak people. We are building a deeper people's democracy... We are carrying out socialism, suitable to our Czechoslovak needs, we are widening the idea of human liberty and human rights..." (The Národní Osvobození, March 12, 1946).

80 President Beneš' Third Message to the State Council of November 12, 1942, (Beneš, E., Šest let exilu, p. 216). Beneš frequently emphasized his stand that a purely Czechoslovak development be applied in all sectors of national life and endeavours: e.g., he had stated, to a delegation of college professors on March 14, 1947 his position in regard to school reforms: "...I am not against the reforms, on the contrary. I want to ensure, however, that they would organically ensue from the best traditions of our educational system... I am in favour of evolutionary advance and of assurance that our school reform would organically ensue from the premises of our national culture. No imitation, either of the West or of the East. It is always unhealthy, if one disregards the roots of his own milieu and nation..." (Vlasák, E., President republiky Dr Edvard Beneš o školské reformě, Praha, 1947, p. 14).

81 Beneš, E., "Postwar Czechoslovakia", p. 410. - Therein, Beneš had also written: "It is natural that the socialistic system of the neighbouring Soviet Union should exercise an influence on the economic reorganization of Czechoslovakia. In spite of this fact, Czechoslovakia remains and will remain absolutely independent, with her own political democratic regime and her own parliamentary democracy. The Soviet Union does not

would, in a modified sense, remain true.[82] Yet this was not to be so. His concept of post-war developments in Czechoslovakia envisaged and called for the spirit of mutual understanding, cooperation and unity among the Czechoslovak people and the strict non-interference, by the Great Powers, in the internal affairs of his country. Neither of the two prerequisites had, however, materialized: the former was destroyed by the Czechoslovak Communists who acting on Stalin's orders were bent on the destruction of the very independence of, and democracy in, their own country which they kept on, at the same time, so loudly praising and ostensibly defending. Soviet imperialism coupled with American indifference to the fate of his country as well as Washington's ignorance of Prague's position vis-à-vis Moscow, resulted in another Czechoslovak disaster within a decade, and in the destruction of Beneš' endeavours to balance continuity and revolution by following the middle course[83] which would have guaranteed,

---

interfere in any respect in Czechoslovak affairs. Czechoslovakia is following her own way, her own methods and traditions..."(p. 409).

82 It was a greatly modified sense since Czechoslovakia, under the Government of the National Front which effected measures (such as arbitrary abolishment of a number of political parties) having been clearly of the anti-Masaryk spirit, was no more able "to follow in the tradition of her first President, T.G. Masaryk" within the strict meaning of this term.

83 President Beneš endeavoured not only to balance continuity and revolution, but also liberalism and communism by following the middle course between the two relevant extremes. He gave an explanatory note in this regard while addressing the Convention of the Czech writers held at Prague on June 16, 1946: "...I reject the political concept of democracy in only pure liberalistic meaning; I comprehend democracy as a system also in the economic and social sense and I see in it, at the same time, the realization of a certain moral philosophy. However, I warn at once against any deification of state and its organs. State and society is not, and

in his estimate, peaceful and harmonious developments in the Czechoslovak internal affairs and the gradual implementation of better forms of political, social and economic democracy.[84]

---

cannot be an absolute master of an individual..." (The Národní Osvobození, June 18, 1946).

84 For a detailed account of the post-war developments in Czechoslovakia see the two following studies by Skilling, H.G.: 1. "Revolution and Continuity in Czechoslovakia 1945-1946" in the Journal of Central European Affairs, University of Colorado, Vol. XX, No. 4, January, 1961, pp. 357-377, and 2. "The Break-Up of the Czechoslovak Coalition, 1947-8", in The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. XXVI, No. 3, August, 1960, pp. 396-412.

C. Main Factors Contributing to the Czechoslovak Tragedy of 1948

1. Prelude to Tragedy - The US Post-War Policy Towards Czechoslovakia

> ...I had offered to Great Britain an identical treaty as I did to the Soviet Union. I wanted to go to Russia with the British treaty in the pocket. It would have been a proof to the world that I want to lean in the same way on the West as on the East, that I want to conduct a European policy as I have always been claiming. I do not want to be dependent only on the Soviets, though I know I shall be living in the sphere of their influence.
>
> I was convinced that the English would grab with both hands my offer but instead of that, they do not even want to hear about it. I am almost certain that, in the same way as in the past, they have also now no interest at all in our European area. We are not lying at the ocean, we are in the heart of Europe, we are for them a far and unknown country as Chamberlain had said...[85]

When President Beneš made the above statement to his Minister of Finance, Feierabend, in London on September 29, 1943, he had already written off, for all the practical purposes, England as an effective counter-balance to the post-war expansionist ambitions of the Soviet Union to fill the power vacuum which would be left in Central Europe in general, and in Czechoslovakia in particular, by the defeat of Germany. Of the three factors which had brought him to this conclusion in regard to England - destruction of his faith in England by Munich and his subsequent difficulties experienced by him with the British, rapid decline of England and its tranformation into a second-class power, and the stubborn British insistence in not getting involved in the affairs of

---

85 Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, p. 86.

Central Europe which kept on continuously frustrating all his attempts, such as the one directed at the conclusion of a British-Czechoslovak treaty, to literally drag England as a participant in matters affecting post-war Czechoslovakia - the last factor was for him of the decisive importance. With France having completely disappeared not only as a factual, but also as a potential, power factor in post-war Central Europe, Beneš concentrated all his efforts towards establishing such a Western power factor capable and, above all, willing, of meeting any Soviet expansionist attempt head-on in Central Europe, by persuading the only remaining Western Great Power - the United States - that it was not only in the Czechoslovak, but also in its own, interest to become actively involved in the Czechoslovak, and Central European affairs.[86]

---

86 He endeavoured to accomplish this self-imposed task by maintaining, during the war:
(a) excellent personal relationship with President Roosevelt which had lasted until the latter's death: besides dealing with political matters of mutual interest, Beneš-Roosevelt war-period correspondence indicates that both of them had often communicated each other on matters of purely personal nature such as e.g. Beneš' message of condolence to Roosevelt of September 9, 1941 upon the death of the latter's mother and Roosevelt's letter of thanks of September 16, 1941; Roosevelt's messages to Beneš on occasions affecting solely the latter's political personality, such as e.g. the letter prepared on March 24, 1945 and signed, just before his death, on April 2, 1945, and sent to Beneš upon his arrival at Košice in which Roosevelt addressed Beneš for the last time:

> "...It is a source of great personal satisfaction to me to see your untiring efforts for the liberation of Czechoslovakia crowned by your return to its own soil. Your homecoming also symbolizes to all Americans the turning of the whole world from the years of conquest and strife to an era of justice and cooperation in a community of free nations dedicated to those principles of democratic integrity which are so characteristic of Czechoslovakia..." (This, and above documents are contained in: PPF-5952 - "Dr Edvard Beneš", The F.D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.).

While Beneš' notoriously pro-Russian stand during the entire war-period appeared to have been running counter to his determined efforts to ensure the active presence of a Western Great Power in Central Europe, he had felt he was able to afford to take such a stand precisely because he had always been counting on the establishment of an East-West balance of power in post-war Central Europe which, besides his belief in the continuation, in the post-war era, of the East-West war-time cooperation, formed the overall basis of his own policy regarding future Czechoslovakia. His faith in Stalin and the Soviets was actually based on his belief that the Western Powers would constitute a sufficient deterrent to discourage the Kremlin from initiating and conducting an imperialist policy, of which Czechoslovakia could, and possibly would, be one of its first victims. He wanted to conclude a

---

(b) continuous contacts with American prominent personalities in general, and with the American diplomatic representatives in London in particular and providing them, at the same time, with his analyses and prognostications of political and military developments in Europe (see Chapter VI of this study, passim).
He had also expressed on numerous occasions during the war, especially during its early stages, his view "that it was Russia alone which had thus far conceived a definite post-war plan applicable to certain areas in Europe. It was highly important, therefore, that the United States and Britain together consider and formulate, at least in principle, a clear-cut plan of their own. This was urgently necessary in order to be prepared for the moment when Russia might possibly bring pressure to bear on Washington as well as on London for commitments in light of her own plan. He felt, moreover, that once the United States and Britain had agreed between themselves, they would be in position to meet with the Russians, to discuss their respective plans... In brief, an allied, not a Russian victory, was essential in order to insure an allied, not a Russian peace..." (Ambassador Biddle's report attached to his letter to President Roosevelt of February 20, 1942, dealing in part with President Beneš' views in regard to post-war European settlement, PSF's "A.J.D. Biddle" Folder, The F.D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, N.Y.).

Soviet-Czechoslovak treaty, not only because he expected to derive from it advantages, vital to the future security of his country, of which the Russian military assistance in the case of a future German attack was of paramount importance, but because he wanted to commit the Soviets, in a written form, to the non-interference in the Czechoslovak internal affairs, and expected that they would sufficiently be forced to abide by the provisions of such a solemn treaty by the presence of the Western Power factor in Central Europe - the United States. Furthermore, he stated that he had signed and approved this Treaty in the East-West sense "... - and in this sense only ... intentionally and consciously linking it with the Anglo-Soviet treaty of May 26th, 1942..."[87]

During the latter part of World War II, however, President Beneš had already become greatly perturbed by developments then taking place which kept on providing an ever increasing evidence of the United States' unwillingness, in the same manner as it had been earlier demonstrated by the British, to get involved in Czechoslovakia's affairs[88] - among the most alarming developments falling into this category was the American performance during the Slovak Uprising and Washington's refusal to enter

---

87 Beneš, E., Memoirs, p. 282 - Beneš then added two extremely important relevant sentences written in 1947: "...At the time I firmly believed that this treaty (i.e. the Anglo-Soviet Treaty - note by author) would continue in operation after the war ended. Was I right or wrong?..."

88 Beneš' explanation was that at the Teheran Conference "The Soviet Union was already hinting that it was counting on its sphere (i.e. of influence - note by author) including in any case North-Eastern Germany, the whole of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary. Probably there were no objections from the side of the British or the Americans..." (Ibid., p. 252).

into an agreement with Czechoslovakia on matters affecting the operations of the American Army on the Czechoslovak territory.[89] General Patton's subsequent failure to liberate Prague left Beneš virtually "obsessed"[90] for the remainder of his life. President Roosevelt's untimely death constituted a further blow to Beneš' hopes that he would still somehow succeed in having Washington to change its attitude towards Prague, and terminated abruptly and effectively his good relations with Washington in general and with the White House in particular.

A tragedy of immeasurable dimensions for President Beneš and his country unfolded itself, however, during the brief period between the end of World War II and the Communist Coup d'état of February 1948: due to the complete misunderstanding of the reality of the Czechoslovak position and the developments which were then taking place in the country, the United States, instead of logically supporting, in its own self-interest, President Beneš' efforts to preserve the extremely weak basis of Czechoslovak freedom which was "a very delicate flower",[91] became one

---

89 See Chapter VI of this study, passim.

90 See n. 8 of this Chapter.

91 In his dispatch 1294 from Warsaw of March 13, 1947, US Chargé d'Affaires Keith reported what Foreign Minister Masaryk had told him after the signing of a Czechoslovak-Polish Alliance which was forced on Czechoslovakia by Stalin's second veto: "... Mr Masaryk remarked on the good fortune of the Czechoslovakians that Prague was intact, that they were getting along very well and that people could say anything they liked. And then, with clear reference to the Soviets, he added that he did not believe in 'talking back' too much. He said: 'This freedom which we have is a very delicate flower!...'" (USDS, 760C.60F/3-1347).

of the main contributors of the Communist success.[92] In the absence of an effective American counter-balance to the Soviet power-factor in post-war Czechoslovakia, President Beneš and non-Communists were incessantly exposed to direct and brutal pressures and threats of the Czechoslovak Communists who were able to boast about, and to openly enjoy full support of the Kremlin: this situation forced President Beneš to hesitantly sign decrees on October 24, 1945 on the "nationalization of mines and some industrial enterprises, some enterprises of the food industry, joint-stock banks and private insurance companies"[93] in a considerably more

---

92 For details on the commencement of the dramatic change which occurred in the American policy towards Czechoslovakia in the post-war period from the traditional policy of very friendly, excellent relations to the one of coldness and economic and financial animosity resulting from the astonishing Washington's ignorance of the Czechoslovak post-war affairs see: Foreign Relations of the United States, Vol IV, 1945, pp. 420-557.
Minister of Nutrition in the Third Republic, Majer who confirmed this fact to the author during an interview held at New York City on November 14, 1970, was especially bitter about the American persistant refusal to grant Czechoslovakia a loan for the purchase, in the United States, of desperately needed food, after the termination of UNRRA.

93 Witnessing a very unfavourable reaction which this measure brought about in the West, President Beneš went to some length in an article "Nationalization in Czechoslovakia" which appeared in the Manchester Guardian in December, 1945, to provide the West with his commentary "on the law concerning the nationalization of some of Czechoslovakia's industries"; also published in Nationalization in Czechoslovakia - Decrees of the President of the Republic of October 24, 1945 on the Nationalization of Mines and some Industrial Enterprises, some Enterprises of the Food Industry, Joint-Stock Banks, and private Insurance Companies, Praha, 1946, pp. 5-10.
His article "Postwar Czechoslovakia" which appeared in the Foreign Affairs in April, 1946 was also President Beneš' attempt to explain Czechoslovakia's position to the West emphasizing in the conclusion: "...I know that during the last six months fantastic rumors have been circulated about her, based on propaganda and a lack of knowledge about actual conditions. I am sure that the year 1946 will prove they were fantastic by giving evidence of her normal development". (Beneš, E., "Postwar Czechoslovakia", p. 410).

rapid fashion and a more extensive scope than he had originally intended to do in his socializing program.[94] These nationalization decrees resulted quickly in American demands for immediate compensation for American economic and financial losses in Czechoslovakia, and when financially bankrupt Czechoslovakia was unable to satisfy these demands, in American economic and financial animosity. With an astonishing disregard for the all-important political developments in which Czechoslovakia waged a desperate life and death struggle against Communist scheme aimed at the seizure of power, the United States had with inexplicable stubborness concentrated their efforts on waging, de facto, an economic warfare against Czechoslovakia - this was one of the most important factors by which the Americans were providing that type of invaluable aid to the Czechoslovak Communists and the Kremlin among the Czechoslovak people that they themselves alone were unable to produce: Washington kept on forcing the Czechs, against their will, to look towards Moscow for the desperately needed financial and economic help and thus to become even more dependent on the whim of Stalin who in turn made certain that the position of the Czechoslovak Communists was further strengthened.[95]

---

94 President Beneš had stated this clearly in his speech given on October 28, 1945, on the occasion of the First Independence Day after the return from his second exile on Prague's Wenceslaus Square: "...I have been urged to sign the decree on nationalization and thus to do the will of the working people. In doing so, I feel it my duty to warn you against any hasty decision in these matters..." (The Národní Osvobození, October 29, 1945).

95 During his visit of Prague in May, 1947, Lockhart observed that during his talks with President Beneš and Jan Masaryk, they were critical "of American ignorance of Europe and, in particular, of the refusal of

President Beneš' pleading and explaining Czechoslovakia's position to the United States officials were generally in vain.[96] He watched in horror the continuously deteriorating relations between his country and the United States; in his talk at the end of 1946 with Steinhardt, Beneš

President Truman to grant a loan to any Government in which there were Communist ministers. It was the view of both Beneš and Jan that a loan would have speeded Czechoslovakia's recovery and reduced the Communists to impotence..." (Lockhart, R.B., Jan Masaryk, p. 52).

96 In his other work in which he also dealt with his 1947 visit of Prague, Lockhart provided even more details about Beneš' criticism of the American ignorance of European affairs and the resulting foolish United States policy: "...Condition of the loan is that the state which is about to receive it, must expell from the Government all the Communist ministers. In a country of such a sensitive equilibrium as is Czechoslovakia, this is impossible. If the Americans were wise, they would realize that they will best defeat communism when they grant the loan to the governments such as is the Czechoslovak Government where the Communists, though strong, have not an absolute majority. Czechoslovakia would make with this loan such a rapid progress that in two years the Communists would be reduced to impotence..." (Lockhart, R.B., Ústup z Prahy, London, 1950, pp. 19-20).

It is interesting to note that in adopting this policy, the United States disregarded the advice of experts, such as that given already in 1945 by the former American Minister to Czechoslovakia, Einstein who described "new democracy" in Central and Eastern Europe as a "fluid condition" halfway between Sovietism and democracy; it was a situation which "cannot be prolonged indefinitely and Communist influence will either grow or diminish in accordance with the prosperity attained by these countries". He depicted the UNRRA as a good start in achieving that prosperity multilaterally and concluded: "Future good relations with Russia depend on the measure of our success in resisting the inroads of Communism by restoring prosperity to Central Europe". (Einstein, L., "Potsdam, Russia and Central Europe", in the Fortnightly, CL XIV, September, 1945, pp. 159-160).

Czechoslovakia pleaded vainly for the continuation of UNRRA after the end of 1946; Minister of Nutrition, Majer stated in August, 1946 that his country needed relief in the amount of 180 million dollars and warned that "All Central European delegates to the UNRRA forecast extensive suffering, economic chaos and even a social catastrophe, if help from the UNRRA is stopped at the end of the year as scheduled..." (News Flashes from Czechoslovakia, September 1, 1946). Yet the United States decided foolhardily to move a motion at the UNRRA Conference to terminate the UNRRA on December 31, 1946, and over the dissent of the receiving nations, this motion was adopted, and the door for the Communist inroads in Central Europe opened. American diplomatic documents of the 1946-1947 period released to date (December, 1974) provide

"referred to suspension of loan negotiations observing that public announcement had come to him as great shock. He deplored publicity given suspension saying it was first time in history of relations between the two countries that such difficulties as existed had been given wide publicity".[97] This suspension was a case of typical American misunderstanding

---

a clear evidence of the negative attitude of the United States towards Czechoslovakia; by so doing, Washington had undermined the position of President Beneš and the Czechoslovak democrats who were desperately looking towards the United States for such an economic help or at least some signs of active encouragement in their endeavours to save their country from being subjugated by the Communists. So inexplicably and inexcusably foolish was the then American stand towards Czechoslovakia that not only Prague was deprived of any loan or other form of economic help and of any demonstration of friendly interest into the affairs of the country but the US War Department which had been conducting against Czechoslovakia an open economic warfare, kept on making such outrageous demands on Prague that even Steinhardt was forced from time to time to protest against such demands - (e.g. the War Department, after having sold to the Czechs a number of old locomotives, from its surplus stock, for a grossly inflated price, subsequently demanded the Czechs to pay "rental charges" for these locomotives) - because "they helped the Communists" (Steinhardt's telegram 788 from Praha of June 25, 1947 - USDS, 860F. 515/6-2547). - On July 22, 1947 Steinhardt was so alarmed by the foolish steps taken by the War Department in regard to ridiculously increasing charges for transit of Czech exports and imports across the US and British zones in Germany, that he asked the State Department to urge upon the War Department, for political reasons, adoption of a conciliatory attitude in the forthcoming negotiations with the Czechs on this subject, and added: "...A continuation of severe policy in this matter would be looked upon by Czechs of all political parties as a measure of economic blockade by west and would tend to convince many who are friendly to the United States that Czechoslovakia has no alternative than to rely economically on the Soviet Union..." (USDS, 711.60F/7-2247).

97 Steinhardt's secret telegram 2008 from Praha of December 23, 1946 (USDS, 860F.00/12-2346). - Steinhardt's last paragraph of this telegram conveyed President Beneš' anxiety about the state of Czechoslovak-American relations and his hope in their improvement: "In conclusion President expressed hope that general impression of coolness in relations between our two countries resulting from public announcement of suspension of loan negotiations would soon be dissipated and that as result of sincere efforts his government is making and will continue to make to remove all of our grievances normal extremely close and friendly relations between two countries would be restored".

of the Czechoslovak position vis-à-vis Moscow and its Communists, this time perpetrated by Secretary of State Byrnes: he admitted later that after having had seen, at the 1946 Paris Peace Conference, that two members of the Czechoslovak delegation - both Communists - had applauded Vyshinský's charges that the United States had been trying to dominate the world with "hand-outs", he immediately ordered the State Department to stop the extension of credit of 50 million dollars which had already been allotted to Czechoslovakia for the purchase of surplus goods, and prevailed upon the Export-Import Bank to suspend negotiations with Prague for a 150-million-dollar loan.[98] "The reaction in Czechoslovakia was exactly that which the Communists and the Soviet government wished: shock, disappointment, a feeling that the West had failed to understand the country's problems in its struggle for independence".[99]

On the post-war international political scene, such as in the United Nations, at the Paris Peace Conference and at other international

---

98 Byrnes, J.F., Speaking Frankly, New York, 1947, p. 143.

99 Korbel, J., op.cit., p. 179. A sample of Czechoslovak public opinion about the United States policy was expressed at the time of the suspension of loan negotiations by the United States, in the Catholic revue Obzory: "It is futile to shut our eyes to the unpleasant reality that for some months American diplomacy has manifested no understanding of the needs and the demands of the Czechoslovakian people. This showed itself at the Paris Conference, where American representatives opposed the eviction of the Hungarian minority from Slovakia... Now the unfavourable attitude has become even more pronounced by the breaking of negotiations for the loan". (Quoted by Hindus, M., The Bright Passage, New York, 1947, p. 320).

conferences, Czechoslovakia was continously forced to cast, in favour of the Soviet Union, in President Beneš' words "meaningless votes... which changed no decision" because Czechoslovakia was, due to American disinterest in Central European affairs and its policy of indirectly providing the Czechoslovak Communists with a welcome support by directly working economically and politically against Czechoslovakia's aims and interests, "so dependent on good will of the Soviet Union... that to have voted against the Soviet Union... would have been to invite serious reprisals and to have aroused suspicions which could not have been allayed for long period of time to come".[100] President Beneš' explanations of the necessity of adopting such a Czechoslovak stand did not produce the desired effect and the United States retaliated by also adopting hostile attitude towards Czechoslovak political interests, as evidenced e.g. at the Paris Peace Conference in regard to the transfer of Hungarians from Czechoslovakia.[101]

---

100 See n. 22 of this Chapter.

101 President Beneš was greatly disturbed by the American hostile stand taken in this particular case, as documented by Steinhardt: "...He said that his government was only too anxious to come to an agreement with Hungary by direct negotiation but Hungarians had become most intransigeant since they had received support and encouragement from American Government and that as it was obvious that their entire course was merely smoke screen to enlarge Hungary ultimately at expense of Zecho he was not hopeful an agreement could be reached by direct negotiation. He said that under no circumstances would Zecho play into hands of Hungary by again granting special rights and privileges to minorities and anyone who insisted that Zecho grant such rights was deliberately shutting his eyes to disaster to which this policy had led in past as evidenced by Vienna award in 1938. He castigated those who do not bear responsibility of governing a country and keeping peace but who nevertheless actively support granting special rights and privileges to an ethnic minority whose loyalty should be to country and flag of which they are citizens and not to foreign power. He

Beneš' inability to convince the Americans that their hostile policy towards Czechoslovakia was de facto contrary not only to the Czechoslovak but also to the American interests since it was serving the interests, and promoting the aims, of the Kremlin, undermined greatly his already very fragile health. He became obsessed with the fear that Czechoslovakia would have to face soon, due to the continuously and alarmingly worsening East-West relations, a direct confrontation, on an important issue, which would force it, if left alone to do so, to make a choice between the East or the West and thus ending his East and West Czechoslovak policy.[102]

---

pictured disastrous consequences to country like US if each ethnic minority were granted special rights and privileges..." (Ibid.) In his earlier telegram 727 from Praha of May 7, 1946, Steinhardt reported that President Beneš had told him in a conversation held on the same day that the remaining Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia constituted a danger, and asked for the American support of the Czechoslovak position to have this minority transferred to Hungary. (USDS, 840.4016/5-746).

The American hostile attitude towards Czechoslovakia at the Paris Peace Conference in regard to the Hungarian question and the resulting Hungarian boldness brought about the famous remark, made by frustrated and astonished Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk in the Assembly that "for the moment he was not quite sure whether it was Hungary or Czechoslovakia who had won this war side by side with the Allies". (Josten, J., op.cit., p. 159).

For the text of Masaryk's speech made at the Eighteenth Plenary Meeting of the Paris Peace Conference on August 15, 1946 where he uttered the above remark of his wondering, after having had listened to the Hungarian delegate, whether it was the United Nations and Czechoslovakia, or Hungary who won the war, see Foreign Relations of the United States, 1946, Vol. 3, p. 222.

102 Professor Václav Beneš, who spoke very bitterly about the American post-war policy towards Czechoslovakia, told the author during the interview held at Bloomington, Indiana, on March 2, 1971 that he was personally convinced his uncle's feeling of uncertainty as to the correctness of his assessment of the post-war developments mixed with a feeling of guilt for his stand during World War II towards the Soviet Union but, above all, his utter frustration, bewilderment and strain resulting from his vain efforts to procure American help and understanding in Czechoslovakia's desperate life

Such a confrontation proved to be the Marshall Plan[103] which resulted not only in Stalin's third veto against Czechoslovakia because of its wish to participate in this Plan but also his determination to ensure by completely dominating the country, that never again would Prague be able to exercise such a freedom of action which would run

---

and death struggle with the Communists aided openly by Moscow, and his fear of the outcome of this struggle in the absence of any American help, were the main contributory factors responsible for the rapid deterioration of President Beneš' health - the Marshall Plan was the climax of this drama.

103 An American writer described, just before the conception of the Marshall Plan, what he felt was the Czechoslovak attitude towards the Soviet Union and what was their main fear in this regard:

"...Most Czechs, rightly or wrongly, do not feel that the Russians have designs upon them or upon their freedom, so long as they themselves do not slip into reaction, or become tools of reactionary forces outside of their own country. Most Czech officials as well as ordinary citizens seem to be really afraid of Russia in only one eventuality - if they are forced to choose sides in a divided world. In that case they know that they have no choice and that the march of events will bring them under Soviet domination. The Czechs fear the United States precisely because they fear that the United States may bring about this eventuality..." (Warburg, J.P., Report on Czechoslovakia, Reprint of articles in the New York Harold Tribune, New York, 1947, pp. 19-20). Among the numerous works dealing with Czechoslovakia's original decision to attend the opening conference on the Marshall Plan in Paris and Stalin reaction thereto, the most informative are: Korbel, J., op.cit., pp. 181-185; Josten, J., op.cit., pp. 69-70, Ripka, H., op.cit., pp. 93-95, Feierabend, L.K., Pod Vládou národní fronty, pp. 132-141, and the three appendices therein, pp. 217-225; Smutný, J., Únorový převrat 1948, London, 1953, Vol 1, pp. 7-8.

In his secret telegram 872 from Praha of 1 p.m. July 10, 1947 Steinhardt reported that a telegram had just been received from Gottwald in Moscow directing an immediate meeting of the Czech Cabinet be summoned to withdraw Czechoslovakia's acceptance of the Anglo-French invitation to take part in Paris Conference and added: "I am inclined to view that Beneš who appears to have been determining factor in acceptance of invitation to Paris prior to departure of Gottwald for Moscow and who approved of Gottwald's trip to Moscow, has out-maneuvered Soviets and Czech Communists. Having anticipated a Soviet veto of Czech participation he is now in a position to make it clear to Czech public that Czechoslovakia's foreign policy is being dictated from Moscow, that country does not enjoy complete independence and that repeated charge in western press that Czechoslovakia is a Soviet satellite has been proven. He

counter to his own imperialistic designs,[104] and caused that President Beneš suffered "a severe stroke of apoplexy, from which he was never to recover completely".[105] The extent and gravity of President Beneš' illness at that time was kept secret by his doctor, wife and Chancellor, and only a very few of Beneš' closest associates were truly informed about the truth; it was feared that if the Communists, who saw in Beneš the only formidable obstacle in reaching their goal of taking over the country, were in possession of this knowledge they would have immediately taken the advantage of this opportunity before Beneš would be able to sufficiently recover and challenge their action.[106] While testimonies of reliable witnesses of

---

will also be in a position to suggest to moderate parties that they bring home to Czech public the fact that Czechoslovak has been obliged by Soviet Union to act contrary to its own interests". - At 6 p.m. of the same day Steinhardt sent the text of Gottwald's telegram from Moscow, mentioned above, in his top secret telegram 876 (Both Steinhardt's telegrams are listed as USDS, 840.50 Recovery / 7-1047).

104 In a personal interview with Chamberlin held in the Czechoslovak Embassy at Washington on May 16, 1949, Ambassador Outrata, after speaking on the polarization of the world and the necessity to choose sides in the Soviet-American rift, categorically stated that the Communist coup d'état would not have occurred in Czechoslovakia in February, 1948, if it had not been for the Marshall Plan. (Chamberlin, L.I., The Circumstances Surrounding the Coup d'Etat in Czechoslovakia in 1948, M.A. Thesis, International Relations, University of Chicago, 1950, p. 149).

105 Ripka, H., op.cit., p. 95.

106 This information was given to the author by Professor Václav Beneš - (see n. 102 above).

this event vary in regard to the degree of Beneš' inability to effectively function on, or immediately after, July 10, 1947 when Communists Clementis and Široký went on Gottwald's instructions from Moscow to receive Beneš' approval of the capitulation to Stalin's veto,[107] there is no doubt that on that, for Czechoslovakia so fateful and tragic day, President Beneš was by far too ill to perform his duties and to function in a normal fashion or to be able to take the course of action which

---

107 President Beneš' Chancellor Smutný attributes Beneš' illness of the night from July 9 to 10th to sunstroke - ("He was carelessly exposed for a long time to intense noon-sun at a rally of legionaries held on Wenceslaus Square" - this sunstroke resulted in a small yet a serious bleeding in brain" in Únorový převrat 1948, Vol 1, p. 8) but does not specify the length of time which Beneš needed for recovery; yet it is clear that on July 10th Beneš was unable to perform any of his duties.

In his article "Was Dr Beneš able to comprehend, after a serious stroke of apoplexy, what the Communist members of the Government had asked him?", Heidrich, who was a member of the Czechoslovak Government delegation in Moscow which received Stalin's third veto directed at Czechoslovakia, wrote in Washington in July, 1967: "...It was only after our return to Prague that I was informed at the airport from my friend Dr Jína that during the night from July 9th to 10th, Dr Beneš had suffered a serious stroke of apoplexy and that he was therefore completely unconscious when Široký and Dr Clementis came to see him. Dr Jína provided me with this information when I had asked him why had President Dr Beneš agreed to Stalin's demands. He furthermore added that Chancellor Smutný had allowed the Government representatives to enter Beneš' bedroom but that it was absolutely clear that Dr. Beneš did not comprehend what they were saying. It was only during the next several weeks that Dr Beneš began gradually to again comprehend. I have no idea until today, how were the two Communist members of the Government able to succeed in covering up this situation, at least until the time when the Czechoslovak agreement, both the President's and the Government's, was announced in Moscow..." (Feierabend, L.K., op.cit., in n. 103 above, Appendix 1, pp. 218-219).

Korbel wrote that "...Clementis, who meanwhile had seen President Beneš, had found him in bed, gravely ill. In the early hours of the morning Dr Beneš had suffered a brain hemorrhage which was accompanied by a loss of speech. Clementis could not even understand what he was trying to say. When the democratic members of the government attempted to consult him by telephone, the President could not speak to them..." (Korbel, J., op.cit., p. 182).

Táborský who was then in Sweden and was therefore unaware of Beneš' illness, suggested that he should have taken.[108]

While President Beneš had gradually began, subsequent to his stroke of July 10, 1947, to recover his health, he had to witness the continuation of hostile attitude of the United States towards his country which, having further been strengthened by the Czechoslovak forced rescission of its participation in the Marshall Plan, was continuously and purposely aggravated by the Communists who well understood that all

---

Less than a year after Heidrich had stated that he had no idea how the Communists had been able to cover up the fact that President Beneš had been so ill that he had been unable to comprehend what Clementis and Široký had told him on July 10, 1947, the Communists provided him with the answer by presenting their own version, suitably amended according to their propaganda needs with their typical disregard of the truth: "...Clementis emphasized that 'the dispatch from Moscow is a unanimous expression of all three members of our delegation. He asked, together with the acting Deputy Prime Minister V. Široký, immediately upon its receipt, for an audience with the President of the Republic in Sezimovo Ústí. After President of the Republic Dr E. Beneš had become aware of the content of the dispatch and had discussed with them several further details, he authorized them to state in the government that after such a clear stand of the Soviet Union it is no more necessary to discuss the question whether or not the government rescind its participation at the Paris Conference. It is quite clear, that it is necessary to rescind the participation at the conference'." - The Communist author then cites the alleged record of the 96th extraordinary and secret meeting of the Third Government on July 10, 1947. (Bělda, J., et al., "K otázce účasti Československa na Marshallově plánu" in the Revue dějin socialismu, Vol. 1968, No. 1, p. 97).

108 Táborský who was then Czechoslovak Minister in Sweden, wrote that a "good opportunity to stand up to the Communists arose when Gottwald, fresh from his interview with Stalin, telephoned from Moscow to say that the Czechoslovak Government should rescind its previous decision to participate in the Marshall Plan talks in Paris. If Beneš had refused to back down, the Czech Communist leaders would have been put in a most unpopular position, because all the people, even the Communist rank and file, were wholeheartedly in favor of accepting American aid. The Communist members of the cabinet would have had to offer their resignations and Beneš would thus had a chance to strengthen the Government at a very critical moment..." ("The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", pp. 682-683).

their violent attacks in their press on the United States, all their anti-American speeches, acts aiming at the prevention of better Czechoslovak-American relations, of a settlement of claims made by the West for nationalized properties and of the conclusion of a commercial treaty, would, as they had always been, incorrectly attributed by Washington to Czechoslovakia as a whole.[109] So blind were the officials of the State Department in Prague to the tragic drama they were then witnessing every day - by the West abandoned Czechoslovakia struggling desperately to retain at least that degree of independence and freedom it was still possessing - that instead of recommending an all-out American help which could have alone saved that country even at this last hour of its being, they kept on advocating continuation of their policy of animosity towards Prague. Even shortly before the Communist Coup d'état took place and shortly after President Beneš had desperately pleaded for American friendship in his conversation with Steinhardt,[110]

---

109 For details about the US policy towards Czechoslovakia during this period see: Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, Vol. IV, pp. 196-255.

In the fall of 1947 Jan Masaryk summed up his and his countrymen's feelings about the United States policy: "...America must offer the world a positive program, not such nonsense as the Truman Doctrine. It must never accept the division between East and West... I would like to tell Truman a thing or two, but I suppose he wouldn't listen. He wrote us off as a "red" country when we didn't go to Paris (for the Marshall Plan Conference). That attitude is an open invitation for Russia to do what she wants with us. We had hoped America would understand our predicament and give us an occasional pat on the back. We've had only the cold shoulder..." (Wofford, H., Unpublished manuscript, 1948, quoted by Chamberlin, L.I., op.cit., p. 121).

110 Steinhardt's telegram 1564 of November 24, 1947 described his conversation with President Beneš of November 20th. Beneš stated that he

Bruins was capable of writing on December 5, 1947 to the Secretary of state such foolish recommendations that the Kremlin and the Communists would greatly have rejoiced had they been able to read them:

> "...Am strongly of opinion that announcement re: Soviet deliveries to Czechoslovakia should not change US policy of no food deliveries and no loans to Czechoslovakia until country has complied with our desire for : (1) compensation to Americans for losses in Czechoslovakia; (2) cessation of anti-American press campaign of vilification, and (3) until the Czechoslovak Government takes some positive steps towards negotiation of a commercial treaty... I feel confident that continued firmness on our part will during next few months not result in undue loss of prestige to US inasmuch as hope of future loans and food deliveries is more potent than actual dispensing of them at present..."[111]

Nothing could have been more tragic and devastating for President Beneš, for the vast majority of the Czechoslovak people and for Czechoslovakia itself than this American attitude: the fact of an all-out importance was, however, that the fate of Czechoslovakia had already been sealed at Washington in April and May, 1947 when the United States had written Czechoslovakia off its list of the countries to which the United

---

"had personally urged Gottwald to settle claims of western powers for nationalized properties... The President expressed his keen interest in negotiations of a commercial treaty with the US as soon as possible. In the course of his general remarks the President showed a more hostile attitude towards Communists than he had in any previous talks with me and at the same time took occasion to stress his desire for continued friendship with the United States. He said he hoped our government would succeed in its efforts to restore tranquility to a troubled world. He referred particularly to his recently published memoirs with their laudatory comments concerning the United States which he added had very much annoyed Communists..." (USDS, 860F.00/11-2447).

111 US Chargé d'Affaires Bruins' secret telegram 1610 from Praha of December 5, 1947 dealing with the US policy towards Czechoslovakia in view of the Soviet promise to deliver 600,000 tons of grain to Czechoslovakia by the end of April, 1948 (USDS, 860F.6131/12-547).

States would provide assistance "from the standpoint of National Security".[112]

---

112 "United States - National Security Policy: The Extension of Military Assistance to Foreign Nations" contain the relevant document: Top Secret Memorandum by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, Washington, May 12, 1947 (SWNCC 360/1, Enclosure "B"), Subject: Policies, Procedures and Costs of Assistance by the United States to Foreign Countries - "...Referring to the listing of countries... as needing assistance, this differs from the listing in the subject paper (SWNCC 360) in that ... Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Poland have been removed from the list... The subject paper proposes certain measures of aid to countries which very probably cannot in the foreseeable future be removed from predominant Soviet influence - Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia - while the Joint Chiefs of Staff believe that exclusion from current assistance of every region under Soviet control is desirable from the point of view of national security... Sg. by Secretary for the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Capt., US Navy, Lalor.

Appendix to the above memorandum entitled "United States - Assistance to Other Countries From the Standpoint of National Security" - Report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee, Washington, April 29, 1947 stated: "...Not withstanding the listing given above" (prepared by the Department of State, where Hungary occupied No 8, Czechoslovakia No 15 and Poland No 16 in priorities of assistance to be given by the United States to other countries - note by author), "no aid of any sort to Hungary or to Czechoslovakia and Poland is advocated. The reason for this is that the United States cannot give aid to all countries requiring aid on the basis of their need in sufficient amounts to have any real effect on the ability of all of those countries to retain, or regain, freedom from predominant Soviet influence..." (Foreign Relations of the United States, 1947, Vol. 1, pp. 734-750).

Dealing with this tragic reality, a friend of Jan Masaryk wrote in the Chicago Daily News on March 12, 1948 on the occasion of the latter's death: "...Jan Masaryk died a bitter man. He felt - as he had felt in the sorrowful days after Munich - that Britain and the United States had thrown Czechoslovakia "to the wolves" by writing it off prematurely... He said he had repeatedly approached the United States, seeking a gesture that would strengthen the Czech democrats and help keep Czechoslovakia in the Western orbit. But he was told that Czechoslovakia had to "get aboard the Marshall Plan bandwagon or shut up". Masaryk felt that the worst thing that could happen to Czechoslovakia would be to have the United States and Britain take the attitude that Czechoslovakia had disappeared from the ranks of the democracies long ago. And this is precisely what happened..." (Quoted by Chamberlin, L.I., op.cit., p. 127).

In a similar fashion as in September, 1938 when Czechoslovakia was abandoned by France and Great Britain to the whim of Hitler and his Nazi terror, President Benes had to witness in February, 1948 how Czechoslovakia was abandoned by the United States to the whim of Stalin and his Red terror.[113]

---

113 President Benes had already known about this abandonment by the United States, in November, 1947, when President Truman, discussing this subject with Masaryk, "had said Czechoslovakia could not count on more than moral help in the case of an emergency, even if Soviet intervention was inevitable", (Josten, J., op.cit., p. 145). - While this statement had later proved to be incorrect in its form - President Truman did not grant to Masaryk an interview at that time (see e.g. Sychrava, L., Svědectví a Úvahy o Pražském Převratu v únoru 1948, London, 1952, p. 17, and confirmed in November 1974 by the author's study of the relevant State Department's documents) the fact remains that this statement was correct in its spirit, and that Masaryk had obtained this information indirectly through his informal talks with State Department officials at Washington before his departure home early in December, 1947.

2. Tragedy in the Offing - Munich's Legacy of Fear and Moral Decline

> ...As a matter of fact, we are at the turning point of history... our people would lose orientation if they would not start from the moral basis. However, if they will have a clear stand and a precise orientation leaning against the moral basis in political, cultural and economic questions, they will be able to get out well from today's difficulties and disorders...[114]

After his return to Prague in May, 1945, President Beneš was able to witness, on a daily basis until the Communist Coup d'état, dramatic changes for the worst which permeated the spirit of his nation - the mentality and morality of his countrymen - since the disaster of Munich. Prior to Munich when his nation had to face the mortal danger of Hitler's attack aimed at its destruction, it had reached not only its spiritual height after three centuries of foreign domination, but had also attained such a harmonious unity, due mainly to President Beneš' incessant efforts, in its determination to defend itself, that the Czechs had been then prepared to give up everything, even their lives, on the altar of their fatherland. After the end of World War II, the deadly and poisonous legacy of Munich combined with the hell of more than six years of uninterrupted vicious and barbarian attacks of the Nazi regime directed against the very soul of the greatest majority of the Czech people who had been unable to leave their country,[115] was intensively accentuated during

---

114 President Beneš' address to the delegation of the Synod of the Moravian Church given in Prague on January 16, 1947 (The Národní Osvobození, January 17, 1947).

115 In his most important pronouncement on the subject of legacy of Munich and Nazism in the internal affairs of the Republic made in his

the last stages, and at the end, of World War II when the Czechs had to witness alarming developments which indicated clearly that they again had been abandoned by the West;[116] this new Munich, coupled with ruthlessly aggressive Communist methods which employed not only those invented and practised by the Nazis but were even greatly improved in their effectiveness[117] had truly devastating impact and proved for many Czechs to be an unbearable and unexpected burden of fear with which they were unable, after having already had to withstand the disaster of the first Munich and the subsequent terror of Nazi occupation, to sufficiently cope; many of them, weary of this seemingly never-ending ordeal of oppression, and anxious to be on the winning side so that they would be able to keep their jobs and provide for their families, reluctantly came

---

letter of November 10, 1947 to the Chairman of the Czechoslovak Community of Legionnaires, President Beneš had, inter alia, stated: "...Nearly all of you who have worked for the liberation of our country or who are liberated political prisoners and who come to see me, agree on the point that the most diabolical device of the Nazis was the incessant, relentless, all-permeating tension, draining spiritual strength, insecurity, trickery, treason..." (The Národní Osvobození, November 12, 1947).

116 See sub-section 2 of Section A of this Chapter, passim; also Korbel, J., op.cit., pp. 128-130.

117 Communist Minister of Interior whose primary task was to reorganize the police as a tyrannical force, completely reliable to the Communists and Soviet Russia, terrorizing non-Communists and preventing any possibility of armed opposition by the Czech people at the moment Moscow would give the signal for Communist take-over of the country, had openly stated at a public meeting in Brno Stadium in October, 1947: "We are accused of Gestapism. I do not deny it. On the contrary we shall show our opponents that we can do this better than the Germans". (Quoted by Josten, J., op.cit., p. 90).

to support the Communists.[118] For a nation which just lost its best people in Nazi gallows and concentration camps, it was imperative to stand up with courage and fight united, if this new calamity presented by the Communists supported by the Kremlin was to be overcome; President Beneš, who well understood this reality, set out to spoil the Communist treacherous activities directed against his state but instead of providing himself an example for his countrymen by courageously fighting Communist subversive terrorizing methods aimed at the destruction of the will of fighting by its population for Czechoslovakia's already limited independence and freedom, he employed his old methods of negotiating, arguing and compromising which were completely unsuitable for dealing with those who like Hitler and Stalin, understood only the determined demonstration of power.[119]

---

118 An excellent description of this phenomenon was given by a Czech author who after having spent six years in the exile in the West, returned to a small Czech village where he had used to spend as a boy his summer school holidays. He visited the local Catholic priest and was told by him about his worries in regard to the people in the village: "...Something has happened to all of us, you know - to them as well, and they cannot get over it. I do not quite know what it is but they are different - somehow we do not understand each other as we used to... they seem to have lost the ground under their feet... I hate to see their helplessness, their confusion, their lack of courage or whatever it is..." Stránský then added that in the 1946 election, the Communists somehow, inexplicably, managed to get the majority of votes in this typical Czech village and that something was very fundamentally wrong in the mentality of its people. (Stránský, Jan, East Wind Over Prague, London, 1950, pp.13-14).
Táborský clearly described this reality: "...The Munich betrayal, the twilight existence leading up to Hitler's coup de grace of March 1939, and the long ordeal of Nazi oppression had shattered the Czechoslovak people's morale more than Beneš realized. Even under the most propitious circumstances it would have taken some time for them to reestablish their confidence and spirit. When, instead of finding the freedom from fear which they had longed for, they were subjected to the Communist variety of

In the post World War II period before February, 1948 there prevailed in Czechoslovakia "...a quite peculiar atmosphere. It was a period of political freedom but full of insecurity, Anxiety and fear mixed with calmness, pessimism with optimism... The Communist Party became the self-invited exponent of the Soviet Union's policy... Communists in the roles of radical reformers and great patriots were using post-war disorder towards strengthening their political influence among those people who were governed by fear and by greed..."[120] While his own personal popularity reached at that time its zenith, President Beneš viewed with alarm the appearance of unmistakable signs of enormous moral disturbance among his people, of which lack of moral courage - fear, and lack of moral integrity - dishonesty, greed and lawlessness, were the predominant features; on the one hand they greatly strengthened the Communists who exploited and aggravated them to further demoralize the country so as to facilitate their planned take-over and, on the other hand, further increased the feeling of helplessness by the non-Communists. Having frequently been accused that by capitulating to Munich he had saved

---

intimidation and lawlessness, the shock was too much for them, and their civic courage slipped to an all-time low..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 681).

119 See n. 43 of this Chapter.

120 Smutný, J., Únorový převrat 1948, p. 5. - Smutný also added that during this period, there were fought out personal hatreds which originated during the war, there were closely scrutinized and strictly punished, guilts of collaborators but those of them who were able to skilfully hide themselves in political parties, escaped punishment. Properties of Germans and of real and alleged collaborators were being confiscated and distributed, and the street and interests of political parties encroached on the functioning of the state administration and of justice.

the body of his nation but at the price of its spirit, he felt after the war to be at least partly responsible for such occurrences of moral deficiencies, since he was even then still uncertain, regardless, and precisely because, of the many statements attempting to justify his decision at the time of Munich, whether or not he had acted at that time correctly and in the best interests of his nation: it was mainly for this reason that he made it to be his own self-imposed mission to erase the legacy of Munich and German occupation - to erase the lack of moral courage and integrity among his people - and by so doing to prevent the Communists from seizing the power from within.[121]

In commencing his mission to reverse the moral decline of his nation and restore its pre-Munich moral standards, President Beneš concentrated first his efforts on improving the existing work-morale; he admitted that "after a war and after a revolution there is always caused by disorder such a great number of irregularities... that it is

---

121 Professor Václav Beneš had confirmed this fact to the author in the discussion held on February 28, 1971 at the University of Indiana at Bloomington. President Beneš told his nephew during the early post-war months that if he would succeed in eliminating fear in Czechoslovakia, the Communists would be finished as a threatening political factor: he added, however, that this would only be the case if the Russians did not intervene in the internal affairs of the Republic.

In this latter remark President Beneš was in accord with Masaryk who after having told Lockhart in London on December 3, 1947 that he was not pessimistic about the coming Czechoslovak elections in the spring of 1948 since "the Communists were not nearly as strong as people thought", added "gloomily: 'of course, if the Russians interfere, we are finished'." (Lockhart, R.B., Jan Masaryk, p. 69).

necessary to solve all these questions, and thus the volume of new work increases almost tenfold. It is necessary that each would work for two, for three..."[122] He also emphasized the point that he did not believe that the work morale of the Czechoslovaks was bad, because to do otherwise, he would have to believe that their morale in general was bad.[123]

Throughout the entire period of his post-war Presidency, Beneš devoted extraordinary attention to the question of unifying the seriously politically divided nation, caused not only by the Communist treacherous activities and terror but also by the arbitrary decision taken at Košice with which he had to agree, to exclude the Right-Wing parties from the active participation in post-war Czechoslovak political life. In a similar fashion as before Munich, he found the most receptive audiences for his unifying efforts in the all-national organizations - the Czechoslovak Community of Legionaries and the Czechoslovak Sokol Community were among

---

122 President Beneš' speech given at Plzeň on June 15, 1945 (Quoted by Kuchynka, J., op.cit., p. 85).

123 Beneš kept on underlining his faith in the good morale of his people in order to provide the needed incentive in this field. In his speech given on October 28, 1946, on the occasion of the Czechoslovak Independence Day in Prague, he had stated: "...I do not believe, my friends, that the work morale of our people would be bad; I would have to otherwise believe that their morale in general was bad. And I know that this is not the case. I only want that it would improve, that it would be better and would become, step by step, faultless... all of us have to demonstrate to the world, how highly we esteem our Republic, free, Czechoslovak and that we will defend our state not only by a struggle but that we shall, above all, secure inside of it, through our work, the well-being, good fortune and permanent prosperity..." (Czechoslovakia, The Department of Information, První Československý plán, Praha, 1946, pp. 14-15).

the most prominent of such organizations: his thesis on this subject which he kept on subsequently emphasizing, had been expounded in his reply to the presentation made by the former community on July 2, 1945: "You are justly emphasizing your determination that nothing from that, what had weakened us in the past, must return - this will not happen if we shall well comprehend in ourselves and among ourselves, what is not in agreement with true democracy, if we all, each in his own place, shall construct with devoted service a new, better world".[124] In his talk with representatives of the Czechoslovak Community of Volunteers of June 4, 1946, Beneš stated that he was in full agreement with their program and especially with the idea "that you would practise unity of our national community, unity of our common national effort which perhaps will be even more indispensable than it was in the past, and finally also the Czechoslovak unity in thought and work".[125] Had the restoration of unity among his countrymen depended purely on moral issues, President Beneš would have undoubtedly succeeded in time in restoring this unity to its pre-Munich level; however, because the Communists, aided by Stalin, were set on to prevent such a development, his desperate efforts towards this end were bound to fail. Yet he did not cease to plead for this unity until the eve of the Communist coup d'état: especially moving was his plea that it was

---

124 The Národní Osvobození, July 4, 1945.

125 Československá Obec Dobrovolců, President Dr Edvard Beneš a Dobrovolci, Praha, 1946, p. 43 - See also in this context Beneš' address to the representatives of the Sokol Community in Náměšť nad Oslavou of July 19, 1946 (Krejčí, A., op.cit., (n. 64), p. 30).

for Czechoslovakia absolutely essential "that all the reasonable people shake hands over the barriers of their world outlooks, political partisanship and religious differences and that they form a quiet partnership from which grows a deep consciousness of national unity of Czechs and Slovaks, of the Czechoslovak state unity..."[126]

His criticism of, and intervention in, the cases involving the lack of morality, justice and order was one of the important aspects of his general drive aimed at wiping out the legacy of Munich and Nazi occupation which was the foundation stone of the Communist internal political strength in Czechoslovakia. In his first post World War II Christmas message to the nation he devoted some time to this subject and declared that he was trying everywhere where he was able, and where it was justified "to clear the way to law and justice".[127] By so doing he had indirectly admitted that there had been cases of injustice which he was unable to rectify and where his interventions were frustrated by Communist tactics and threats. The Chairman of the Lawyers' Union in Prague made a point of this reality to President Beneš on March 6, 1947 by his explanation that the frequent threat of the street was a very depressive development and was causing an impression of general legal insecurity. Beneš replied that he considered himself, in his function as head of the state, to be the first protector of valid laws;

---

126 This letter of President Beneš (see n. 115) was de facto an all-encompassing desperate plea of a seriously ill, lonely man, forsaken by the West, who saw the only remaining hope for the preservation of his state in the unity of all of its citizens.

127 The Národní Osvobození, December 27, 1945.

after having admitted that he kept on coming across cases of violation of law every day, he added: "I have nothing against the revolution - we had to take revolutionary measures - but the revolution means that we shall implement a certain new legal order and we shall then have to adhere to it. I do not want chaos, there is too much of it in our life..."[128]

President Beneš directed his main attention, in internal matters of his country during his post-World War II Presidency, to matters of moral conduct, criticizing occurrences where it was seriously disregarded or completely omitted, pleading for its revival and restoration to its pre-Munich high standards, giving encouragement to all those who along with him advocated, and actively worked for, the spiritual restoration of their nation, and providing guidance, especially to young people, how to help in reaching this objective.

Observing the immediate post-war developments in Czechoslovakia which demonstrated the seriousness of spiritual derangement of many of its inhabitants exploited and aggravated by the Communists, Beneš set on eliminating Hitler's heritage from his country;[129] he admitted that it was a very difficult period to live in, submitting every individual to a persistent test of his character.[130] On every suitable occasion

---

128 Ibid., March 9, 1947.

129 Thus e.g. Beneš told the representatives of the Association of National Revolution on October 26, 1945 that he was in agreement with their efforts to eliminate "all the remnants of nazism and fascism from our milieu". (Beneš, E., Zavazuji Vás, Brno, 1948, p. 45).

130 Beneš explained this point in his speech at Brno of July 9, 1946: "...The present period is a great test of character. I have news

he kept on admonishing his nation to remember all those who had died in the fight against Nazism, and especially to keep in mind "what all these sacrifices mean: they are, above all, the guidance for further ways of our national life, they bind us and also they bind our future generations, they bind by their high moral virtue and their eternal moral force... We are bound by it not only to the devoted construction of our new and happy national unit... but, above all, also to the moral and human improvement of each of us..."[131]

Beneš was particularly concerned with the continuously deteriorating moral qualities of Czechoslovak political parties and issued stern warnings to his countrymen that it was absolutely essential to bring "a true democracy into the internal structure of our political parties", and provided them with instructions how to morally improve their political life:

> "...And in this our political life be consistent and courageous. Be at the same time conscious and not stubborn and

---

that not all of those who were entrusted with significant positions... were capable of resisting various possibilities which were brought about by the new situation. This does not involve only legal responsibility but, above all, moral disorder which appears during such situations on weaklings. It is exactly the war period and the revolutionary epoch which frequently make such disorders possible... We are entering the period which should represent our full and consistent, material and spiritual, national, political, social and, above all, economic liberation. What is at stake is a new world, a new order, a new life. It depends on us to prove daily by our deeds that this work will succeed, regardless of difficulties". (Kuchynka, J., op.cit., p. 89).

131 President Beneš' address on the occasion of the First Anniversary of the 1945 May Revolution in Prague, given on May 4, 1946 (Beneš, E., op.cit., n. 129, pp. 92-93).

> biased. Mutual toleration is and must be the condition of every common political national front. Be at the same time convinced democrats, believe in ideals, because improvement of every society is possible only by waging a hard struggle of the good against the bad. Have sufficient amount of moral strength in order that you would persevere in these struggles despite of all difficulties and suffering. Be prepared to suffer even in the future. Help the weak and those who suffer injustice, regardless of their and yours political affiliation. Good is always good, evil is always evil. Think in these clear moral categories..."[132]

His 1946 Christmas message to the nation dealt almost in its entirety with the question of morality in general and with the several "startling signs of our life with which we should deal in a merciless and ruthless manner", in particular: he pointed out as the most important of these signs the fact that evil elements were hiding in political parties and that there existed an alarming demoralization in the society, especially among its youth.[133] He expressed his appreciation to representatives of

---

132 President Beneš' address given at the First Congress of the Association of National Revolution on October 26, 1946 (Beneš, E., op.cit., n. 123, pp. 124-125).

133 He said, describing these startling signs: "It is above all the reality that in our political parties - and that is in all of them without distinction - various evil elements are hiding, from which should every society clearly dissociate itself - I have in mind a number of those persons with more or less serious moral defects who are always product of the period following great wars and great revolutions. I am talking about all of our parties because it is a general phenomenon. These elements entered the parties not to strengthen them but to save themselves. For the restoration of our affairs it is essential that these people would disappear from the public life. Let us not forget that even the present time - in the same manner as was the war period - is a great and all-encompassing test of character! Let us provide help to morally clean and reliable people and let us get rid ourselves of bad people! We shall thus contribute very effectively to the restoration and consolidation of our entire national life.

The other sign which is causing me today considerable worries, are some alarming signs of demoralization in our national society, and

all groups and sectors of his nation whose tasks involved exclusively or at least partially, the spiritual realm and who offered him their help in the moral reconstruction of the Czechoslovak national society.[134]

The continuously deteriorating East-West relations on the international scene during 1947 and their alarming impact on Czechoslovak internal affairs, due to ruthless and persistent Kremlin's interference which climaxed during that year in Stalin's employment of the two vetos - his second and third - against Czechoslovakia, the former in March in connection with the Czechoslovak-Polish Treaty and the latter in July forbidding Prague to go to Paris Conference on the Marshall Plan, had a profound effect on Benes' drive aimed at the moral restoration of his nation. Having realized, after having effectively been abandoned by the West, that only unity of his people could save Czechoslovakia's existence against the Communist threat,[135] Benes accelerated in the fall of 1947, after his partial recovery from the stroke suffered in July, his moral campaign because only by first achieving this objective could unity subsequently

---

especially among our teen-agers..." (President Benes' 1946 Christmas message in Czechoslovakia, Department of Information, Na prahu dvouletky, Praha, 1947, pp. 10-11).

134 To the delegation of the Czech Catholic clergy who spent their war years in Nazi prisons and concentration camps, led by Archbishop of Prague Josef Beran, President Benes stated: "You are pointing out the urgent need for the moral and spiritual reconstruction after the great suffering which our nation, and mankind in general, have just undergone. I welcome your help in this direction because honest and sincere democracy is quite impossible without a solid moral and spiritual basis. You can see it all the time, I keep on emphasizing it everywhere, in every speech I deal with it and I am truly convinced about it all the way into my deepest soul..." (Benes, E., op.cit., n. 129, pp. 132-133).

135 See n. 126 of this Chapter.

be effected. Yet he was fighting against the time, not knowing whether or not he would be given by the forthcoming developments sufficient time for completing successfully his mission.

To achieve the greatest possible impact, President Beneš turned again his attention to the all-national organizations; one of his first addresses was directed at Czechoslovak youth. Having clearly in mind the Communist anti-democratic methods based on the force and intimidation, he pleaded to the young people of his country for their support of democracy: "...Let us establish our new life on love and tolerance, on opposition to violence and injustice..."[136] In his address to the Czechoslovak Sokol Community he emphasized the historical mission and importance of the Sokol in the nation and explained its task at that time: "...At present when our epoch is searching, and desperately fighting, for its more definite expression, the Sokol must be the balancing factor between the past and the future and must help towards overcoming the differences and contrasts in the contemporary life. Through its position of being above the political parties, Sokol can contribute towards political relaxation..."[137]

His monumental, all-encompassing letter to the Chairman of the

---

136 Radio address to the Czechoslovak youth of October 25, 1947 in the Národní Osvobození, October 28, 1947.

137 Address to the Eighth Congress of the Czechoslovak Sokol Community, given on October 27, 1947 in the Národní Osvobození, October 30, 1947.

Czechoslovak Community of Legionaries[138] constituted a new trend in his mission to reverse the moral decline of his nation since it was not only a desperate plea for democracy, unity and morality but it was also an open attack on Communist treacherous tactics in the clearest possible form just falling short of naming the Communists to be "the criminal, destructive and unreliable elements" which he asked to be eliminated from the public life. Another new aspect which appeared in this letter was his specific acceptance of the vow, made on the occasion of the Independence Day on October 28, 1947 by the Czechoslovak Community of Legionaries, the Association of the Liberated Political Prisoners and the Association of National Revolution that they would remain faithful to the ideals on which was built the Czechoslovak Republic and were prepared to fight for it in the future in the same way as they had done in the past: "...You have vowed to me that in the same way as at the present time you are prepared also in the future to contribute with united forces towards consolidating, safeguarding and - if this would be necessary - even towards defending our national liberty in the spirit of the ideals which led us during both wars in the most difficult times... Brothers, I bind you by your vow, I count upon all of you..."[139]

His indirect attacks on the Communists, by emphasizing the absolute necessity of morality which they were completely lacking, intensified

---

138 See n. 115 and 126 of this Chapter.

139 The Národní Osvobození, November 12, 1947.

during the few remaining months before the Communist coup. d'état. To the extremely important 21st Congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party Beneš explained that "our generation lives in the predominantly spiritual and moral crisis which hit the roots of the man and shook all the values which for whole centuries appeared to be inviolable", told them that they were carrying a great responsibility on their shoulders and asked them to "sincerely cooperate with honest workers of all other political parties"[140] which immediately excluded, for all the practical purposes, the Communists. Another indirect attack of President Beneš on the Communists while discussing moral issues was comment that in states "where they had dictatorship before the war, dictatorship is forming even after the war, though of a different kind".[141] He stated on the same occasion that he was definitely in favour of the cooperation of all parties, that he wanted all of them to arrive at an agreement, that the decisions which were agreed upon would be adhered to, and added: "This was so until now and I think that we shall continue to observe this principle even in the future and that we shall succeed to keep and preserve it..."[142]

---

140 President Beneš' telegram to the Presidium of the Twenty-first Congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party (Ibid., November 15, 1947).

141 President Beneš' remark in his address to the delegation of Catholic Bishops led by Archbishop of Prague, Josef Beran, made on November 19, 1947 (Ibid., November 21, 1947).

142 Ibid.

In his reply to Czechoslovak students, Beneš' indirect attack took a more open form by attacking the Communists who on the one hand indulged in peace propaganda and on the other hand kept on spreading hate against those who did not share, or at least did not pretend to share, their political outlook: after having stated that he was in full agreement with the students' idea of peace and tolerance in the nation and of peace among nations, he added: "You want to work for peace on the understanding that - as you are saying - 'peace cannot sincerely want that person who, although he speaks about it, hates other person for his political affiliation and his different world outlook'. I agree with you... I wish you, young friends, firm life optimism, resting on the faith in eternal permanence of moral and spiritual values..."[143]

President Beneš' 1947 Christmas message was not only his last of the monumental and outspoken appeals to his countrymen to preserve democracy and to fight for the ideals on which the Czechoslovak Republic was founded but his very last one in the series of these messages which he kept on uninterruptedly delivering, with the exception of 1938, to his nation every Christmas since his election to the Presidency in December, 1935. This message was in reality his Manifesto, in which he had summarized all his ideals, which were diametrically opposed to the Communist conspiracy, and had pleaded for, and advocated, conduct and actions which were mutually exclusive to those practised and propagated

---

143 The Národní Osvobození, November 28, 1947.

by the Communists. He appealed to his countrymen to conduct the forthcoming elections in a truly democratic spirit since

> ...our efforts are directed towards the happiness of the nation as a whole: care for it... rests on each of us to whom the democratic state system enables to participate in the improvement of living conditions of the entire population. Of course, we also believe with Karel Havlíček that democracy which places emphasis on the man, places also emphasis on his personal consciousness which means that it requires each man that he would not lay responsibility from himself on others and that he would, therefore, begin with himself, with his own soul, with the improvement and reform of the life and people. According to Havlíček, man should not be afraid to look into the eyes of his own soul. However, let us also say with Havlíček that man must not at all have fear and that every honest man, that is he who has his soul clean, does not also need to be afraid... Dear friends, many, many worries are still awaiting us at home and in the world, I do not hide it from myself or from you; and why, therefore, should we not make the life more pleasant at least there, where it depends only on us, our patience, kindness and good will, and where we are capable of accomplishing it with our own strength? Sincerity, purity and emotional verity of Christmas let encourage us towards a better life. Spend it, dear friends, peacefully and happily in the same manner as the entire forthcoming great anniversary year of the Republic with our glorious all-Sokol Slet![144]

Yet this President Beneš' wish in regard to 1948 was destined not to be realized and less than two months later his country experienced the First Russian Invasion headed by Zorin. He had to witness that when "the poison of Bolshevism"[145] was engulfing his nation, the morale of the vast majority of his countrymen - the only weapon left to him with

---

144 The Národní Osvobození, December 25, 1947; Havlíček, mentioned by Beneš was a famous Czech newspaperman and patriot who lived in the nineteenth century who had the courage to always say the truth; he was severely persecuted by the Habsburg regime and died young as a result of his imprisonment and years spent in exile.

145 President Beneš had employed this term on many occasions during World War II in his talks with representatives of the Western

which to stop this poison after having been abandoned by the United States - which, though devastated by Munich, Nazi terror and Communist persistent intimidation, had gradually been improving during the preceding months as a result of his pleas, and under his guidance, sank at the time of the Communist coup d'état to its lowest ebb, and paralyzed by fear, this weapon became ineffective. His own personal tragedy at that time was his knowledge that he himself did not practise during World War II in relations with Communist Russia those high principles of morality which he so eloquently advocated to his countrymen after the war; in February 1948 the legacy of Munich appeared in its extreme form also in President Beneš' political personality. As he had himself stated in his last Christmas message, according to Havlíček "every honest man that is he who has his soul clean, does not need to be afraid;"[146] however, in regard to his relations with Communist Russia - the very country which staged and directed this onslaught on his nation - Beneš' soul was not clean and he was therefore afraid, though his fear, brought about by his appreciation of his own moral shortcomings, was of different kind than the fear of brutal force experienced by most of the Czechoslovak citizens; both of these kinds of fear had originated at, and owed their existence to, Munich.

Powers in general and with officials of the British Foreign Office in particular. (See e.g. Foreign Office memorandum prepared by Leeper on November 22, 1939 about his talk with President Beneš - BFO, C 19148/72/55, FO 371/23132; also Chapter VI of this study, passim).

146 See n. 144 above.

3. Tragedy Completed - Communist Coup d'état of February, 1948

> ...There must be no force, no terrorism of any kind, either spiritual or physical, and the people of Czechoslovakia and of other countries must remain democrats above all. Let us assert this principle everywhere and in everything in our political life today. I repeat: today, tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, during the elections, after the elections, always and everywhere...[147]

Throughout the entire period of his post-World War II Presidency, Beneš resolutely opposed the employment of force and terrorism in his country, yet he was forced to witness, on a daily basis, how these totalitarian, undemocratic and in their spirit totally anti-Czechoslovak, political means were persistently being used by the Communists against those of his countrymen who had the courage to oppose their plans to usurp the power in the Republic. It is, therefore, an irony that Beneš himself has to bear a considerable degree of responsibility for failing to stop these Communist atrocities, since he was during this entire period the only political personality in the country who was in the position, due to his enormous personal popularity among his people, to do so successfully: Táborský has presented a convincing argument that after the 1946 elections, Beneš had had an excellent opportunity to deprive the Communists of the Ministry of the Interior from which, under

---

147 President Beneš' speech delivered to commemorate the tenth anniversary, in September 1947, of President Masaryk's death, quoted by Canadian Chargé d'Affaires at Prague, Macdonnell, in his dispatch 155 of September 18, 1947 (CDEA, 7121-40).

Communist Minister Nosek, the Communists were spreading the worst abuses of power and terror over the entire country.[148]

In this statement Táborský presented the most crucial failure of President Beneš, before February, 1948, to resolutely wipe out the source of the Communist menace to his country. Had Beneš indeed appointed Masaryk as Minister of the Interior, he would have become himself Minister of that Department and would have been in the position to effect the urgently needed vast remedial measures throughout the country. This would have quickly reduced the Communists to impotence, in so far as their extra-legal methods of intimidation and terror were concerned, since they would have been no longer able to use Ministry of Interior as their most effective instrument for subversively increasing their power - on the contrary, they would have been themselves closely watched by that Ministry's properly instituted and functioning organs who would have had the authority to prevent and punish those "evil elements"[149] in the

---

148 Táborský stated that this "opportunity came after the parliamentary elections of April 1946. Despite the substantial Communist vote of 38 percent, those elections gave a clear majority to the democratic parties. By this time it was already crystal-clear that the Communist Minister of the Interior had grossly misused his powers in order to communize the police force. It was vitally important for the future of democracy to stop this malfeasance before it was too late. Consequently, Beneš should have refused to appoint anyone but a staunch non-Party man to such a key position in the new cabinet. I believed then, and I still believe today (in July, 1958 when this article was written and published - note by author), that it would have been a brilliant stroke to have chosen Jan Masaryk. To be sure, Masaryk was not well qualified for the office, for he was a poor administrator. But his tremendous popularity and strict non-partisanship would have made it difficult for the Communists to oppose his appointment. Had Beneš put his whole authority behind the idea, I do not see how he could have lost. As Masaryk was devoted to Beneš and always followed his instructions, Beneš would have become his own Minister of the Interior..." ("The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 682).

Communist Party in the case that they would have kept on perpetrating their extra-legal practices. Such a development would have effectively eliminated the until then persistent and psychologically devastating Communist practice of terror and intimidation and by so doing it would have boosted the morale of the Czechoslovak people to an incomparably higher degree than Beneš was able to attain by his speeches and pleas. As Minister of the Interior, Beneš would also have been in the position to effectively purge the Ministry of National Defence of the "evil elements" represented by the secret police which he had actually undertaken to do but was unable to bring to successful conclusion.[150] If such a development had taken place, it would have provided Beneš with the only, for him, acceptable method by means of which he could have arrived at his objective of effectively wiping out the legacy of Munich and Nazi occupation and of successfully dealing with the Communists,

---

149 See n. 133 of this Chapter. While President Beneš did not single out the Communist Party as the party in which these "evil elements" were hiding, and had gone even so far as to suggest that they were hiding in all Czechoslovak parties, there was no doubt in the minds of those who were listening to his 1946 Christmas Message that he was referring to the Communist Party. This fact was subsequently admitted by the Communists themselves by not printing in their press those passages of Beneš' speeches where he had denounced tactics which were practised only by themselves or where he had advocated certain actions which ran counter to their, and Moscow's, schemes. This was e.g. the case in respect to President Beneš' letter to the Chairman of the Czechoslovak Community of Legionaries of November 10, 1947 (see n. 115, 126 and 138 of this Chapter). Press of all political parties with the exception of the Communists printed the text of this letter in its entirety: The Communist organ Rudé Právo of November 13, 1947 left out those passages where Beneš had written about democracy, Masaryk and Czechoslovakia's mission in the world (The Národní Osvobození, November 14, 1947).

150 In his secret telegram 2008 from Praha of December 23, 1946 concerning his talk with President Beneš of December 20th, Steinhardt

provided, of course, that the Kremlin would not have interfered in Czechoslovak internal affairs; this method did not entail the employment of armed forces and the inevitable bloodshed of civil war, which he so thoroughly abhored, even to the point that he did not authorize the employment of the Czechoslovak Army against Communist militia and police although this would have been for the good, and in agreement with the interest, of the Republic, and minimized the possibility of Soviet invasion coupled with the certainty of no military help from the United States.[151]

---

wrote: "In discussing Ministry of National Defense, Beneš remarked he had recently undertaken "major fight" to purge Ministry of so-called OBZ (secret police). He said this organization, sponsored and heavily staffed by Soviet NKVD which had engaged in spying, intimidation, denunciation and unlawful arrests, was menace to country, and as Minister Svoboda lacked willingness or courage to clean house, he had personally undertaken task and results would be apparent within three or four months..." (USDS, 860F.00/12 - 2346).

151 Macdonnell, who had been the first Canadian diplomatic representative in Prague since opening of the post in March, 1947, dealt with this aspect at some length: "...The outstanding recollection is of Dr Beneš as a tired, worried, and probably sick individual. There seemed to be no public evidence of the industry and leadership that had made his name famous in earlier years when he was one of Europe's outstanding international figures. It is a matter for speculation how much of this was due to impairment of physical health and how much to deep worry over the difficult choices facing Czechoslovakia... Certainly it was a generally held opinion at the time that illness was a major factor contributing to indecisiveness and lack of leadership.

The chief - and understandable - worry of Dr Beneš was the prospect of civil war and bloodshed resulting from any attempt to forestall a seizure of power by the Communist Party. It was, for example, proposed to him that the army, which was predominantly loyal to him, should take preventive action against focal centres of the Communist party, such as the factory militia and those elements of the police that were under Communist control. This he was not prepared to authorize. The thought of Czechs and Slovaks fighting other Czechs and Slovaks, with the possible entry of Soviet forces

President Beneš, however, did not take such a step because he hoped that internal developments in the country, if given sufficient time,[152] would inevitably produce a dramatic decline of Communist internal strength and a corresponding rise of democratic power. Since the non-intervention of Moscow was the key prerequisite on which this development depended, he was extremely careful throughout the entire post-war period to ensure that no situation would take place inside his country which would antagonize the Soviets and thus provide them with an excuse for interfering in Czechoslovakia's domestic affairs. The dangers

---

should the Communist party need help, seemed to lead him to avoid making difficult decisions. One rationalization may have been a belief that it was too dangerous to oppose a Soviet-supported Communist Party in the absence of guarantees of assistance from the West, which had forces nearby in occupied Germany. Whether or not this assistance was ever seriously sought, the subject was much discussed in Prague in the months leading up to February, 1948. There were few realistic observers who thought that the Western powers would give such guarantees, and a general belief that Soviet pressure was being strenuously applied. Whether as a result of direct enquiries, or through his own assessment of the possibilities, Dr Beneš may well have reached the same conclusion that military help from the West would not be forthcoming. At all events, he left no record at the time of being willing to take the risks involved in challenging the ambitions of the Communist Party." (Letter of Canadian High Commissioner in Ceylon, R.M. Macdonnell, from Colombo of September 18, 1970, to the author).

152 During his conversation with Táborský, Beneš said in June, 1947: "... I am struggling for time. We cannot be saved unless the Russian advance is checked by a tremendous show of power on the part of the West. Once the Russians see that any further step would mean a general war, they will stop, but not one moment earlier. The Russians will do everything possible to enlarge and strengthen their grip on Germany and the whole of Central and Eastern Europe in the coming months, before they are definitely checked. If we manage to hold out until next summer or fall, the highest danger point will by then have been passed..." (Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš, p. 683).

posed by restored Germany to his country in the future, and, in the absence of any guarantees from the West, its dependence on Russia for help against a possible future German attack which would again, as he had believed, be directed first against Czechoslovakia,[153] provided Beneš with another powerful motive to maintain a good relationship with Russia, and not to endanger it prematurely by employing drastic measures against the Czechoslovak Communists. It was in this vein that during his 1946 pre-elections speeches Beneš had been urging his countrymen to carry out the elections "responsibly, with dignity and calmly, without quarrels and unnecessary arguments, as it is proper to do for a free and educated nation" and emphasized that: "...I wish that our relationship with the Soviet Union would completely be excluded from any discussion during the elections. We had been its ally already in 1935, we are its ally today and we shall remain its ally also for the entire future..."[154] His countrymen followed his instructions in

---

153 Beneš made during the post-war period numerous remarks to this effect. See e.g. his speeches made during his visit of Western Bohemia's borderlands of May 18-22, 1947 in Kettner, P. et al., op.cit., (n. 58 of this Chapter), passim.

154 President Beneš' speech in Kladno of March 24, 1946 (The Národní Osvobození, March 26, 1946).

His efforts at not antagonizing the Soviets, appear in an even more pronounced form in his speeches where the importance was not in what he had, but rather in what he had not, said: into this category falls e.g. his address given on the occasion of the First Anniversary of the 1945 May Revolution in Prague, of May 4, 1946 - in it he did not utter a single word on why the Czechs of Prague were left dying without any help from the American Army standing idly by and why the Czech planes operating in the West were prevented from taking off to help Prague at the same time. (Beneš, E., Zavazuji Vás, pp. 89-93). By doing so Benes confirmed among his countrymen their belief that "an agreement was made at Yalta

this regard and "the election of May 26th was held without incidents or disorder of any kind throughout the country".[155] During 1946 and 1947 Beneš had furthermore been afraid to effect any effective measures against the Communists who had still then commanded sufficient strength in the country to be capable of creating such a serious crisis in the Republic that it would have resulted in bloodshed, civil war and would possibly bring about Soviet intervention;[156] he had decided to wait until

---

whereby Czechoslovakia was to remain in the Soviet sphere of influence after the occupation ended". (Duff, S.G., "Czechoslovakia Revisited" in the World Today, Vol. III, January 1947, p. 14).

By having placed the Czechoslovak-Soviet relations under taboo, Beneš had been expressing the then existing sentiments of the majority of his countrymen who had still been overwhelmed by their distrust of the West because of Munich and the United States' performance since 1944, which confirmed their above belief that Czechoslovakia had been left at Stalin's mercy and the fear of German vengeance in the future so skilfully planted and inflated above all proportions in their minds by the Communists. Typical expression of that sentiment was an article by Peroutka - a well known Czech journalist who has been since the Communist Coup d'état living in exile and has been writing eloquent anti-Russian articles - which had appeared in the Svobodné Noviny of October 7, 1945: "All of us must realize that the alliance with Russia is the concern not solely of the Communist Party but of every Czech party, and must remain the basic foundation of the State, regardless of who is at the helm... Not only Communists but every one of us must be the guarantee of the alliance with Russia..."

155 Steinhardt's telegram 893 from Praha of May 27, 1946 (USDS, 860F.00/5 - 2746).

156 This point was confirmed by the Canadian Chargé d'Affaires at Prague who wrote in September, 1947 that there was in Czechoslovakia "considerable apprehension that if the Communists fail to get their way on important issues, they will bring about a general strike through their control of the trade unions and may even take more drastic direct action. From the frequent references made recently to the subject, there is evidently genuine concern that the Communists will resort to undemocratic methods". After having quoted President Beneš' concern on this issue in his speech to commemorate the tenth anniversary of President Masaryk's death (see n. 141 of this Chapter) Macdonnell concluded: "Presumably

1948 when, as he had hoped, Communist strength would diminish to such a degree that they would no longer be in a position of creating a similar crisis under the same circumstances.

Developments of the first half of 1947 seemed to prove the correctness of Beneš' policy of struggling for the time of displaying patience and caution with the Communists at home and thus of not antagonizing Moscow. His policy towards Soviet Russia seemed also to have been paying dividends, and in April 1947 Beneš was able to state that "There has been no direct intervention by the Soviet Government in Czechoslovakia's affairs other than the Soviet request for the Czechoslovak-Polish treaty".[157] This seemingly favourable political situation which had also improved Beneš' physical and mental health and boosted his morale[158] came to an abrupt end by the Czechoslovak drama surrounding the Marshall Plan and

---

the President would not speak out so forcefully unless he were convinced of the need for doing so". (Macdonnell dispatch 155 of September 18, 1947 CDEA, 7121-40).

157 Steinhardt's telegram 311 from Praha of April 3, 1947 about his conversation, of the same day, with President Beneš who had also expressed his generally optimistic outlook on the internal development of his country (USDS, 860F.00/4-347).

158 Táborský describes one of such outbursts of Beneš' high morale: "In the same conversation of June 1947 (see n.152 of this Chapter, ibid., pp. 683-4) he told me that, should the Communists attempt to seize power by violence, he was determined to fight them to the bitter end, and that he would call on the Sokols (a patriotic gymnastic organization), the Legionnaires, and even the Army if necessary. "The Communists think that I would try to avoid an open clash with them at any cost", the President continued with a smile. "I know that they are saying: 'If you succeed in pushing Beneš into a tight corner and if you keep on pressing him hard enough, he will yield in the end'. But they are wrong. I wish to avoid trouble, that's right, but my patience and my willingness to make deals

Beneš' severe stroke of apoplexy.[159] Yet even subsequent to these calamities, Beneš managed to recover, at least partially, his health and his strength, and to continue, in his own way, to fight the Communists in their activities aimed at the destruction of the National Front and at their own seizure of power by extra-legal methods.[160] Following the two serious set-backs suffered by the Communists in the late fall of 1947 by Fierlinger's ouster from the Czechoslovak Social

---

with them have their limits. I shall make no compromise which would destroy democracy in this country. The Communists could seize power in this country only over my dead body..."

159 See Section C, sub-section 1 of this Chapter.

160 An interesting evidence to this effect was given by American Chargé d'Affaires Yost in his secret telegram 1235 from Praha of September 15, 1947 in which he reported that "Dr Beneš interrupted his vacation, saw Social Democrats Vilím and Tyměš and took them to task for signing joint communiqué with Communists and thus creating a block within National Front. He then saw Majer with whom he was very cordial and whose resignation (as a result of his party's pledge of close co-operation with the Communists) he refused to accept. Then he saw Gottwald and spoke in strong terms. Beneš declared Communists were destroying National Front and subverting normal political life of Czechoslovakia. He stated that even if Communist millionaire levy proposal should be passed by National Assembly (they proposed a heavy capital tax against "millionaires", the proceeds from which would be used for subsidies to farmers) which he doubted, he would not sign it. He attacked recent Communist action vis-à-vis Social Democrats and said he would not stand for non-Communist parties being eaten up one by one as had occurred in other eastern European countries. He declared that in case of Putsch he would not ease Communist way by resigning or leaving country. He added that though he had been ill he had no intention of dying for some time to come. Gottwald is not reported to have had much to say in reply". (USDS, 860F.00/9 - 1547). See also excellent description of the political situation prevailing in Czechoslovakia at that time, in Canadian Chargé d'Affaires Macdonnell's three dispatches from Prague: No 136 of August 28, 1947, No 155 of September 18, 1947 and 157 of September 19, 1947 (CDEA, 7121-40).

Democratic Party, and by the solution of the Slovak crisis, Beneš' "optimism reached the point of asserting that the turning point had been reached. Communists will make one or two more efforts between now and May elections to intimidate and even terrorize non-Communists to influence the outcome of the elections but they will not succeed..."[161]

Beneš' ever-increasing animosity towards, and impatience with, the Communists broke into the open during a talk he held in mid-November with Gottwald in which the latter had complained that it was becoming increasingly difficult for him to function in his post of Prime Ministry and that in order to obtain "co-operation" from the non-Communist leaders, it might be necessary to purge their ranks. Beneš was reported to have bluntly replied: "Then I guess you will have to begin with me".[162]

---

161 Steinhardt's telegram 1564 from Praha of November 24, 1947 about his talk with President Beneš of November 20, 1947. In it, Steinhardt had also reported that "in the course of his general remarks the President showed a more hostile attitude towards Communists than he had in any previous talks with me"; in regard to Fierlinger's ouster, "Beneš was delighted and readily took credit for what he described as a major victory. Balance in the Government was restored, Communist attack on the Government has been beaten off, and 'he is now bending his efforts towards making the Social Democratic Party as independent and non-Communist as possible!" (In this connection see Beneš' telegram to the Presidium of the Twenty-First Congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Party, see n.140 of this Chapter - note by author). "He was also pleased with the solution of the Slovak crisis... He referred particularly to his recently published Memoirs" (The Národní Osvobození of October 26, 1947 reported that the first volume of Dr Beneš' Memoirs was going to be published on the Independence Day - October 28, 1947; the same newspaper reported on December 7, 1947 that this book had won the main award in the Literary Contest of the organ of the Czechoslovak writers, the Svobodné Noviny, having been judged to be "the most interesting book of 1947" - note by author) with their laudatory comments concerning the United States which he added had very much annoyed Communists..." (USDS, 860F.00/11-2447).

162 Steinhardt's telegram 1553 from Praha of November 20, 1947 (USDS, 860F.00/11-2047).

Beneš' struggle with the Communists, cast against the background of ever-increasing antagonism and rivalry between the Communist and non-Communist parties on the internal, and of similarly intensifying East-West hostility on the international, political scene, drew generally pessimistic comments in the West, as to the outcome of this uneven struggle which reflected the generally pessimistic political mood prevailing at that time in Western Europe. French Foreign Minister Bideault remarked in this vein in December, 1947 that "he thought that Beneš would be evicted by the Communists in Czechoslovakia".[163] On the other hand, Beneš' optimism that the turning point in Communist tide had already been reached and that the Communists would not succeed to influence the outcome of the May, 1948 elections in which as it was apparent from the then conducted Gallup poll the Communists would suffer heavy looses, was shared in Czechoslovakia by the majority of non-Communists and American diplomats in Prague.[164] Masaryk went even as far as to believe that the Communists did not intend to seize power by employing extra-legal methods by stating just before 1947

---

163 Memorandum of conversation between American Ambassador in London, Douglas and French Foreign Minister, Bideault, of December 17, 1947, held in London on the same day (USDS, 740.00119 Control (Germany)/12-1747).

164 In his secret telegram 1670 from Praha of December 22, 1947, American Chargé d'Affaires Bruins named three reasons against Communist illegal measures:1. "President Beneš is regarded as 'ace in hole' who is highly popular and respected and who could be counted upon in emergency to use his position strongly to resist extra-legal action. While President has suffered physical setback, he is far from being incapacitated and his intellectual vigour is unimpaired". 2. Non-revolutionary character of the Czechs; 3. Soviet Union's need of Czech products and Czech dependency on raw material from the west. (USDS, 860F.00B/12-2247).

Christmas that "Gottwald who had never misled him in matter of this nature, said that he would seek to obtain 51% majority by constitutional methods".[165] The Canadian representative at Prague who had reported earlier that there was in Czechoslovakia genuine concern that the Communists would "resort to undemocratic methods" raised the point that if the Communists were to suffer "a substantial defeat" in the May, 1948 elections, they could resort to force and that it would appear, therefore, "in the interests of the country for the Communists to win a respectable number of votes".[166]

After the Marshall Plan and the subsequent formation of the Cominform, East-West world tension translated itself into the domestic Czechoslovak situation and the political parties began to emphasize their mutual differences and hostilities instead of their mutual agreements and

---

165 Bruins' telegram 1677 from Praha of December 23, 1947, (USDS, 860F.00B/12-2347).

166 Chargé d'Affaires Macdonnell had made this interesting observation on September 18, 1947; after having described the Communist threat of employing undemocratic methods, if they would not get their own way on important issues, he stated that: "...One can therefore not rule out the possibility that in the event of a substantial defeat at the polls, or a situation where the Communists took strong objection to the activities of the other parties, the Communists might resort to force. Assuming that the present equilibrium is maintained until the elections, it would certainly appear to be in the interests of the country for the Communists to win a respectable number of votes which would give them more than token representation in the next Government... There is no suggestion that the National Front should be dissolved. It would seem that the chances of Czechoslovakia's getting through the elections and the post-election period without departing from democratic methods depend upon recognition by the non-Communists that the country cannot be governed if the Communists are excluded from the Government, and upon the willingness of the Communists to participate in a Government in which they might be in second or third or fourth place. The first of these conditions is likely to be met, and open season has been declared for speculation on the second". (Dispatch No 155, CDEA, 7121-40).

aims. Criticism of violently undemocratic Communist tactics became much more outspoken[167] and the explosively growing crisis within the National Front which involved all the major issues of policy vital to the preservation of the National Front itself, climaxed on February 13, 1948 in the Cabinet deadlock on the matter of drastic and illegal communization of the police forces by Communist Minister of the Interior, Nosek, who had been using towards this end the very same Ministry which Beneš had failed to take away from the Communists after the 1946 elections.

The tragic drama of the events of February 13th to 25th, surrounding the Communist Coup d'état need not be retold in this study of President Beneš' political behaviour. This story had been told over and over on the one hand by those democratic politicians who had succeeded to escape to the West and who had chiefly attempted to justify their stand during this tragedy,[168] and on the other hand by the Communists who by having employed their usual method of distorting the truth to suit their own purposes, attempted to rationalize and justify their violent and undemocratic seizure of power;[169] some of the former singled

---

167 Macdonnell noted that "Criticism of Communist tactics has been more outspoken than previously and charges of "terror" have been laid. Thus the Social Democrats call for "the cessation of the present agitation, pressure and terror which has often been used in factories and offices", and the National Socialists and the People's Party have done the same". (Ibid.)

168 For listing of the most important of these works see: Sychrava, L., Svědectví a Úvahy o Pražském převratu v únoru 1948, London, 1952; Skilling, H.G., "The Prague Overturn in 1948" in the Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol. IV, 1959, pp. 88-114, and n. 6 of this Chapter.

169 Ibid., and Kaplan, K., "On the Role of Dr E. Beneš in February 1948" in the Historica, Vol. V, 1963, pp. 239-265.

out President Beneš as the individual who had to bear the greatest, if not the sole, responsibility for the Communist success because of his alleged break of the promise, made to the National Socialists and the Populists that he would never accept the resignation of Cabinet members representing two or more political parties - others, while accusing him in the same vein, attempted to excuse his action because of his illness: finally, two of these authors who have known Beneš most intimately, Táborský[170] and Smutný,[171] presented in an objective way President Beneš' role at his own, and his country's second disaster within a decade. The Communists, while having generally condemned Beneš' position taken in February, 1948, emphasized the point that by accepting the resignation of the democratic ministers and by signing the new Gottwald Government, Beneš "did, after all, play a positive role" in the Communist victory.[172]

President Beneš' personal drama and tragedy of February, 1948, when the battle royal with the Communists took place, involve even at the present time many important issues which cannot be determined with any claim to indisputable validity. Testimonies and statements presented by witnesses to, and participants in, this disaster, are often contradictory

---

170 The most important of Táborský's works falling into this category, are the three already cited ones: "Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", "Beneš and The Soviets" and Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960.

171 Smutný, J., Únorový převrat 1948, London, 5 Vols., 1953-1957.

172 Archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, speech by Gottwald of April 9, 1948, quoted by Kaplan, K., op.cit., p. 240.

173

and in some cases mutually exclusive. It is evident, however, that an incomprehensibly and inexcusably serious lack of explicit understanding existed between President Beneš and the leaders of non-Communist parties as to the precisely and unmistakably defined tactics to be employed in their common struggle against the evidently forthcoming Communist attempt to seize power; yet such explicit understanding constituted the absolute and foremost prerequisite in matter of this most vital importance to the very existence of the Republic.[174] His tragic role was determined and influenced by a number of all-encompassing factors which incapacitated him from acting otherwise: his complete physical exhaustion coupled with his serious illness from which he had not until then sufficient time to fully recover, his enormous mental strain and despair brought about by his own intense inner feelings of doubts and insecurity in regard to his past political course, and the accompanying heavy burden of responsibility before the nation and history, his general stand towards Soviet Russia and the Communists by which, as he had

---

173 The author had experienced personally such cases of mutually exclusive statements made by participants in this drama. One of these is of particular interest: the Deputy Prime Minister of the Third Republic and Chairman of the National Socialist Party, Zenkl had emphatically told the author in the conversation of November 5, 1970 held at Washington, D.C. that the Social Democrats had been informed about the decision made by the Ministers of the National Socialist, the People's and the Slovak Democratic Parties on the necessity of causing a governmental crisis by resignation from the Cabinet. - The author was told with equal emphasis by the Minister of Nutrition of the Third Republic and Right-Wing member of the Social Democratic Party, Majer, on November 15, 1970 at New York City that his Party had not been informed about this decision and had completely been surprised when these resignations took place.

174 See Smutný, J., op.cit., passim; especially Vol. V, pp. 1-2, and p. 57.

realized, he "had compromised his position as to be in a vulnerable moral position once the final onslaught developed"[175] and which were at least partially responsible for the approaching disaster which he was then, as at the time of Munich, so helplessly watching, his aversion to bloodshed and horrors of a civil war in which he foresaw hordes of well-armed and well-prepared Communist cohorts and riff-raffs supported by a direct or indirect intervention of the Kremlin as indicated by Zorin's arrival to Prague, massacring scores of unarmed, unprepared and defenceless Czechoslovak democrats, who were under the illusion that the crisis would be resolved on a parliamentary basis and failed to take any effective measures to counter-balance the massed display of Communist hordes, the truth that because of Munich's legacy of fear and moral decline which he had not had sufficient time to erase from the minds of his nation by employing his own moderate, rather than drastic methods, the fact that the majority of Czechoslovaks "including the famed Sokols and the legendary Legionnaires on whom Beneš had pinned great hopes, seemed stricken with paralysis",[176] - the students having been the only exception in this depressing spectacle - the swiftness of the Communist onslaught and their ever increasing threats of employment of violence and terror throughout the country unless he would accept the resignation of the democratic ministers, his own rapid and effective isolation and deprivation of all

---

175 Beck, C.F., op.cit., p. 206.

176 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 684.

resources for resistance, his inability to establish contacts with non-Communists and to broadcast an appeal to his nation and finally the certainty that the West would not provide Czechoslovakia with any effective help coupled with the fear to cut-off his country completely from Russia and its help in case of a future German attack had completely overwhelmed, after having kept for five days postponing his decision, Beneš' ability to hold on any longer, and he had signed "the death warrant of Czechoslovak democracy... Having made the most painful decision of his whole life, Beneš left the Hradčany Castle never to return".[177]

---

177 Ibid. - For details about President Beneš' original intention to resign immediately after having had accepted the resignation of the democratic members of the Cabinet and his decision to change the word "departed" to "retired" from "the Prague Castle" in the official press communiqué, since "By doing so he wanted to indicate to the public, that from that moment on he wanted to have nothing to do with that what was happening in the state", see Smutný, J., op.cit., Vol. IV, pp. 165-173.

Epilogue

> For a long time I believed that Gottwald at least did not lie to me. But now I see that they all lie, without exception. It is a common matter with all Communists, especially the Russian ones. My greatest mistake was to refuse to believe that even Stalin lied to me cynically, both in 1935 and later, and that his assurances to me and to Masaryk were an intentional deceit.[1]

Beneš' final, bitter words exposing the true nature of the treacherous position held by the Czechoslovak Communists and especially by the Russians, in their dealings with himself, expressed in the clearest possible form the tragic climax of his more than quarter of a century-long efforts striving at establishing and maintaining close and friendly relations with Soviet Russia which had constituted, at the same time, his own political personality's as well as his country's, second disaster within a decade.[2] The veracity of Kramář's prophecy made at the time of Foreign Minister Beneš' final success in 1934 in his long-lasting, tireless endeavours to secure to Soviet Russia his country's

---

1 Beneš' message, written nine days before his death, to Táborský (The New York Times, January 7, 1949).

2 For more details on and some interesting comments in regard to, Beneš' role in the whole field of Czechoslovak-Soviet relations see: Cernicek, A.D., Czechoslovak-Russian Relations 1914-1948 in the Foreign Policy of Dr Edvard Beneš, MA Thesis, Department of History, University of Chicago, 1952, passim. An author stated that in regard to the events of February, 1948, "Beneš can be blamed mainly for misjudging the Communists and Soviet Russia. He misjudged them perhaps because he lacked the strength of character and the deep insight of his master, T.G. Masaryk. His errors of judgement were not the kind that would have been made by the man who founded the Republic on austere ethics and cultural, political and economic affinity to the West. In contrast thereto, Beneš tried to revive the Republic on a formula of mechanical

official recognition,[3] was fully vindicated by the events of February, 1948. Having decided "to cede to the terror of the street",[4] instigated and enhanced by Moscow, by accepting resignation of the democratic Ministers because "the state has to be administered and governed",[5] he had to witness his own contribution in the development brought about by the Communist tactics "which went against his whole life work",[6] and which had effectively destroyed the remnants of Masaryk's democracy of the First Republic. He understood that Zorin's presence in Prague in February, 1948 had de facto constituted the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia;[7] correctness of his understanding in this regard was proven by the second Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia two decades later.

---

balance between the forces of East and West. In place of moral conviction he placed agility in compromise; in place of wisdom, cleverness. An Englishman once called Beneš "the political mathematician". But Beneš, the mathematician, tried to square the circle..." (Schmidt, D.A., Anatomy of a Satellite, Boston, 1952, p. 136.)

3 In his dispatch 210 from Prague of June 14, 1934, Benton reported that leader of the Czechoslovak National Democratic Party, Dr Kramář had written in the Národní Listy, the official organ of his Party in regard to Czechoslovak recognition of Soviet Russia, that "the betrayal of the Slavs has finally taken place" and that "the Czechoslovak nation will dearly pay for their recognition of the Bolsheviks". (USDS, 760F.61/50).

4 Ducháček, J., op.cit., p. 42.

5 Beneš' statement to the new Gottwald Government on February 27, 1948 quoted by Smutný, J., op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 5.

6 Beneš' statement to the delegation of Czechoslovak generals - the very last audience given by him at the Prague Castle in his life on February 27, 1948 (Ibid., p. 5).

7 This point was emphasized to the author by the Minister of Nutrition in the Third Republic, Majer, during their talk in New York

The question of his failure to immediately resign from his Presidency subsequent to his acceptance of the new Gottwald Government on February 27, 1948 has become one of the several highly controversial issues that cannot be settled with absolute accuracy even today.[8] However, it would appear that in accord with his entire political behaviour, even after this disaster had become a fait accompli, Beneš was on the one hand still hoping that by employing "his old habit of negotiating, arguing and compromising"[9] he might somehow exercise a moderating influence on the brutalities of victorious Communists directed against their political opponents and the country as a whole, and on the other hand, he was awaiting an opportune time when his resignation, while not provoking civil war and direct Soviet military invasion with the inevitable bloodshed and final defeat of non-Communists, it would still clearly demonstrate his resolute, though vain, opposition to the Communist rule.[10]

City on November 15, 1970; it was openly admitted by the Czechoslovak Communists themselves, when Communist member of Parliament, Juna, publicly declared at Domažlice on April 11, 1948: "Today I can already tell you that anyone who thought that Zorin came to Czechoslovakia because of grain would be foolish. The reason for his being here was to watch that Americans did not cross the boundary. If they did, the Russians would have immediately entered our country!" (Czechoslovak Permanent Representative to the United Nations Organization, Papánek's testimony before the Security Council, given on May 21, 1948 - Official Records of the United Nations Security Council, III, May 21, 1948, p. 28).

Heidrich, the Secretary-General of the Czechoslovak Foreign Ministry during the Third Republic told Cernicek on May 15, 1949 that "President Beneš was much impressed by the significance of Zorin's visit". (Cernicek, A.D., op.cit., pp. 291-292).

8 See Skilling, H.G., "The Prague Overturn in 1948", p. 113.

9 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", p. 682.

10 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires at Prague, Macdonnell had reported early

His already feeble health kept on, in the meantime, deteriorating further. Following his retirement from the Prague Castle to his summer residence in Sezimovo Ústí on February 27, 1948, he was able to visit Prague on two occasions only: to attend briefly Jan Masaryk's funeral, and to give, with a great difficulty, since his voice almost broke down in several instances, the briefest speech of his entire political career, on the occasions of the six hundredth anniversary of the foundation of the Charles University of Prague.[11] The irreconcilable differences between him and the Communists climaxed in the provisions contained in the new Constitution written by the Communists: such an anti-democratic document he was determined not to sign, and he carried out this determination into practice by his resignation from the Presidency on June 7, 1948.[12]

---

in March, 1948, that while "rumors circulating in diplomatic circles show that Dr Beneš' position remained unchanged, there were beliefs that he contemplated resigning but will wait until some outrageous bill or other document requiring his signature, will come around, and then resign with as much publicity as can be obtained in a country where all the channels of information are in the hands of the Communists". Macdonnell also mentioned that correspondent of the London Times, Lias, believed that Dr Beneš would stay on and do what he could to slow up the Communists, and added that "in my opinion he can do very little". (CDEA, 7121-40).

11 For details about these visits see Josten, J., op.cit., pp. 217-218, and Smutný, J., op.cit., Vol. 5, pp. 20-25.

12 For details about the entire period of Beneš' presidency in Sezimovo Ústí between February 27, 1948 and June 7, 1948 see Smutný, J., op.cit., Vol. 5, passim.

In his telegram 70 of June 8, 1948, Macdonnell reported that President Beneš' resignation, which had been expected because of his refusal to sign the new Constitution, "represents belated and reluctant recognition by a sick man that to retain office since February was a mistake. It is a tragic end to a career of brilliant service to the nation..." (CDEA, 7121-40). See also Macdonnell's dispatch 132 from Prague of June 9, 1948

During the remaining brief period of his life, lasting less than quarter of a year, Beneš was constantly subjected to an enormous weight of mental torture - a kind of supreme spiritual crucifixion: he had to suffer torments caused by the feelings and realization of his own grave mistakes in regard to Soviet Russia, and personal guilt resulting therefrom due to his moral weaknesses and lack of moral indignation, and he was sentenced to helplessly watch the horrid drama of a new era of "darkness"[13] engulfing his country, when all what his teacher, predecessor and only true friend, T.G. Masaryk held sacred and what he had bestowed on him to maintain and safeguard at the time of his election to the Presidency in December, 1935, was being mercilessly destroyed, and its protagonists ruthlessly terrorized, by the Czechoslovak and Russian Communists.

---

on the same subject (Ibid.) For the provisions of this document see: Czechoslovakia, Ministry of Information and Public Culture, The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, Promulgated on June 9, 1948, Praha, 1948.

A Communist author who stated, in the usual Communist interpretation of history, that a Czechoslovak people "expressed its agreement with the Constitution" which brought about its unanimous approval in Parliament, had to admit that "Nevertheless there had risen one open voice of opposition against the Constitution - the voice of Dr Edvard Beneš. He had refused to sign the Constitution because it contained for him too much "socialism" and too little "democracy". The Constitution of 9th May signed, therefore, already new President Klement Gottwald..." (Kaplan, K., "Zakotvení výsledků únorového vítězství" in the ČSČH, Vol. X, 1962, p. 157).

13 The first era of "darkness" which engulfed the Czech nation for almost three centuries was described by the majority of Czech historians the period subsequent to the Czech defeat at the White Mountain in November, 1620.

While Beneš' early death had mercifully ended his excruciating agony, he died a bitter, heartbroken and lonely man: he was bitter towards those who destroyed his life-work and the very raison d'être of his own personality, and who kept on consistently lying to him throughout his entire political career - the Russians and the Czechoslovak Communists,[14] towards the West for having abandoned him and his country for the second time within a decade, towards the democratic Cabinet members who submitted their resignation on February 20, 1948[15] and then accused him of betraying their trust by having accepted their resignations although he had previously promised them on numerous occasions that he would never do so,[16] and, above all, towards himself

---

14 See n. 1 of this Epilogue.

15 As early as on March 7, 1948, President Beneš wrote in regard to the resignations of the Democratic Ministers in his own transcript of his talk with Gottwald of the same day underlining some of the words: "...That frivolity - what they had done-" and admitted that " - I - even I had committed errors, I should have never allowed that they would refuse to participate in the Government - though I have no right to order them to do so, but it should have occurred to me that this would climax in an irreconcilable conflict". (Smutný, J., op.cit., Vol. 5, p. 57).

16 It was reported that two weeks before his death, Beneš had sent abroad a counter-accusation against those democrats who had accused him of having failed them in February, 1948: "They are accusing me that I failed them, and I am accusing them that they failed me at the decisive moment. I was helpless without their promised intervention. When Gottwald had the Old Town Square full of bloodthirsty, up-to-their-teeth armed militia, I had expected that all others would gather on the Wenceslaus Square. But I was unable to imagine that they were lacking to such an extent organization and determination when the situation called for this measure. I believed that the demonstration of unarmed students would give the signal to general uprising. But when nobody moved, I was unable, after all, to allow that Gottwald's pugnacious hordes would commit mass-massacres on defenceless inhabitants of Prague. There were no limits in that, with what they threatened". (Peroutka, F., Byl Edvard Beneš vinen?, Paris, 1949, p. 26).

because he had felt, on his deathbed, that it was precisely by his own failure to strictly adhere to Masaryk's ideals of political philosophy in formulating his own policies, especially those in relations with Soviet Russia, that he had contributed greatly, if not entirely, to the occurrences of both disasters: his entire policy towards Soviet Russia constituted a curse on his political personality.

Táborský stated that during both disasters - Munich in 1938 and Communist Coup d'état in 1948 - Beneš had considered the situation "sub specie aeternitatis";[17] key to Beneš' tragedy is in the reality that his policy towards Soviet Russia was not based on those eternal philosophical elements and values which alone could be considered "sub specie aeternitatis" in regard to the well-being of his nation: instead, this policy was based on his own and his nation's extreme reaction to Munich, shallow principles of expediency, wishful thinking and unjustifiable and unwarranted association with that type of ruthless, backward and despotic state, the very existence of which presented to his own country mortal danger. In the short run, this policy might have seemed to be at times of benefit and to constitute a wise course to follow but, in the long run, it was bound to result, as it has indeed resulted, in the disaster for both its architect and protagonist on the one hand, and his country on the other hand.

---

17 Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", pp. 673 and 684.

The horrors of Beneš' funeral[18] and the subsequent Communist attacks on his personality which were initiated by the Russians[19] demonstrated only too clearly the magnitude of Moscow's treachery towards the man who had devoted most of his career for the realization of lasting and friendly East-West relations in general, and of Czechoslovak-Russian relations in particular, and who had stood for years almost alone in defending and justifying policies of the Kremlin. Moscow's gratitude to him and his country proved that good relations with Soviet Russia are governed only by the latter's imperialistic aims and policies and can arbitrarily and brutally be terminated at its whim. President Beneš' tragedy bears witness to this indisputable reality.

It was precisely, and solely, this Moscow's brutal interference into the Czechoslovak internal affairs that made the Communist Coup d'état possible and successful. Neither Beneš, mortally wounded by Munich, nor his entire nation, devastated in a similar manner by that

---

18 Canadian Chargé d'Affaires Macdonnell enclosed to his dispatch 211 from Prague of September 15, 1948, dealing with President Beneš' funeral in which he mentioned that "fear of incurring Moscow's anger" and "great pressure from Moscow on the satellites these days to deal ruthlessly with any manifestation of heresy or heterodoxy" were mainly responsible for "the strict security arrangements and particularly the calling out of the slovenly and nondescript workers' militia", Irwin's memorandum from Prague of September 11, 1948 entitled "Funeral of President Edvard Beneš" in which the writer who had represented, in Macdonnell's absence from Prague, Canada at this funeral, described in detail the ugly scenes caused by Communist riff-raffs and hordes of militia who "were dirty, unkept and often unshaven", and added that "such consistency in slovenliness, I thought, could only have been obtained by express orders".

19 See Josten, J., op.cit., pp. 227-228.

disaster of 1938, were capable a decade later to resolutely accomplish their objectives - the Czechoslovak Communists were no exception to this rule and felt themselves this reality throughout 1946 and 1947. The first Canadian diplomat stationed in Prague who had not personally and intimately known the Czech spirit prior to Munich, had perhaps perceived this tragic inability of the Czechs to accomplish their goals in 1948 since they were still overwhelmed by the evil spirit of Munich. Commenting on the extremely tight security measures taken by the Communists on the occasion of Beneš' funeral which he had considered "probably unnecessary" because he thought it "extremely doubtful that any real threat to the stability of the regime could have been organized under cover of the funeral", he had poignantly added: "Demonstrations there would have been, but typically Czech demonstrations in being long on words and sentiments and short on accomplishments".[20]

Only an open intervention of a Great Power from without, was capable of destroying the uneasy balance existing within the country between the Communist minority and the non-Communist majority. Such an intervention had unfortunately come in February, 1948 from the Kremlin and swiftly translated not only the Czechoslovak Communists', but also its own, objectives into reality; had the United States decided at that time to provide President Beneš and the vast majority of the Czechoslovak people with its all-out support, the latter would have been able to

---

20 Macdonnell's dispatch 211 from Prague of September 15, 1948.

swiftly arrive, in a similar fashion, at the objective of reestablishing a truly democratic Czechoslovakia. However, it was President Beneš' and his country's tragic fate to again be abandoned by the West: in relation with this political reality of overruling, primary importance, the questions relating to President Beneš' February, 1948 political behaviour in general, and his leadership and health in particular, constitute matters of secondary importance and concern since they alone were unable to prevent or at least to change the disastrous outcome of the February 1948 crisis which had spelled for him and for Czech democracy the death sentence.

Bibliography[1]

1. Unpublished Documents, Manuscripts and Theses

Canada

(a) External Affairs Records - Files 7121-40, 8676-40 and 9201-40C.

(b) Public Archives of Canada - Files 53-TK-40 and 53-TQ-40C (Container 71/69).

Germany

Bundesarchiv Reichskanzlei, Koblenz, R58/983, R 431/149-154.

Great Britain

Public Record Office: British Cabinet Papers, 1935-1945;
British Foreign Office - General Correspondence Files, FO 371/ series, 1935-1940.

United States

(a) Library of Congress - Manuscripts Division:

(i) Thomas Čapek Papers;
(ii) Wilbur J. Carr Papers;
(iii) William E. Dodd Papers;
(iv) Cordell Hull Papers;
(v) Edward O. Tabor Papers.

---

1 This bibliography lists only the most important and relevant material which the author deemed essential to include; to list all the material he has explored on the subject of this study during the past decade would have resulted in an incomparably more voluminous bibliography covering several hundred pages. The author endeavoured, however, to list most of the sources to which he has referred in the text of this study; many of the books and published documents have already been listed in footnotes at the beginning of various Chapters, sections and sub-sections of this study and have not, therefore, been listed again.

(b) National Archives:

(i) Captured German Documents (Microfilmed documents of the German Foreign Ministry, and other documents found in the possession of Germany at the end of World War II);
(ii) Department of State's Documents, Record Group 59, Purport Book 623, 1934-1943;
(iii) The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park, New York, PPF 445, 9-2, 2259, 200P, 4928, 3000, 5952, 6011 and 7180.

(c) University of California at Berkeley: The Masaryk-Beneš Collection.

(d) University of Chicago:

(i) Chamberlain, L.I., The Circumstances Surrounding the Coup d'Etat in Czechoslovakia in 1948, 1950;
(ii) Cernicek, A.D., Czechoslovak-Russian Relations 1914-48 in the Foreign Policy of Dr Edvard Beneš, 1952;
(iii) Evans, K.P., The Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia, 1935;
(iv) Lansing, A.E., Czechoslovakia's Foreign Policy 1939-45, 1951;
(v) Weintraub, B., Czechoslovakia and the Runciman Mission, 1951.

(e) University of Texas at Austin:

Hayes, B.B., The Fall of Czechoslovakia, 1938-1939, 1958.

2. Published Documents

Beneš, E., Problémy nové Evropy a zahraniční politika československá, Praha, 1924.

Beneš, E., Šest let exilu a druhé světové války, London, 1945.

Berber, F., ed., Europaeische Politik 1933-38 im Spiegel der Prager Akten, Essen, 1942.

British Blue Books: Protocols Determining the Frontiers Between Germany and Czechoslovakia, 1938.

British White Papers: Correspondence Respecting Czechoslovakia, 1938;

British White Papers: Further Documents Respecting Czechoslovakia, Including the Agreement Concluded at Munich on September 29, 1938, 1938.

Czechoslovak Republic: Czechoslovak Sources and Documents (the complete series published during the First Republic, and during World War II abroad);

Czechoslovak Republic, Ministry of Information: Na prahu dvouletky, 1947;

" " " " " : Nationalization in Czechoslovakia, 1946;

Czechoslovak Republic, Ministry of Information: Program prvé domácí vlády republiky, vlády Národní Fronty Čechů a Slováků, 1945;

Czechoslovak Republic, Ministry of Information: The Constitution of the Czechoslovak Republic, Promulgated on June 9, 1948, 1948;

Documents on British Foreign Policy, Third Series, Vols. I-IV (March 9, 1938 - April 3, 1939), London, 1949-1951.

Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Woodward, E.L., and Butler, R., eds., London, 1949-50.

Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, Series C (1933-37) London, 1957-1962, Series D, (Vols. I-IV, 1937-1939), Washington 1949-1951.

Dokumenty z historie československé politiky 1939-1943, Otahálová, L. and Červinková, M., eds., Praha, 1966, 2 Vols.

Edvard Beneš a Malá Dohoda, Praha, 1934.

Edvard Beneš als Politiker, Praha, 1934.

Edvard Beneš, Gedanke und Tat, Praha, 1937, 3 Vols.
Fischer, J.L., Proti Mnichovu, Brno, 1968.
Edvard Beneš in His Own Words, New York, 1944.

Hlavní město Praha Dr Edvardovi Benešovi, Praha, 1945.

House of Commons, Canada, Official Report of Debates, Fourth Session, Nineteenth Parliament, Vol. IV, 1943 (June 3, 1943).

Král, V. ed., Cesta ke květnu, Praha, 1965, 2 Vols.

Král, V. ed., Cestou k únoru, Praha, 1963.

Král, V. ed., Politické strany a Mnichov, Praha, 1962.

Mnichov v dokumentech, Praha, 1958, 2 Vols.

Německý imperialism proti ČSR (1918-1939), Gajan, K., ed., Praha, 1962.

New Documents on the History of Munich, Praha, 1958.

Official Record of the Trial of the Major War Criminals Before the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, London, 1947-1949.

Padesát let Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1934.

Pocta k šedesátým narozeninám Dr Edvarda Beneše, London, 1944.

République Française: Le livre jaune Français, Documents Diplomatiques 1938-39, Paris, 1939.

Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích poslanecké sněmovny Národního shromáždění republiky Československé, Praha, 1935-38.

Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích Prozatimního Národního shromáždění republiky Československé, Praha, 1946.

Těsnopisecké zprávy o schůzích Ústavodárného Národního shromáždění republiky Československé, Praha, 1946-48.

Únor 1948, Bouček, M., ed., Praha, 1958.

3. Books

Alexandrov, V., The Tukhachevsky Affair, London, 1963.

Beck, J., Dernier Rapport, Neuchâtel, 1952.

Beckman, R., K diplomatickému pozadí Mnichova: kapitoly o britské mnichovské politice, Praha, 1954.

Beloff, M., The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia, London, 1949, 2 Vols.

Beneš, B., Czechoslovakia, its Sacrifice and Future, Chicago, 1939.

Beneš, E., Armáda, brannost národa a obrana státu, Praha, 1937.

" " , Bohemia's Case For Independence, London, 1917.

" " , Boj o mír a bezpečnost státu, Praha, 1934.

" " , Building a New Europe, London, 1939.

" " , Christmas Message 1936, Praha, 1937.

" " , Czechoslovak Policy For Victory and Peace, London, 1944.

" " , Czechoslovakia's Second Struggle For Freedom, London, 1941.

" " , Czechoslovakia's Struggle For Freedom, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 1941.

Beneš, E., Das Oesterreichisch - Deutsche Abkommen, Praha, 1931.

" " , Demokracie dnes a zítra, Praha, 1948.

" " , Democracy Today and Tomorrow, New York, 1939.

" " , Der Aufstand der Nationen, Berlin, 1928.

" " , Der Praesident in Suedboehmen, Praha, 1937.

" " , Détruisez l'Autriche-Hongrie!, Paris, 1916.

" " , Deux Conférences sur T.G. Masaryk, Praha, 1936.

Beneš, E., Die Aktuellen Internationalen Probleme und die Tschechoslovakei, Praha, 1928.

Beneš, E., Die Internationale Lage und die Tschechoslovakische Aussenpolitik, Praha, 1928.

Beneš, E., Dvě řeči Presidenta republiky k mládeži, Praha, 1938.

" " , Five Years of Czechoslovak Foreign Policy, Praha, 1924.

" " , Future of the Small Nations and the Idea of Federation, New York, 1942.

Beneš, E., German Imperialism and Czechoslovakia, London, 1943.

" " , Germany and Czechoslovakia, Praha, 1937, 2 Vols.

" " , Germany's Retreat in Russia, London, 1943.

" " , International Security, Chicago, 1939.

" " , L'Accord Austro-Allemand, Praha, 1931.

" " , La Conférence de Gênes, Praha, 1922.

" " , La France et la Nouvelle Europe, Paris, 1932.

" " , La Question du Directoire Européen et la revision des Frontières, Praha, 1933.

Beneš, E., La Problème Autrichien et la Question Tchèque, Paris, 1908.

" " , La Révolution Allemande et la Nouvelle Phase de la Politique Européenne, Praha, 1933.

Beneš, E., La situation internationale, Praha, 1923.

" " , La Situation Internationale et la Politique Etrangère Tchécoslovaque, Praha, 1928.

Beneš, E., Le Dilemme Européen: La Guerre ou la Paix?, Praha, 1932.

" " , Le Pacte D'Organisation de la Petite Entente, Praha, 1933.

" " , Le programme du Nouveau Cabinet tchécoslovaque, Praha, 1921.

Beneš, E., Le Socialisme Autrichien, Paris, 1915.

" " , Les Problèmes de L'Europe Centrale, Praha, 1932.

" " , Les Problèmes Internationaux Actuels et la Tchécoslovaquie, Praha, 1928.

Beneš, E., London and Social Conditions in England, Praha, 1943.

" " , Masarykovo pojetí idejе národní a Problém jednoty československé, Bratislava, 1935.

" " , Masaryk's Path and Legacy, Praha, 1937.

" " , Masaryk's Weg und Vermaechtnis, Praha, 1937.

" " , Memoirs, London, 1954.

" " , Mnichovské dny, London, 1955.

" " , Mnichovské dny, Praha, 1968.

" " , My Fears and My Hopes, Cardiff, 1940.

" " , My War Memoirs, London, 1928.

" " , Na cestě k vítězství, London, 1944.

" " , Na prahy dvouletky, Praha, 1947.

" " , Naš boj o osvobození republiky, London, 1941.

" " , Naše politická práce v druhém a třetím roce války, London, 1942.

Beneš, E., Naše politické vzdělání a potřeba vysoké školy sociálně-politické, Brandýs nad Labem, 1910.

Beneš, E., Nazi Barbarism in Czechoslovakia, London, 1940.

" " , Nová slovanská politika, Praha, 1946.

" " , O budoucnosti hlavního města Prahy, Praha, 1936.

" " , Official Wartime Visit to the United States and Canada in 1943, New York, 1944.

Beneš, E., On War and Peace, New York, 1943.

Beneš, E., Otázka národnostní, Praha, 1909.

" " , Où vont les Slaves?, Paris, 1948.

" " , Paměti, Praha, 1947.

" " , Podmínky úspěšného života, Praha, 1938.

" " , Poslání Vojenského Historického Ústavu, Praha, 1947.

" " , Povaha politického stranictví, Praha, 1920.

" " , Právna veda a kríza demokracie, Praha, 1937.

" " , Principy a předpoklady naší zahraniční politiky, Praha, 1931.

Beneš, E., Problém alkoholové výroby a abstinence, Praha, 1915.

" " , Probleme der Tschechoslovakischen Republik, Praha, 1937.

" " , Problèmes de la Tchéchoslovaquie, Praha, 1936.

" " , Problémy nové Evropy a zahraniční politika československá, Praha, 1924.

Beneš, E., Pro čistotu veřejného života, Praha, 1926.

" " , Projev na sjezdu českých spisovatelů v červnu 1946 v Praze, Praha, 1946.

Beneš, E., Promotion solennelle du Prof. E. Beneš, Praha, 1946.

" " , Reč k Slovákom, Bratislava, 1934.

" " , Reč o Podkarpatoruskoi probleme, Praha, 1934.

" " , Rede an die Deutschen in der ČSR, Praha, 1935.

" " , Réponse faite par M. Beneš à la Séance de la Chambre du 30 mai 1922, Praha, 1922.

Beneš, E., Slovanské úvahy, Praha, 1946.

" " , Sociologická revue československá, Brno, 1930.

" " , Souvenirs de Guerre et de Révolution, Paris, 1928.

Beneš, E., Speech Delivered on the Old Town Square, Prague, on His Return to Czechoslovakia on May 16, 1945, Praha, 1945.

Beneš, E., Stranictví, Brandýs nad Labem, 1912.

" " , Stručný nástin vývoje moderního socialismu, Brandýs nad Labem, 1910-11, 4 Vols.

Beneš, E., Světová Krise, kontinuita práva a nové právo revoluční, Praha, 1946.

Beneš, E., Světová válka a naše revoluce, Praha, 1927-35, 3 Vols.

" " , The Austro-German Customs Union Project, Praha, 1931.

" " , The Diplomatic Struggle For European Security and the Stabilization of Peace, Praha, 1925.

Beneš, E., The Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia, Praha, 1921.

" " , The Future of Europe, Chicago, 1943.

" " , The Opening of the Prague Parliament on October 28, 1945, Praha, 1946.

Beneš, E., The Organization of Postwar Europe, New York, 1942.

" " , The Problem of Central Europe and the Austrian Question, Praha, 1934.

Beneš, E., The Problem of the Small Nations After the World War, London, 1926.

Beneš, E., The Struggle For Collective Security in Europe, Praha, 1935.

" " , The Struggle For the Liberation of the Republic and the Rehabilitation of the State, New York, 1945.

Beneš, E., The Way to Victory, London, 1942.

" " , To the Youth of the United Nations, London, 1943.

" " , Towards a Lasting Peace, London, 1942.

" " , Tři roky druhé světové války, London, 1943.

" " , Une nouvelle phase de la lutte pour l'équilibre européen, Praha, 1934.

Beneš, E., Úvahy o slovanství, London, 1945.

" " , Válka a kultura, Praha, 1922.

" " , Vers un regroupement des forces en Europe?, Praha, 1934.

" " , Vojáci československé republiky, London, 1940.

" " , What Would be a Good Peace?, London, 1943.

" " , Zavazuji Vás, Brno, 1948.

Beneš, K.J., ed., Za svobodu - Do nové československé republiky, Praha, 1945.

Beneš, V., Ten Million Prisoners, Chicago, 1940.

Beneš, V., The Mission of a Small Nation, Chicago, 1941.

Beneš, V., The Vanguard of the "Drang nach Osten", Chicago, 1943.

Berdych, F., Obrana státu a naše politické strany, Praha, 1938.

Betts, R.R., ed., Central and South East Europe, 1945-1948, London, 1950.

Beuer, G., Berlin or Prague, London, 1943.

Beuer, G., New Czechoslovakia and Her Historical Background, London, 1947.

Bittner, K., Deutsche und Tschechen, Leipzig, 1936.

Bolton, G., Czech Tragedy, London, 1955.

Bonnet, G., Défense de la paix: I-De Washington au Quay d'Orsay, Geneva, 1948.

Borovička, J., Ten Years of Czechoslovak Politics, Prague, 1929.

Bouček, M.J., Československá tragedie, Chicago, 1956.

Boura, F., O ústavě 9. května, Praha, 1951.

Brown, J., Who's Next? - The Lesson of Czechoslovakia, London, 1951.

Brügel, J.W., Tschechen und Deutsche 1918-1938, Munich, 1967.

Budník, J., Prozatimní státní zřízení Československé republiky, Praha, 1947.

Buk, P., La Tragédie tchécoslovaque de septembre 1938 à mars 1939, Paris, 1939.

Bušek, V. and Spulber, N., eds., Czechoslovakia, New York, 1957.

Bušek, V., Poučení z únorového převratu, New York, 1954.

Čapek, K., et al., At the Cross-Roads of Europe, Prague, 1938.

Čapek, K., Masaryk Tells His Story, London, 1936.

Čapek, M., A Key to Czechoslovakia - The Territory of Kladsko, New York, 1946.

Čapek, T., ed., Bohemia Under Hapsburg Misrule, New York, 1915.

Čapek, T., Origins of the Czechoslovak State, New York, 1926.

Carr, E.H., German-Soviet Relations Between the Two World Wars 1919-1939, Baltimore, 1951.

Carr, E.H., The Soviet Impact on the Western World, London, 1946.

Carr, E.H., The Twenty Years' Crisis, New York, 1939.

Čelovský, B., Das Muenchener Abkommen von 1938, Stuttgart, 1958.

Chmelař, J., National Minorities in Central Europe, Prague, 1937.

Chmelař, J., Political Parties in Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1926.

Chmelař, J., The German Problem in Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1936.

Churchill, W., The Second World War, Boston, 1948, 6 Vols.

Císař, J., et al., The Czechoslovak Republic, London, 1922.

Clementis, V., Panslavism, Past and Present, London, 1943.

Coulondre, R., Von Moskau nach Berlin, Bonn, 1950.

Crabités, P., Beneš, Statesman of Central Europe, London, 1935.

Craig, G.A., and Gilbert, F., eds., The Diplomats 1919-1939, Princeton, 1953.

Dallin, D.J., The New Soviet Empire, New Haven, 1951.

Daniel, H., The Ordeal of the Captive Nations, New York, 1958.

Davenport, M., Too Strong For Fantasy, New York, 1968.

Davies, J.E., Mission to Moscow, New York, 1941.

Dean, V.M., Europe in Retreat, New York, 1939.

Dean, V.M., The United States and Russia, Cambridge, 1947.

Deane, J.R., Strange Alliance, New York, 1947.

Dérer, I., The Unity of the Czechs and Slovaks, Prague, 1938.

Descotes, M., Aspects de la Tchécoslovaquie, Paris, 1948.

Diamond, W., Czechoslovakia Between East and West, London, 1947.

Dodd, W.E., Ambassador Dodd's Diary 1933-38, New York, 1941.

Drábek, J., Z časů nedlouho zašlých, Řím, 1967.

Druce, G., Czechoslovakia - Past and Present, Prague, 1948.

Drtina, P., Hitler Contra Beneš, London, 1942.

Ducháček, I., The Strategy of Communist Infiltration: The Case of Czechoslovakia, New Haven, 1949.

Eisenmann, L., Un grand Européen: Edouard Beneš, Paris, 1934.

Eisner, K., The "Unknown" Little Democracy, Toronto, 1945.

Erdely, E.V., Germany's First Protectorate, London, 1942.

Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládách Druhé republiky, New York, 1961.

Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě Protektorátu, New York, 1962.

Feierabend, L.K., Z vlády doma do vlády v exilu, New York, 1964.

Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě v Exilu I, Washington, 1965.

Feierabend, L.K., Ve vládě v Exilu II, Washington, 1966.

Feierabend, L.K., Beneš mezi Washingtonem a Moskvou, Washington, 1966.

Feierabend, L.K., Soumrak Československé demokracie, Washington, 1967.

Feierabend, L.K., Pod vládou Národní Fronty, Washington, 1968.

Fierlinger, Z., Od Mnichova po Košice, Praha, 1946.

Fierlinger, Z., Ve službách ČSR, Praha, 1947-48, 2 Vols.

Foustka, R.N., Život, dílo a příklad Dr Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1946.

Frank, K.H., Čechy a Morava v Říši, Praha, 1942.

François-Poncet, A., The Fateful Years, New York, 1949.

Friedman, O., The Breakup of Czech Democracy, London, 1950.

Gadourek, J., The Political Control of Czechoslovakia, Leiden, 1953.

Gajanová, A., ČSR a středoevropská politika velmocí 1919-1938, Praha, 1967.

Garaj, J.K., Slováci a Češi, Praha, 1946.

Gedye, G., E.R., Betrayal in Central Europe: Austria and Czechoslovakia - The Fallen Bastions, New York, 1939.

Glaser, K., Die Tschechoslowakei, Frankfurt am Main, 1964.

Gluckstein, Stalin's Satellites in Europe, Boston, 1952.

Goldman, J., Czechoslovakia: Test Case of Nationalization, Prague, 1947.

Gottwald, K., Deset let, Praha, 1949.

Gottwald, 1946-1948, Praha, 1949, 2 Vols.

Gottwald, K., Kupředu, zpátky ni krok, Praha, 1948.

Gottwald, K., O československé zahraniční politice, Praha, 1948.

Gottwald, K., Od února na cestě k socialismu, Praha, 1948.

Gottwald, K., Na prahu dvouletky, Praha, 1947.

Grant-Duff, S., A German Protectorate: The Czechs Under Nazi Rule, New York, 1942.

Grant-Duff, S., et al., Czechoslovakia: Six Studies in Reconstruction, London, 1947.

Grant-Duff, S., Europe and The Czechs, New York, 1938.

Grant-Duff, S., German and Czech, London, 1937.

Hadley, W.W., Munich: Before and After, London, 1944.

Hajšman, J., Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1946.

Halasz, N., In the Shadow of Russia - Eastern Europe in the Postwar World, New York, 1959.

Hartl, A., ed., Edvard Beneš - Filosof a státník, Praha, 1937.

Heidrich, A., International Political Causes of the Czechoslovak Tragedies of 1938 and 1948, Washington, 1962.

Henderson, N., Failure of a Mission, New York, 1941.

Herben, I. and Třešňák, F., Padesát let, Toronto, 1968.

Hindus, M., The Bright Passage, New York, 1947.

Hindus, M., We Shall Live Again, New York, 1939.

Hitchcock, E.B., Beneš: The Man and the Statesman, London, 1940.

Hitchcock, E.B., I Built a Temple For Peace, New York, 1940.

Hník, F. M., Edvard Beneš - Filosof Demokracie, Praha, 1945.

Hoch, K., Political Parties in Czechoslovakia, Prague, 1936.

Hoch, K., et al., World Peace and Czechoslovakia, London, 1936.

Hosák, L., Nové československé dějiny, Praha, 1947.

Hronek, J., Černá Kniha Heydrichova režimu, London, 1942.

Hronek, J., Volcano Under Hitler, London, 1941.

Husák, Gustav, Svědectví o Slovenském národním povstání, Praha, 1970.

Hutton, G., Survey After Munich, New York, 1939.

Jablonický, J., Z ilegality do povstánia, Bratislava, 1969.

Janáček, F., ed., Národní fronta a komunisté, Praha, 1968.

Jakovenko, B., Edvard Beneš als Denker, Praha, 1935.

Jakovenko, B., La bibliographie d'Edouard Beneš, Prague, 1936.

Jaroš, V., ed., Šest let okupace Prahy, Praha, 1946.

Jaksch, W., Benesch war gewarnt!, Munich, 1949.

Josten, J., Oh, My Country, London, 1949.

Kaplan, M.A., The Communist Coup in Czechoslovakia, Princeton, 1960.

Kapras, J., et al., Idea Československého státu, Praha, 1936, 2 Vols.

Kapras, J., President Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1936.

Karlagren, A., Henlein, Hitler a československá tragedie, Praha, 1945.

Kennan, G.F., From Prague After Munich, Princeton, 1968.

Kerner, R., ed., Czechoslovakia: Twenty Years of Independence, Berkeley, 1940.

Kerr, W., Behind the Iron Curtain, New York, 1947.

Kertesz, S.D., ed., The Fate of East Central Europe, South Bend, 1956.

Kettner, P. et al., President Dr Edvard Beneš po prvé v našem pohraničí, Karlovy Vary, 1947.

Klátil, F., Beneš o dnešku a zítřku, London, 1945.

Klátil, F., President, vláda a lid v boji o svobodu, London, 1945.

Klenková, H., Náš president, Praha, 1947.

Korbel, J., The Communist Subversion of Czechoslovakia 1938-1948, Princeton, 1959.

Kordt, E., Nicht aus den Akten, Stuttgart, 1950.

Kordt, E., Wahn und Wirklichkeit, Stuttgart, 1947.

Kotrlý, J., et al., Pražské povstání 1945, Washington, 1965.

Král, V., O Masarykově a Benešově kontrarevoluční protisovětské politice, Praha, 1953.

Kramář, K., Kramářův soud nad Benešem, Praha, 1938.

Krejčí, A., Sokolství Dr Edvarda Beneše, Praha, 1948.

Krofta, K., A Short History of Czechoslovakia, London, 1935.

Krofta, K., Československo v mezinárodní politice, Praha, 1934.

Krofta, K., Czechoslovakia and the Crisis of Collective Security, Prague, 1936.

Krofta, K., Das Deutschtum in der tschechoslowakischen Geschichte, Praha, 1936.

Krofta, K., La Tchécoslovaquie et la Petite Entente dans la politique actuelle de l'Europe, Praha, 1937.

Krofta, K., Národnostní vývoj zemí Československých, Praha, 1934.

Krofta, K., The Germans in the Czechoslovak Republic, Prague, 1937.

Krofta, K., Z dob naší první republiky, Praha, 1939.

Křen, J., Do emigrace, Praha, 1963.

Křen, J., V emigraci, Praha, 1969.

Kubka, F., Mezi válkami, Praha, 1969.

Kuchynka, J., President Budovatel, Třebechovice pod Orebem, 1948.

Kuhn, H., Tschechoslowakei, Nuremberg, 1965.

Kýbal, V., Origines diplomatiques de l'état Tchécoslovaque, Praha, 1929.

Lamatsch, P., Prager Tragedie, Munich, 1967.

Laštovička, B., V Londýně za války, Praha, 1960.

Laušman, B., Kdo byl vinen?, Vienna, 1953.

Lavergne, B., Munich, défaite des démocraties, Paris, 1939.

Lažnovský, K., Ein Tscheche ueber das Benesch-Regime, Praha, 1940.

Lažnovský, K., Říše a my, Praha, 1941.

Lechner, O., A Great Czechoslovakian, Torquay, 1945.

Lennhoff, E., In Defence of Dr Beneš and Czech Democracy, London, 1938.

Lias, G., Beneš of Czechoslovakia, London, 1940.

Litvinov, M., Note For a Journal, New York, 1955.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., Guns or Butter?, London, 1939.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., Jan Masaryk, London, 1956.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., Ústup z Prahy, London, 1950.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., What Happened to the Czechs?, London, 1953.

Lvová, M., Mnichov a Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1968.

Luža, R., The Transfer of the Sudeten Germans, London, 1964.

Machray, R., The Struggle for the Danube and the Little Entente, 1929-1938, London, 1938.

Mackenzie, C., Dr Beneš, London, 1946.

Mackworth, C., Czechoslovakia Fights Back, London, 1942.

Malypetr, J., et al., Armáda a národ, Praha, 1938.

Masaryk, J., Speaking to My Country, London, 1941.

Masaryk, J., Statement on the Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia, on March 20, 1947, Prague, 1947.

Masaryk, T.G., The Making of a State: Memories and Observations, 1914-1918, London, 1927.

Masaryk, T.G., The New Europe, New York, 1918.

Masaryk, T.G., The Spirit of Russia, London, Second Edition,1955, 2 Vols.

Maugham, V., The Truth About the Munich Crisis, London, 1944.

Moravec, E., Das Ende der Benesch - Republik, Praha, 1941.

Moravec, E., O smyslu dnešní války, Praha, 1941.

Moravec, E., The Strategic Importance of Czechoslovakia for Western Europe, Prague, 1936.

Munzer, Z. and J., We Were and We Shall Be, New York, 1941.

Němec, F. and Moudrý, V., The Soviet Seizure of Subcarpathian Ruthenia, Toronto, 1955.

Obrátil, K.J., Čítanka Dr Edvarda Beneše, Brno, 1936.

Odložilík, O., Masaryk's Idea of Democracy, New York, 1952.

Opat, J., O novou demokracii 1945-1948, Praha, 1966.

Opočenský, J., ed., Edvard Beneš, London, 1944.

Opočenský, J., The Collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the Rise of the Czechoslovak State, Prague, 1928.

Paneth, P., Edvard Beneš - A Leader of Democracy, London, 1944.

Papánek, J., Czechoslovakia, New York, 1945.

Papoušek, J., Czechoslovakia, Soviet Russia and Germany, Prague, 1936.

Papoušek, J., Dr Edvard Beneš - Sein Leben, Praha, 1937.

Pekař, J., Smysl českých dějin, Praha, 1936.

Perman, D., The Shaping of the Czechoslovak State, Leiden, 1962.

Peroutka, F., Budování státu, Praha, 1933-1936, 4 Vols.

Peroutka, F., Byl Edvard Beneš vinen?, Paris, 1949.

Polák, F., Jak došlo k nastolení komunistické diktatury v Československu, New York, 1968.

Polák, F., Mnichovská tragedie, New York, 1966.

Polisenský, J.V., History of Czechoslovakia in Outline, Prague, 1947.

Pollzien, G., Dr Edvard Benesch, Munich, 1948.

Potěmkin, V.V., ed., Histoire de la Diplomatie, Paris, 1946-47.

Pulec, F. Země mluví, Brno, 1946.

Radl, E., Der Kampf zwischen Deutschen und Tschechen, Liberec, 1928.

Ripka, H., Československo - sovětská smlouva, London, 1944.

Ripka, H., Czechoslovakia Enslaved: The Story of the Communist Coup d'Etat, London, 1950.

Ripka, H., East and West, London, 1944.

Ripka, H., Eastern Europe in the Post-War World, London, 1961.

Ripka, H., Le coup de Prague, Paris, 1949.

Ripka, H., Likvidace Mnichova, London, 1942.

Ripka, H., Munich: Before and After, London, 1939.

Ripka, H., The Problems of Central Europe, London, 1943.

Ripka, H., Russia and the West, London, 1942.

Ripka, H., Small and Great Nations, London, 1944.

Ripka, H., The Future of the Czechoslovak Germans, London, 1944.

Ripka, H., The Repudiation of Munich, London, 1943.

Ripka, H., The Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaty, London, 1943.

Rotnágl, J., Češi a Slováci, Praha, 1945.

Šalda, F.X. ed., Dr Edvard Beneš ve Fotografii, Praha, 1946.

Schmidt, D.A., Anatomy of a Satellite, Boston, 1952.

Schwarz, F., Dr Beneš o vojně před válkou i za ní, London, 1942.

Seton-Watson, H., Eastern Europe Between the Wars: 1918-1941, Cambridge, 1945.

Seton-Watson, H., The East European Revolution, London, 1950.

Seton-Watson, H., The Pattern of Communist Revolution, London, 1960.

Seton-Watson, R., From Munich to Danzig, London, 1939.

Seton-Watson, R., A History of the Czechs and Slovaks, London, 1943.

Seton-Watson, R.W., Munich and the Dictators, London, 1939.

Seton-Watson, R.W., Twenty Five Years of Czechoslovakia, London, 1945.

Silberstein, L., Kaempfende Vernunft - Das Beispiel von Masaryk und Beneš, Prag, 1937.

Smutný, J., Němci v Československu a jich odsun z republiky, London, 1956.

Smutný, J., Únorový převrat 1948, London, 1953-57, 5 Vols.

Smutný, J. et al., K Slovenské otázce v Československu, London, 1952.

Sobota, E., et al., Československý president, Praha, 1934.

Sobota, E., Co to byl Protektorát, Praha, 1946.

Spurný, G., Únorové dny, Praha, 1958.

Šrámek, J., Politické projevy v zahraničí, Praha, 1945.

Stocký, J., Der Präsident in Suedboehmen am 6.-8. Mai 1937, Praha, 1937.

Stránský, J., East Wind over Prague, London, 1950.

Stránský, J., et al., Úvahy k čtyřicátému výročí republiky, London, 1958.

Stránský, J., et al., 70. výročí narozenin Dr E. Beneše, London, 1954.

Stroh, H., Der Grosse Europaer - Edvard Beneš, Moravská Ostrava, 1938.

Svátek, R., O smysl českých dějin, New York, 1963.

Svoboda, A., et al., Jak to bylo v únoru, Praha, 1949.

Sychrava, L., Dr Edvard Beneš v boji o Československou samostatnost, London, 1950.

Svoják, V., ed., O Československé zahraniční politice 1918-1939, Praha, 1960.

Sychrava, L., Svědectví a úvahy a Pražském převratu v únoru 1948, London, 1952.

Táborský, E., Communism in Czechoslovakia 1948-1960, Princeton, 1961.

Táborský, E., Conformity Under Communism, Washington, 1958.

Táborský, E., Czechoslovak Democracy at Work, London, 1945.

Táborský, E., Naše nová ústava, Praha, 1948.

Táborský, E., O novou demokracii, Praha, 1945.

Táborský, E., "Political Science in Czechoslovakia" in The Czechoslovak Contribution to World Culture, Rechcígl, M., ed., The Hague 1964, pp. 277-282.

Táborský, E., The Czechoslovak Cause, London, 1944.

Thomson, H.S., Czechoslovakia in European History, Princeton, 1953.

Uhlíř, F., O nové Československo, London, 1943.

Uhlíř, F., Prague and Berlin, 1918-1938, London, 1944.

Urban, J.F. ed., President Dr Edvard Beneš, Praha, 1946.

Vajtauer, E., Češi v nové Evropě, Praha, 1942.

Vávra, R., et al., Slovenské národní povstání, Praha, 1945.

Veselý, J., Kronika únorových dnů 1948, Praha, 1958.

Vondráček, F.J., Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia 1918-1935, New York, 1937.

Wandycz, P.S., Czechoslovak-Polish Confederation and the Great Powers 1940-43, Bloomington, Indiana, 1956.

Weil, F., Das Werden eines Volkes und der Weg eines Mannes: Edvard Beneš, Dresden, 1930.

Werstadt, J., Dr Edvard Beneš, spoluzakladatel nové svobody a tvůrce zahraniční politiky československé, Praha, 1924.

Werner, A., Edvard Beneš - Der Mensch und der Staatsman, Praha, 1936.

Wheeler-Bennett, J.W., Munich: Prologue to Tragedy, London, 1948.

Wiskemann, E., Czechs and Germans, London, 1938.

Wolfe, H.C., The Imperial Soviets, New York, 1940.

Young, E.P., Czechoslovakia - Keystone of Peace and Democracy, London, 1938.

Zinner, P.E., Communist Strategy and Tactics in Czechoslovakia 1918-48, London, 1963.

Zinner, P.E., "Czechoslovakia" in The Fate of East Central Europe, ed. by Dertesz, S.D., South Bend, 1956.

Zinner, P.E., National Communism and Popular Revolt in Eastern Europe, New York, 1956.

Zinner, P.E., "Czechoslovakia: The Diplomacy of Eduard Beneš", in The Diplomats 1919-1939, Craig, G.A. and Gilbert, F., eds., Princeton, 1953, pp. 100-122.

4. Articles

Beck, C.F., "Can Communism and Democracy Co-exist? - Beneš' Answer", in The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol XI, No. 3, October 1952, pp. 189-206.

Bělda, J. ed., "K otázce účasti Československa na Marshallově plánu", Revue dějin socialismu, Vol. 1968, No. 1, pp. 81-100.

Beneš, E., "Czechoslovakia Plans For Peace", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 23, No. 1, October 1944, pp. 26-37.

Beneš, E., "Postwar Czechoslovakia", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 24, No. 3, April 1946, pp. 397-410.

Beneš, E., "The New Central Europe", Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 1, No. 1, April 1941, pp. 1-4.

Beneš, E., "The New Order in Europe", The Nineteenth Century and After, Vol. 130, September 1941, pp. 150-155.

Brügel, J.W., "Zum Streit um Eduard Beneš," Osteuropa, Vol. 14, No. 10, October 1964, pp. 729-735.

Červinková, M., "Views and Diplomatic Activity of Dr Edvard Beneš in the Period of Preparation for the Czechoslovak-Soviet Treaty of 1943", Historica, Vol. 17, 1969, pp. 235-274.

Ducháček, I., "The February Coup in Czechoslovakia", World Politics, Vol. 2, No. 4, July 1950, pp. 511-532.

Ducháček, I., "The Strategy of Communist Infiltration: Czechoslovakia, 1944-1948, World Politics, Vol. 2, No. 3, April 1950, pp. 345-372.

Fichelle, A., "Etude critique sur l'évolution de l'idée et de la politique slaves, d'après les 'Essais sur le slavisme d'Edvard Beneš", in Sociologie et Droit Slaves, Vol. 1, No. 3, Juin 1966, pp. 233-236.

Fichelle, A., "La Democratie aujourd'hui et demain, d'après un livre de M. Edvard Beneš," in Sociologie et Droit Slaves, Vol. 1, No. 1, Décembre 1945, pp. 60-65.

Gajanová, A., "K některým otázkám mezinárodního postavení předmnichovské ČSR", ČSČH, Vol. 9, 1961, pp. 677-697.

Griffith, W.E., "Beneš und der Prager Putsch von 1948," Osteuropa, Vol. 14, No. 4, May 1964, pp. 357-360.

Horák, J., "Československí sociální demokraté v druhém odboji," Svědectví, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 38-54.

Huebl, M., "Lidové demokracie v letech 1947-1948", Slovanský Přehled, No. 2, March 1967, pp. 65-72.

Hulička, K., "Communist Anti-Masaryk Propaganda in Czechoslovakia," The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. 16, pp. 160-174.

Janišová, M., "Francouzská zahraniční politika a Československo v Obdobi příprav Mnichova", ČSČH, Vol. II, No. 5, 1963, pp. 573-593.

Kalvoda, Josef, "Záhady v cš. zahraniční politice během druhé světové války," Zpravodaj, Chicago, Vol. XII, No. 7-8, pp. 1-7. No. 9, p. 3, No. 10, p. 4.

Kaplan, K., "On the Role of Dr. E. Beneš in February 1948", Historica, Vol. 5, 1963, pp. 239-265.

Kladiva, J., "Boj o duši národa v předvečer února 1948", ČSČH 1967, No. 1, pp. 51-72.

Křen, J., "Beneš - problém politického vůdcovství (1939-1940)", Revue dějin socialismu, Vol. 1968, No. 2, pp. 180-202.

Křen, J., "Dr Beneš za války", ČSČH, Vol. 13, No. 6, 1965, pp. 797-826.

Kubát, D., "Communist Use of the Czechoslovak Parliament Since World War II", Slavic Review, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 1961, pp. 695-700.

Kvaček, R., "K bezprostřední diplomatické přípravě Mnichova," ČSČH, Vol. 6, 1958, pp. 409-446.

Laštovička, B., "Vznik a význam Košického vládního programu", ČSČH, Vol. 8, 1960, pp. 449-471.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., "Czechoslovak Revolution", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 26, No. 4, July 1948, pp. 632-644.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., "Report on Czechoslovakia", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 33, No. 3, April 1955, pp. 484-498.

Lockhart, Sir R.B., "The Second Exile of Edvard Beneš", The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 28, No. 70, November 1949, pp. 39-59.

Lvová, M., "K otázce tzv. objednaného ultimata", ČSCH, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1965, pp. 333-348.

Miljukov, P., "De Masaryk à Beneš", Le Monde Slave, Mars, 1936, p. 383-390.

Moravec, E., "L'importance de la Tchécoslovaquie et ses forces", Le Monde Slave, Avril, 1938, pp. 1-31, Mai, 1938, pp. 161-185, et juin 1938, pp. 321-346.

Polák, F., "Beneš a Masaryk", Zpravodaj, Vol. XII, No. 5, May 1967, p. 4.

Polák, F., "Buškova obhajoba Benešovy Mnichovské kapitulace", Zpravodaj, Vol. XII, No. 1, January 1967, pp. 3-4.

Polák, F., "Národ má právo slyšet pravdu", Zpravodaj, Vol. XII, No. 3, March 1967, p. 3.

Powell, R., "Jan Masaryk", The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 28, No. 71, April 1950, pp. 332-341.

Schiefer, H., "Deutschland und die Tschechoslowakei von September 1938 bis März 1939", Zeitschrift fuer Ostforschung, 1955, pp. 48-66.

Schieche, Emil, "Edvard Beneš und die slawischen Ideen", Zeitschrift fuer Ostforschung, 1955, pp. 194-220.

Seton-Watson, R.W., "Edvard Beneš", The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 27, No. 69, May 1949, pp. 359-362.

Silberstein, L., "Die Entstehung des tschechoslowakischen Staates nach Benesch's Memoiren", Europaische Gespraeche, Vol. 6, No. 3, 1928, pp. 1-23.

Skilling, H.G., "Gottwald and the Bolshevization of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (1929-1939)", Slavic Review, Vol. 20, No. 4, December 1961, pp. 641-655.

Skilling, H.G., "Revolution and Continuity in Czechoslovakia 1945-1946", Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 20, No. 4, January 1961 pp. 357-377.

Skilling, H.G., "Revolutions in Prague", International Journal, Vol. IV, 1949, pp. 119-136.

Skilling, H.G., "The Break-up of the Czechoslovak Coalition 1947-8", The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, Vol. 26, No. 3, August 1960, pp. 396-412.

Skilling, H.G., "The Comintern and Czechoslovak Communism: 1921-1929", The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. 19, No. 2, April 1960, pp. 234-247.

Skilling, H.G., "The Formation of a Communist Party in Czechoslovakia", The American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. 14, No. 3, October 1955, pp. 346-358.

Skilling, H.G., "The Prague Overturn in 1948", Canadian Slavonic Papers, Vol. 4, 1959, pp. 88-114.

Šnejdárek, A., "Tajné rozhovory Beneše s Německem v letech 1936/37", ČSČH, Vol. 9, 1961, pp. 112-116.

Štědrý, V., "Beneš und der Prager Putsch von 1948", Osteuropa, Vol. 14, No. 5, May 1964, pp. 352-356.

Táborský, E., "A Polish-Czechoslovak Confederation", Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 9, No. 4, January 1950, pp. 379-395.

Táborský, E., "Beneš and Stalin, Moscow 1943 and 1945", Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. 13, 1954, pp. 154-181.

Táborský, E., "Beneš and the Soviets", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 27, No. 2, January 1949, pp. 302-314.

Táborský, E., "Benešovy moskevské cesty", Svědectví, Vol. 1, No.3-4, 1957, pp. 193-214.

Táborský, E., "The Triumph and Disaster of Edvard Beneš", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 36, No. 4, July 1958, pp. 669-684.

Wallace, W.V., "The Foreign Policy of President Beneš in the Approach to Munich", The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 39, No. 92, December 1960, pp. 108-136.

Wallace, W.V., "The Making of the May Crisis of 1938", The Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. 41, No. 97, June 1963, pp. 368-390.

Zinner, P.E., "Marxism in Action: Seizure of Power in Czechoslovakia", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 28, No. 4, July 1950, pp. 644-658.

5. Newspapers

Čas, 1945-48, Bratislava
Čechoslovák, 1939-45, London
České Slovo, 1935-39, Praha
Chicago Daily News, 1938-45, Chicago
Čin, 1945-48, Brno
Deutsche Volks-Zeitung, 1936-38, Praha
Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 1965, Frankfurt am Main
Hartford Courant, 1939, Hartford
Lidové noviny, 1938, Brno
Lidová demokracie, 1945-48, Praha
Mladá fronta, 1945-48, Praha
Národní listy, 1920-38, Praha
Národní obroda, 1945-46, Brno
Národní osvobození 1945-48, Praha
Národní politika, 1935-39, Praha
Der Neue Tag, 1939-45, Praha
Neue Zuercher Zeitung, 1935-48, Zuerich
The New York Times, 1918-48, New York
Obrana lidu, 1947-48, Praha
Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 1939-45, Pittsburgh
Práca, 1945-48, Bratislava
Práce, 1945-48, Praha
Prager Presse, 1935-38, Praha
Právo lidu, 1937-38; 1945-48, Praha
Pražské noviny, 1935-38, Praha
Rudé právo, 1938; 1945-48, Praha
Svobodné Československo, 1945-46, Praha
Svobodné noviny, 1945-48, Praha
Svobodné slovo, 1945-48, Praha
The Times, 1935-48, London
Venkov, 1935-39, Praha
Die Zeit, 1937-38, Praha

6. Periodicals

The American Slavic and East European Review, I-XX, 1941-60.
Bohemia, I - X, 1960-69.
The Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, XV-XXVI, 1949-60.
Canadian Slavonic Papers, I-XIV, 1956-72.
The Central European Observer, X-XXIII, 1933-46.
Československý časopis historický, I-XVIII, 1953-70.
Český časopis historický, XXVIII-XLIV, 1922-38.
Czechoslovak Life, 1968.
Der Donauraum, I-VII, 1956-62.
Europaeische Gespraeche, VI, 1928.
Foreign Affairs, XIII-XLVIII, 1934-70.
Fronta, VI-XI, 1933-39.
Historica, 1963-69.
Historický časopis, I-VIII, 1954-61.
Historie a vojenství, I-XV, 1954-67.
International Journal, I-IV, 1946-49.
Journal of Central European Affairs, I-XX, 1941-61.
Le Monde Slave, 1935-38.
Naše doba, XLI-LIV, 1934-48.
Obzory, I-IV, 1945-48.
Osteuropa, I-XIV, 1951-64.
Osteuropaeische Rundschau, I-XIX, 1955-73.
Panorama, XXI-XXIV, 1945-49.
Politische Studien, I-XIV, 1951-63.
Přítomnost, I-XVI, 1924-39.
Proměny, I-VII, 1964-70.
Revue dějin socialismu, 1968.
Sborník historický, I-XVII, 1953-70.
Slavic Review, I-XXXI, 1942-72.
The Slavonic and East European Review, XIV-XXX, 1935-1951.
Sociologie et Droit Slaves, I, 1945-46.
Svědectví, I-V, 1957-62.
World Politics, I-V, 1949-54.
Zahraniční politika, 1933-38.
Zeitschrift fuer Ostforschung, I-XXII, 1951-73.
Zpravodaj, I-XVI, 1955-71.

7. Other Sources

Interviews with Prof. Dr Václav Beneš, nephew of President Beneš, held on November 14 and 15, 1970 in New York City, and on February 28, March 1, 2 and 3, 1971 in Bloomington, Indiana.

Interviews with Msgr. Th Dr Josef Bezdíček, high ranking representative of the Czech Catholic Church in the First Republic, held on September 9, 20 and 21, 1971 in Rome.

Interviews with Dr Ladislav K. Feierabend, Chairman of the Czechoslovak Wheat Board in the First Republic and Minister of Finance in the Czechoslovak Government in London, held on September 17, 1967 and November 24, 1968 in Washington, D.C.

Interview with Prof Dr Vladimír Krajina, one of the foremost leaders of the Czech resistance movement in Bohemia during World War II, and secretary general of the National Socialist Party in the Third Republic, held on March 22, 1971 in Vancouver, B.C.

Interview with Václav Majer, Minister of Nutrition in the Third Republic, and leader of the Right-Wing Social Democrats, held on November 14 and 15, 1970 in New York City.

Interview with Prof. Dr Eduard Táborský, secretary to President Beneš during the entire period of World War II and Czechoslovak Minister to Sweden during the Third Republic, held on March 7, 1971 in Austin, Texas.

Interview with Dr Petr Zenkl, mayor of Prague during the First, and Deputy Prime Minister during the Third, Republic, held on November 5, 1970 in Washington, D.C.

Letters to author from Prof. Dr. Václav Beneš of October 14 and December 15, 1970 and December 7, 1971.

Letter to author from Mark G. Eckhoff, Director of Legislative, Judicial and Diplomatic Records Division, National Archives of the United States, Washington, D.C., of July 23, 1970.

Letters to author from Dr Ladislav K. Feierabend from Washington, D.C. of September 17, 1967 and November 11, 1968.

Letters to author from Josef Josten, high ranking official of the Czechoslovak Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the Third Republic, from London of January 15, 1969, March 31, May 25 and July 17, 1970.

Letter to author from R.M. Macdonnell, Canadian High Commissioner in Ceylon, who was from March, 1947 to October, 1949 first Canadian diplomatic representative in Czechoslovakia, from Colombo of September 18, 1970.

Letters to author from Prof. Dr Vojtěch Mastný, Director of the Institute on East Central Europe of the Columbia University, from New York City of July 28 and September 1, 1970.

Letter to author from James E. O'Neill, Director of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library at Hyde Park, New York, from Hyde Park of October 12, 1970.

Letter to author from Dr František Polák, outstanding Czech historian, from Coxsackie, New York, of May 15, 1967.

Letter to author from Alois Rozehnal, outstanding Czech political economist, from New York City of September 20, 1967.

Letter to author from Dr K.M. Stewart, Director of the Reference Department, Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress, from Washington, D.C. of August 20, 1970.

Letters to author from Prof. Dr Eduard Táborský, from the Department of Government, University of Texas at Austin, of August 16 and December 13, 1970.

Letter to author from Dr Robert Wolfe, Director of the Modern Military Records Branch, National Archives of the United States, from Washington, D.C., of July 27, 1970.

Résumé

This thesis explores the field of political behaviour and personality of Edvard Beneš during the last thirteen years of his life - the period of his Presidency. During this period two immense disasters befell Czechoslovakia within a decade - Munich in 1938 and the Communist Coup d'état in 1948. Beneš was then at the helm of his state, after having completed several decades of brilliant career of diplomacy and international politics when he became renown as an excellent strategist and tactician - "the Grand Master of Compromise". Among all of his compatriots he was destined to play on these two occasions the leading role and to make the ultimate decision on behalf of his nation. Both of his decisions, as well as many other contributory relevant factors affecting the entire scope of his political behaviour and personality have become since the time of their occurrence matters of sharp controversy among the Czechoslovak political scientists and historians both at home and abroad, have affected every single subsequent political event in Czechoslovakia and have completely overwhelmed political thought of every Czechoslovak regardless of his political creed.

Following a brief Preface and an Introduction which bring forward the principal aspects of this problem - the former also extends due acknowledgement to all those personalities and institutions without whose generous help this study could not have been completed, Chapter I follows the early stages of Beneš' political development and career under T.G. Masaryk's guidance and protective assistance, extending from their very

first meeting until the end of his Foreign Ministry. His overriding personality trait of doing most, if not all of the work in which he became involved alone, produced even then many beneficial, yet, at the same time, some detrimental effects to the Czechoslovak state.

Chapter II describes the complex political situation surrounding Beneš' election to the Presidency in December, 1935 and the scope of presidential powers existing at that time in Czechoslovakia.

The next Chapter encompasses all the fundamental aspects, and the matters of primary importance during the period of Beneš' Presidency prior to Munich which, on the one hand, either influenced his political behaviour, or, on the other hand, were influenced by him. His political system involving not only theoretical and conceptual aspects but also matters of practical political activity which he employed in his dealings with problems of Czechoslovak internal as well as foreign politics, is therein the subject of the most intensive study ever undertaken on the subject.

Chapter IV is devoted in its entirety to the tragedy of Munich - since this disaster has become the most dealt with single event of recent political history, a brief and comprehensive elucidation of President Beneš' role is appropriate for the purpose of this study.

Chapter V opens the door to a better and more complete understanding of Beneš' early period of his second exile prior to the outbreak of World War II. New documentary evidence, especially that covering his political activities in the United States at that time, demonstrate his desperate

struggle for the restoration of the Czechoslovak Republic and the annulment of Munich.

Chapter VI encompasses the entire drama of President Beneš' endeavours and accomplishments during World War II; it was intermingled with periods of anxiety and happiness, of hope and despair and of success and failure. Having been by far the most outstanding Czechoslovak political personality whose single-handed efforts seemed to have secured a new and better future for his restored and liberated country, new and dangerous clouds appeared on the horizon during, and subsequent to, his last visit of Moscow in March, 1945; this danger was represented by Czechoslovak Communists acting on behalf of, and fully supported by, the Kremlin.

The last Chapter presents the brief post-war era of Beneš' Presidency prior to February 1948. In this era a new and even greater tragedy both for President Beneš and for his nation was in the making. His faith in East-West post-war cooperation, in the American-Soviet balance of power in Central Europe in general and in Czechoslovakia in particular, was gradually being eroded and destroyed. His failing health, immense mental torture aggravated by an overwhelming realization of, and feeling of guilt for, his erroneous Russian policy due to his moral weakness and lack of moral indignation, and his completely exposed position vis-à-vis the Communists and Moscow, the spiritual devastation of his nation by the evil heritage of Munich, and the brutal Soviet invasion of his country, all these were the contributory factors which

enabled the Communists to stage a successful and swift coup d'état, signifying death of President Beneš and of Czechoslovak democracy.

Epilogue deals with the ultimate tragedy of Beneš when in the few remaining months of his life he was forced to witness how everything what he stood for was being destroyed, and how Moscow's and the Czechoslovak Communists' promises made to him were nothing else than treachery and deceit. While his own enormous suffering ended so swiftly after the February 1948 disaster because the Communists destroyed the very raison d'être of his own political personality, the suffering of his own nation has now been lasting for more than a quarter century.