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GERMANY
and
CZECHOSLOVAKIA

By

AN ACTIVE AND RESPONSIBLE
CZECHOSLOVAK STATESMAN

I.

Foreign Policy of Czechoslovakia
in its Relations
to Germany

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I.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

1. Since the Spring of last year the world press has very frequently discussed Czechoslovakia, her geographical position and location in Central Europe, her international situation, her relations with Germany, her attitude towards her minorities, particularly the German minority, and her internal situation, but it has also spoken of her moral, political and economic solidity, of her military capacity, of her democratic internal structure and of the quality of resistance displayed by her democratic institutions in surroundings that without exception have succumbed to authoritative regimes.

A State which for long years could say of itself that all was in order within it and therefore nothing was written about it, a State in which the correspondents of European and American newspapers did not care to settle because—in contradistinction to its neighbours—nothing of interest was happening that required to be reported, suddenly became an object of great interest. This was manifested first in long, sometimes sensational,

newspaper articles, then in mischievous campaigns on the one hand and alarm reports on the other, and finally in serious dissertations in the reviews, or in political discussions that followed calmer lines, even though they were conducted from an oppositional or indeed tendentious angle.

At first all this caused surprise in Czechoslovakia, and later, especially when from the German side particularly aggressive and systematic campaigns were launched, alarmed a few politically inexperienced or calculating minds. Serious politicians and the responsible political factors, however, kept calm, and the broad masses of the Czechoslovak population replied with instinctive reaction: with dignified calm, with a steadfast preparedness to look every difficulty and every danger both within and without straight in the face, and to take up the defence of the State with really incredible energy, determination and unyielding spirit. The Government and other responsible factors in perfect calm and deliberation reduced the sensational and alarmist reports—also on the side of our friends—to their proper proportions, and through political channels and in the press quietly answered even the hostile and mischievous attacks, and prepared in the spheres of administration, of internal policy, of economic, financial and finally military affairs, to answer discussion by discussion, to reply to aggressive

press campaigns by accurate information, and to meet threats by quiet but effective effort towards internal and external defence.

No one on our side really believed in any serious conflict with Germany, and the most responsible authorities on several occasions declared so publicly and very emphatically. All the suggestions from abroad that Czechoslovakia was likely to be attacked by Germany were refuted, in conciliatory tone, it is true, but very categorically and with the fullest conviction, to the general surprise of those who had believed such suggestions or had written about them.

2. To-day it is universally known, and observers inside and outside the country, home and foreign, confirm the fact that *the calm, reflection and moderation shown on the one hand, and the firmness, courage and determination, the decision and general preparedness for sacrifice of every kind to the very limits of possibility* suddenly displayed here, called forth throughout Europe appreciation, confidence and praise, a new intense interest and a new enquiry into the situation and into the reasons of this reaction on our part to the attacks made upon us. In this sense *the echo of these events has been supremely satisfactory* for us, even if here and there criticisms have occasionally been put forward, among others from the ranks of our friends. And our opponents—those who have con-

ducted the campaigns against us—have, we hope, arrived at any rate at the point of realising that with their inaccurate and tendentious campaigns they will settle nothing and enforce nothing, and that the proper course is to speak of Czechoslovakia and deal with Czechoslovakia on more objective lines.

And so, in Germany, after aggressive campaigns, there ensued first of all a calmer system of polemics, and finally political discussions. These discussions are, it is true, still sharply pointed, nor has the tendentious information of the journalists on the occasion of even the slightest incident as yet ceased.

3. Political thinkers and responsible political persons in Czechoslovakia regard this international discussion concerning Czechoslovakia, and the results of the discussion so far, as of political importance and as decidedly *favourable* to Czechoslovakia from the angle of both external and internal policy.

This campaign has given Europe and the world an opportunity—it may indeed be said to have compelled them—to begin to occupy themselves more seriously than ever before with the problem of Czechoslovakia. Czechoslovakia as a new State has hitherto been—sometimes even for our friends—something in the nature of an interesting, more or less schematic political conception rather than otherwise, a country which they have observed on

the map of Europe, of which they have known one or two interesting facts, and which they have placed in the front rank of the new post-War States on account of its cultural, technical and economic maturity, on account more particularly of its internal political stability and of the important rôle it has so far played in European politics, but of whose actual political function in Europe, of whose historical, political and cultural mission, of whose political, economic and military strength, of whose geographical significance in Europe, of whose unyielding character Germany, and often even our own friends, had no true conception whatsoever, any more than they had of the fact that, after the disappearance of Austria-Hungary from the map of Europe, political equilibrium and balance of power in Central Europe and in Europe generally depends today, and will depend to a still greater extent in the future, on the position and future development of Czechoslovakia.

The present discussion has already largely remedied these errors, and its further development will enable the facts to be increasingly comprehended in both camps. We are far from wishing to exaggerate the importance of our country, *but Bismarck's well-known remark about it still has its historical and practical application.*

4. In the sphere of domestic policy, too, this campaign and these discussions have greatly benefited us. We look upon it as a great gain that

several of our internal problems, especially the minority problem—that of our Germans in particular—have under the influence of all these events become the subject of discussions and criticisms both at home and abroad, and *have caused us to occupy ourselves calmly, practically, impartially, but also energetically and fundamentally more than ever before with them.* We were, and still are, in the matter of a solution of minority questions—with the exception of Switzerland, and compared with all the Central European and East-European countries and of course Germany—whole decades ahead of the other countries of Europe. We are well aware of this and are proud of it. Let German, Hungarian, Polish and other propaganda say what it will about this, it is the truth, and in the long run no one in Europe will be able to get away from this truth.

On the other hand we are strong enough morally and politically to confess that in this matter it is possible and necessary to do much more still, and that domestic and foreign criticism—in so far as it is seemly, to the point, and prompted by good will—can only be helpful to us in examining our problems gradually, as they evolve, and in continued reasonable manner, in the light of new situations, in seeking here and there new solutions, and in making changes where desirable. *Impractical and unseemly criticism will merely be harmful to our minorities, particularly to our German fel-*

low-citizens, and will not constrain us to anything. And fundamental harm will accrue to our minorities from every illicit interference from abroad in our internal affairs, from clandestine contacts with foreign elements, from pressure exerted upon us or threats made against us. Czechoslovakia will pursue her own way, her own method, will proceed according to her own programme and her own natural conditions and needs, and will settle her questions practically, calmly and justly to the essential conclusions.

We do not doubt that within a certain time there will be people in numbers of other countries in Europe where such is not yet the case that will point to Czechoslovakia as a model of reasonable and sensible policy in these matters. And there will come times when other countries *will with great difficulty catch up with what our State has long ago accomplished already in these questions or will quietly, with well-considered method, along natural lines and at the necessary intervals of time and evolution still accomplish.* What we are doing for our minorities they will of necessity have to do for theirs. And for them it will be more difficult and really dangerous!

5. We say all this as an introduction to this contribution to a historico-political discussion of the relations of Germany to Czechoslovakia. It is a survey of things that is intended to be objective, it issues of good-will and is written *sine ira et*

studio. It consists on the one hand of simple statements of fact, it gives our defence and our reply to our critics, it gives, too, the material reproaches we have to make against the other side, it shows how these things are regarded amongst us.

Nor is it a press polemic. We are not concerned with wartime or post-War recriminations, we are not out to argue for one regime against another, we are not concerned with this or that question of current politics, with the passing interests of the day, or with the petty matters of personalities, parties or regimes, with this or that political agreement of to-day or to-morrow; we are concerned in these pages *with the permanent relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia within the scope of European politics as a whole*, with the deep and lasting roots and primary conditions of those relations, with the relations between Germans and Czechs not merely from the political angle but also from the general political, economic and especially cultural and moral angle, and *of course with the lasting political conclusions which it is essential for us and for Europe to deduce from all this*.

II.

GERMANY'S REPROACHES TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. Germany has complained since the year 1919 of a series of points in Czechoslovakia's activities and general foreign policy.

For some time complaints were raised against our *concluding a treaty of alliance with France*; when these ceased, there remained the constantly-repeated statement that we are vassals to France and that *our policy is that of vassals to France* and the West of Europe. It was considered as rigidity, inelasticity, lack of vitality and inability to adapt ourselves to developments, that we *insisted on the validity of the peace treaties* and that they be changed by agreement and by mutual understanding only. Our defence of this standpoint at Geneva and in international conferences was for Germany only a confirmation of the fact that our policy is in vassalship to France or Western Europe in general and is therefore hostile to Germany.

From time to time the attitude was adopted that our *insistance on the independence of Austria and*

our whole Central European policy were hostile to Germany, intended to bring Austria into an anti-German front and thus form a barrier in Central Europe to Germany's so-called *Drang nach Osten*.

Our policy at Geneva and our defence of the principle of collective security were also considered as hostile to Germany, although it is obviously in the vital interest of a small, new State to be able to rely on the collective interest of the rest of the world, particularly Europe. This attitude of ours is not directed against Germany—our attitude to the other States is the same. It was complained that we thereby *help to further the policy of isolating Germany*, and we were alleged to be seeking allies against Germany on all sides (sometimes even our attempts to arrive at a friendly agreement with Poland were objected to as anti-German), and avoiding the agreement with our largest neighbour which is dictated by our geographical position and economic interests. In this connection the latest stage of our relations is marked by criticisms of *the treaty of mutual aid we have concluded with Soviet Russia*. And in the same connection occasional complaints are made by Germany that our whole policy is continually influenced by *fear of Germany* and by the feeling that Germany is our historical and sworn enemy.

And finally we are accused of *oppressing our German minority*. The two great anti-Czechoslovak campaigns of last year and this also dealt with these points.

The other points of conflict (press controversies, emigrés, frontier or other personal incidents and complaints) are temporary, passing and of inferior political importance; they exert no decisive influence on the relations between the two States. Where they do have any effect on relations, they can easily and speedily be neutralised in an amicable way. In economic matters, on the other hand, agreement is—in the opinion of official quarters, of experts and interested parties—not only possible and even easy, but actually of considerable advantage to both parties, and on the whole these matters have up to now led to no considerable or substantial difficulties.

We will now outline our attitude towards these German complaints.

I.

FRANCE, GERMANY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA

2. First of all we must make it clear that the basic conceptions of the foreign policy of Germany and Czechoslovakia are absolutely different. *Czechoslovakia* is a *medium-sized* European State, *Germany*, its neighbour, has been and is a *European and world power*. Czechoslovakia lies in a geographical position among States which have been antagonistic to it during a long period of its history. The national development of the Czechs and Slovaks was adversely affected by the attitude

of these States, and their very existence was threatened to such an extent that towards the end of the eighteenth century the Czechs almost ceased to exist as a nation, and the same would have been the lot of the Slovaks by the end of the twentieth century if they had not been liberated by the Great War. On the other hand, Czechoslovakia cannot threaten the existence of Germany.

This is no question of ideology, sentiment, love or hatred and hostility, it is no use insisting that the Germans and Hungarians do not want to harm the Czechs and Slovaks; these two facts remain and have necessarily determined Czechoslovakia's attitude towards Germany, just as they still do so and always will. The Germans as nation are more than six times as strong as the Czechoslovaks (Germany is more than four times as strong as the Czechoslovak State) and the entire history of this State shows it weakened and threatened by German pressure. This is no extraordinary state of affairs—there are other nations in the same or similar situation, and no hostility is necessarily involved in this statement—for Rumania and Finland, for example, are in the same situation with regard to Russia.⁽¹⁾

(1) The German propaganda unjustly utilises in the anti-Czechoslovak press campaign the memoranda sent to the Peace Conference in 1919 by the Czechoslovak delegation to this Conference, where these facts are stated. They are concrete political facts, untinged by liking or dislike.

Germany is a great power and its policy is determined accordingly; it is strong enough to defend itself alone against anybody, it has its own aspirations for expansion and the ambitions of a great power, as all the other powers have; as such it stands, with all its moral and material resources and with the overwhelming weight of its sixty-seven million inhabitants, side by side, perhaps face to face, with eleven million Czechoslovak citizens of Slavonic nationality in a State of nearly sixteen million inhabitants. Germany would like to monopolise or isolate Czechoslovakia, would like to elaborate her relations to Czechoslovakia by her influence, here and there resorting to pressure exerted on Czechoslovakia by her other neighbours.

This is natural, dictated by the necessities of life and politics, and Czechoslovakia must reckon with it. We do not complain of this, do not make it a reason for hostility, we consider it as part of our political destiny, and we are compelled to act accordingly. It must be the aim of our policy to escape from this fate by first creating normal relations, then good neighbourliness and finally even friendship. This of course demands from the other party the same conception of our mutual relations. This aim cannot otherwise be achieved.

3. The great powers, too, of course, must realise that they are not alone in Europe and the world, and that each should further the maintenance of equilibrium by not allowing the others

to dominate small States. In the long run world politics are only a continual and consistent maintenance and levelling of the relations between the powers, i. e. the *policy of an equilibrium of power*. Before the War this policy was pursued by the aid of coalitions between the Powers, and at the conclusion of the Peace Treaty of Versailles the League of Nations was adopted as a compromise and perhaps the only future instrument for the maintenance of equilibrium in the world between the Great Powers and the other States. *If there is no League of Nations, there will once more be a policy of coalitions or blocs—this dilemma cannot be solved in any other way.* We are, and always have been, aware of this and it is for this reason that we have always, on principle and consistently, been in favour of the League of Nations, considering it as a system which is morally and politically-speaking better than the coalition system.

In consideration of these facts and of Germany's position in Europe, Czechoslovakia was compelled immediately after the War to pay considerable attention to the problem of the future equilibrium in Europe and how she herself could contribute towards it. Her aim was not hostility of any kind towards Germany; her problem was to create for herself a place in Europe, in the European equilibrium, and how to direct her policy in order to make herself a factor of equilibrium not only towards Germany, but also towards the other

Powers ; in practice this means that she was not, and did not wish to be, an instrument in the hands of German policy for use against the other Great Powers, but neither did she wish to be used by the other Powers against Germany. *In his first speech in Parliament, on September 30th 1919—the first after the Peace Conference—the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Beneš, laid down this principle as vital for the future.*

And it was therefore with due regard to the proximity of Germany as a neighbour, her geographical position, and to the attempt to found a new instrument of the policy of world equilibrium—the League of Nations—that Czechoslovakia determined the direction of her foreign policy at the very outset, in the years 1918-1921. With the aid of this policy, to the best of her knowledge and conscience, but also in furtherance of her interests as a nation and State, Czechoslovakia wished to help to build up equilibrium in the new Europe. Our Government and other official circles emphasised this course and laid down as a rigid principle that *we must pursue a European policy within the scope of the League of Nations.*

4. It was clear to us that the conditions created by the peace treaties would gradually change, and that Germany in particular would by degrees recover power and play a considerable part in Europe and the world. It was moreover clear to us that there would be no peace in Europe if there were

no agreement between France and Great Britain on the one hand and Germany on the other, for we have always been convinced that the two former Powers will in the end always throw their weight on the same side of the scale. Finally, immediately after the War, in the well-known post-War political, economic and moral chaos, we, as a small and particularly a new State without tradition, at first without internal cohesion, with all our infantile ailments, were in need of support, assistance, moral, political and occasionally even material aid (help in the struggle with the Hungarian Bolsheviks in 1919, a loan from Great Britain in 1921, a further loan from Great Britain, the U.S.A. and France in 1923, 1931, etc.).

In short, we had at least at first to lean on somebody, much more because of the general chaos in Central Europe, the complete lack of stability and the general insecurity, the attempts to restore the old Austrian Monarchy and the Habsburgs, the danger of social and political revolutions (Bolshevism) all around us, than because of Germany, then disintegrated and weak.

We therefore naturally inclined towards those who helped us in the Great War. that is to the Allies, and to France especially, as the power which helped most, and was most interested in Europe and particularly, in Central Europe, in us. It was a feeling of gratitude, but at the same time our fundamental political interest. To this we added a principle never since abandoned: to make every

endeavour, together with France, to bring about a Franco-German agreement and to contribute towards it ourselves in the interests of Europe and of our own country.

In this way our first treaty of alliance with France was concluded (in 1923). In our eyes this treaty was not intended to be a repetition of the pre-War coalition system, as we desired at all costs to achieve a Franco-German agreement and conceived the League of Nations as the new instrument of equilibrium in Europe and the world. In point of fact Czechoslovakia has tried ever since the year 1922, sincerely and consistently, to obtain the recognition by Geneva of the principle that treaties of alliance may in future be concluded only to facilitate putting into practice Article 16 of the League of Nations Covenant; in 1923, at the assembly of the League of Nations, Dr. Beneš supported this idea in his well-known proposal for a treaty of mutual aid, and in 1924 he succeeded in achieving this aim in the well-known Protocol of Geneva. It is well-known that Czechoslovakia *from the beginning* took the idea of the League of Nations *very seriously and very sincerely, not only on principle but also in her own interests*. Every collective system is of advantage to the small State.

Interpreting as we did the Franco-Czechoslovak agreement in this way, we held the concrete political conviction that it was through Geneva that Franco-German agreement would be achieved, and

that our policy of collaboration with France would gradually prepare and build up the agreement with Germany. From the very beginning we made it one of the most important points of our international political programme that Franco-German agreement was and should remain the foundation of our friendly relations with Germany, that co-operation between Paris and Berlin meant at the same time co-operation between Berlin and Prague.

5. Developments appeared to confirm our assumptions. After 1924 (after the Dawes' plan was signed by Herriot) attempts were made to achieve a rapprochement between Paris and Berlin, in February 1925 Stresemann submitted his proposal for an agreement between Germany, France and Great Britain, and finally, in October 1925, on the basis of this proposal, the Rhine Pact was signed at Locarno. The basic principles of our policy led us to collaborate in the achievement of this agreement. Dr. Beneš seems to have been entirely at one with Herriot and Briand here, for at Locarno they agreed to change the former treaty of alliance between France and Czechoslovakia, ridding it of all that might give it the character of an anti-German coalition, transforming it into an agreement for the application of Article 16 of the League of Nations Pact. This was given external expression in a very emphatic form: the treaty was made not as an alliance between France and Czechoslovakia but as a guaranty treaty of

the German-Czechoslovak convention of arbitration signed at the same day and became a part of all the Locarno agreements included in the joint Protocol of Locarno, with the consent of all members of the Locarno conference (i. e. including Sir Austen Chamberlain, Stresemann and Mussolini). It was signed and submitted to Geneva for registration in the presence of all the Locarno signatories, including Stresemann. Czechoslovakia considered herself well on the way towards agreement with Germany, believed that Germany would recognise that France, Great Britain, Italy and Poland were interested in her existence and her position in Central Europe, and that Germany, too, would respect it.

In our opinion Germany really did, by virtue of the Locarno Pact, recognise this new way to equilibrium between the Powers and the principle of collective security represented by the League of Nations. Also by virtue of its joining the League of Nations as a regular member soon afterwards. In these negotiations Czechoslovakia was neither an instrument nor vassal to any other power, she was merely considered as an accepted member of the European concert of powers. Czechoslovakia also negotiated directly, bilaterally, with Germany regarding an arbitration treaty, but of course in close connection with the entire Locarno, i. e. collective system. This holds true in spite of the fact that it was at that time clear to all that Germany

signed the Rhine Pact and became a member of the League of Nations in the succeeding year as a part of its political programme, with the intention of claiming gradual changes in the political and juridical conditions in Europe resulting from the Treaty of Versailles.

Czechoslovakia's pursuance of this policy has never been in any way hostile to Germany. It is the just wish of a small State to obtain from a Great Power guarantees for its existence and its legitimate position in the general equilibrium of power among the other States, with the collaboration and guarantees of the rest of Europe, even if the conditions necessary for direct, independent and bilateral relations still obtain and must, in the interest of both States, continue to do so. To us France was the symbol and guarantee of this equilibrium, for France worked hardest and most consistently for it. The signature of the German-Czechoslovak arbitration treaty was the external expression of these principles and this policy—disputes between the two States were no longer to be arbitrarily settled by one State alone, they were to be submitted to an international forum, the *Hague Court of Arbitration*, a European and world-wide control.

Czechoslovakia naturally continues to insist upon the principles of this policy, not only for reasons of ideology and principle, but also—predominantly—in its own vital interests. That Ger-

many recognised and accepted this policy, putting it into practice towards Czechoslovakia to the satisfaction of both parties in 1925 and for a number of years afterwards, is for us only a document of the fact that this policy was correct and that in this matter right is on our side.

6. *A few words about Czechoslovakia's defence of and insistence upon the peace treaties.* How can a new State, created by the peace treaties, not yet fully recognised by a number of its opponents as a permanent institution, start to undermine its existence, its strength and its position by admitting the possibility of immediate changes in something which constitutes one of the main moral and political pillars of its existence? A small State's main weapon of defence against more powerful States is always *its legitimate legal basis*, the guarantee that the general legal order will be respected, for it itself has no considerable material resources in its defence against a larger State.

If we have understood Germany's demand for an alteration of the reparation payments and the granting of this demand, if we have understood that Germany demanded equal rights at the armament conference, and if we did not see in this *a priori* hostility to ourselves, every calm and serious German politician should realise that a new State will consistently defend its peace treaties and emphasise that they can be changed only gradually, by compromise and agreement, with the consent of

the signatories. Otherwise no international legal order at all exists and the rule of mere material strength and power succeeds. No-one of political experience and good will to his partner can see hostility in this, in the case of a new State. It is its natural, legitimate and *just vital interest*, with nothing in common with a feeling of hostility.

II.

AUSTRIA, CENTRAL EUROPE AND "DRANG NACH OSTEN"

7. *The Austrian question and the Central European problem* are certainly of extreme importance to Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The existence of this problem is to-day so clear to the whole of Europe that it can be discussed fairly, accurately and openly. It is closely connected with Germany's whole Central European policy, the whole so-called pan-German movement, and the so-called policy of the "Drang nach Osten".

It is neither an insult, propaganda, nor polemics against past and present Germany to say that pan-Germanism and the Drang nach Osten in its former, pre-War shape and its present manifestation (the "Volkstum" and "Nationalgemeinschaft") *really did exist* as the natural expression of the biological strength and expansion of the German nation towards the South-East of Europe,

Poland and the Ukraine, just as Russia used to exert similar pressure in the direction of Central Europe, the Balkans and Asia Minor, Italy towards Central Europe, the Balkans and Africa. The gradual emancipation of the small nations of Central Europe and the Balkan Peninsula furnished this expansion with vital energy, an excuse and influence, but at the same time erected a *barrier* against it, as soon as the emancipation movement among these nations found expression in their achievement of independence as separate States. This applies to Germany as to Russia and Italy.

In this way the Great War was a great historical turning point, *one of the greatest events in the history of Europe*. It created a vast zone of new independent States stretching from the North of Europe to the South, and fortified the existing small States by unifying them nationally. It consequently represents a new phase in the development of Central and South-East Europe. The Baltic States, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, and Austria too, are to-day concrete political facts which must be taken into account even by Germany, Russia and Italy, and with which the whole of Europe and the world reckon. To speak, therefore, of a "barrier" against pan-Germanism or against the "Drang nach Osten" is merely to express the new European political realities, the new European policy, which must reckon with the

existence of independent States in Central and South-East Europe that desire to pursue an independent policy of their own, and all wish to do their part in the establishment of the new European equilibrium. And this does not concern Germany alone, it also directly concerns Russia; but equally, of course, Italy too. There is therefore no hostility or insult to Germany, or to the other two States named, in talking of a "barrier".⁽¹⁾ It is merely a political fact which, in consideration of the sensitive character of German public opinion and for reasons of principle, should not be discussed in a spirit of hostility to Germany, but as to whose existence no realist politician should have any illusions.

In this respect Czechoslovakia looked on the new European conditions as the end of the former pan-Germanist policy and of the policy of a "Drang nach Osten", just as they mean the end—we emphasise it very strongly—of the former policy of pan-Slavism and of the former Imperial Russia. It was Czechoslovakia's official policy to express this quite loyally—and publicly—even in its former and present attitude to Soviet Russia, which has

⁽¹⁾ In the campaign launched by German propaganda against the Czechoslovak memoranda submitted to the Peace Conference, unnecessary anger against Czechoslovakia is therefore displayed. Some Sudete German politicians have correctly stated that this "barrier" can be transformed into a "bridge" of agreement and collaboration in the cause of peace.

always admitted this and consented to it. This was the essence of our policy towards Western and Eastern Europe, this is the essence of our War-time and post-War policy, which is intended to avoid our becoming the instrument of either Russia, Germany, or Western Europe. Czechoslovakia, in consideration of her important geographical situation, wishes to co-operate—naturally to an extent corresponding to her strength and resources, and together with other States—with Poland, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, etc. in establishing the new European equilibrium, in which each shall hold the place to which it is rightly entitled.

8. After the War this idea, particularly in Western Europe, was not always correctly and exactly expressed. A number of plans were advanced for the reorganisation of Central Europe, which to a certain extent showed on the one hand a lack of confidence in the new independent States, their internal strength, cohesion and consequently their capacity to resist their powerful neighbours, on the other hand suspicion of possible fresh expansion by the three Great Powers in Central and Eastern Europe. It was for this reason that attempts were made—otherwise economically justified and quite justifiable—to reorganise the Danube basin not only politically and in international law, but also as regards its political economy, to concentrate and unite these States in a single more

or less compact political and economic organism, intended to constitute a "barrier", not only with regard to Germany, but also with regard to Russia and Italy, too. In these new plans an important position was naturally always occupied by *Austria* and therefore, in view of the attempts to achieve an "Anschluss" between Austria and Germany, all these plans were doubly important for Germany.

Germany and Italy, partially Russia too, always regarded such plans with suspicion, seeing in them an instrument of the French policy, occasionally even of the policy of the whole of Western Europe, against themselves. Czechoslovakia herself never opposed such a reorganisation of Central Europe—which of course could never have affected her political and economic independence—and was always willing to collaborate in this direction and make certain sacrifices for it. She took, however, no special initiative in this matter, simply because the broad masses of our people still retain too vivid memories of the former Monarchy, and our political circles for some time regarded the reorganisation of the Danube basin cautiously, reservedly and even with a certain amount of suspicion. But Czechoslovakia, loyally, amicably and quite openly, concealing nothing from anyone, desired to exert her entire influence in co-operating with the rest of Europe in these plans, and admitted a number of the arguments in favour of this reorganisation advanced by France, Great Britain, the U.S.A. and

other States. She never, therefore, undertook any steps which might have counteracted this campaign.

On the other hand we concealed from nobody that the effectuation of such plans was regarded by certain sections of our population partly with opposition, partly with suspicion and lack of confidence comprehensible in a nation recently liberated from the bonds of Monarchy and now once more expected to enter into close relations with its former constituent parts. On the whole, however, everybody agreed that in our case the pursuance of this policy was subject to a number of conditions and assumptions:

a) First of all we were clear that it is necessary that, if there is to be something of this kind, Austria and Hungary too must declare themselves clearly in favour of it, and jointly, uncompromisingly and without any ulterior motives strive for its realisation. If they hesitate, make impossible demands of the other States either as conditions or as pretexts, it cannot be put into practice. If they are afraid of trying to carry this point with their friends, Germany and Italy, and do not express their firm and uncompromising intention of defending and realising these plans at all costs, then it cannot be done. Passivity is not enough, a more or less calculating acceptance of such plans is not enough. If these two States' immediate interest in the realisation of a new Danube basin is not

strong enough in itself, this plan will not be put into practice.

b) The new Central European policy of the small and medium-sized Danubian States cannot be successful if opposed by Germany and Italy. Prague always stressed this particularly, and consequently, in the case of such plans, always reckoned on the one hand with negotiations, on the other with a certain co-operation by other States, primarily the three neighbouring Great Powers, so that the new Danube basin would really be a factor of equilibrium and not a means of the domination of one party over another.

c) Czechoslovakia never shared the pessimistic opinion that without a fresh close bond the small Central European States will not have strength and vital energy enough to resist the pressure of the three neighbouring Powers, Germany, Russia and Italy. *On the contrary, she is of the opinion that future developments in the Danube basin will strengthen and stress the new States' independence.* For this reason she has always looked forward calmly to the further development of her own country and Central Europe, even if the new and much closer reorganisation of the Danube basin does not come to pass. She has always considered the Little Entente as an adequate international instrument of Central European equilibrium and as a guarantee of the independence of the States in question, *at least until such time as the principal*

European Powers agree upon a more stabile European policy. At least she considered this as the Little Entente's *main* task in Central Europe and the most important part of its mission of peace.

Czechoslovakia's Central European policy has always been guided by these considerations. She believed and still believes that *Austria will maintain its position as an independent State*, is in favour of this independence and defended it openly, concealing her attitude from no-one, and always openly emphasised it in Berlin, not in any way in hostility to Germany, but as her own vital political concern. We emphasise our vital interest, not merely ordinary interest, for a State can and must make certain sacrifices to the *vital* interest of another State, though—we, too, recognise it—*under certain assumptions and conditions*, i. e. provided the vital interests of Germany are not affected, and that independent Austria is not utilised to further any directly anti-German policy. If Germany was in Czechoslovakia's place, it would do the same.

9. When Czechoslovakia supported the independence of Austria, this was always in the sense of Monsignor Seipel's policy: she never wanted to force Austria into any anti-German camp, did not want to force on it a character other than its own, i. e. German, desired to maintain the best possible political and economic relations with it, recognising its complete independence and liberty, and in particular did not want to force it into something

objectionable to the psychology of both the Austrian and Czechoslovak people. Such an Austria would be, in our opinion, free, independent, true to itself, and its international position would be acceptable both to the Western Powers and to all its neighbours; such an Austria could not be utilised as an instrument of a policy directed against Germany or anybody else. The natural proximity of Austria and Germany would, after all, always be an obstacle to this. On the other hand, Austria would be a natural bridge between German culture and the other Central European States, and would contribute towards European equilibrium; *culturally and politically, although on a smaller scale, it would fulfil its former great historical mission.*

We are of the opinion that this solution would be accepted by the whole of Europe, providing of course that Austria itself, i. e. those who to-day in the spirit of the policy of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg strongly stress Austria's independence and dissimilarity to Germany, are satisfied with it. And it would not harm Germany—might rather even help it in future.

Czechoslovakia, not being opposed to any re-organisation of the Danube basin realisable in any form in agreement between the States themselves and interested parties, would consider such a solution of European and Central European equilibrium as acceptable to herself as well. We do not know whether we interpret correctly the intention

of the present Austrian government; but it appears to us that it intended to create something of this sort by the well-known agreement with Germany of July 11th, 1936. Whether it judges that this has been achieved, is another question.

We will therefore conclude our reflections on the Austrian and Central European problem in relation to Germany by stating that Czechoslovakia is vitally interested in the independence of Austria and therefore defends it; that this is not hostility of any kind towards Germany, the less so because Austria itself is the first to strive for this independence, further because it is desired by France, Italy, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, and Hungary and Rumania too (though to a different extent in each case), and that Czechoslovakia's endeavours would carry no weight at all were it not that all these States strive for it, and finally that Germany itself has often recognised it in principle, for the last time in the agreement of July 11th, 1936. In a word: *the Austrian problem is a European problem and not one between Germany and Czechoslovakia.*

As regards the reorganisation of Central Europe or the Danube basin, Czechoslovakia will continue to collaborate constantly, willingly and with all her weight, to this end, but on the conditions detailed above, without the slightest intention of excluding from this part of Europe the legitimate political or economic interests of the four other interested States: Germany, Italy, Poland and Russia.

As far as the so-called policy of pan-Germanism and the "Drang nach Osten" is concerned, it would certainly be only reasonable to comprehend the importance of the Great War and the foundation of new States in Central and South-East Europe, to realise that this affects not only Germany but also Russia and Italy, and to see in the policy of the so-called "barrier" merely the fact of the desire of the independent Central European States to be really true to themselves, their own masters, not subject exclusively to any Great Power, and to fulfil their new political mission in Europe: to contribute to a just balance of power in Europe and to help establish a political equilibrium of power such as is in harmony with the policy of the League of Nations, *just as is the case with Belgium and Holland on Germany's other frontier and with the Scandinavian States and Turkey on Russia's two frontiers.*

III.

COLLECTIVE SECURITY

RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION

10. After all these explanations it is not necessary to deal at length with Czechoslovakia's *policy of collective security and her defence of the League of Nations.* A Great Power can more easily do without collective security than a small or medium-sized State. The pre-War policy of coalitions was and still is a policy of collective security. The

creation of Western European or Central European diplomatic camps is also a policy of collective security, even if it is called merely collaboration or axis, and even if it is founded merely on an agreement in the form of protocols and not in the legal form of a treaty. We repeat: if in future there is no League of Nations and its universally-controlled and generally accessible "collective" security, *there will be the collective security of opposed and uncontrolled camps*. Czechoslovakia was not and is not in favour of the old hostile camps; she is in favour of the same policy in this respect as is desired by Great Britain, Scandinavia, Belgium and Holland, the Baltic States, the Central European, Balkan and other States: the League of Nations and collective security. And we repeat that this is both on ideological grounds and for reasons of our State and international interest.

We well know the objections advanced by Germany and possibly Italy to the League of Nations and collective security: it is said to have been unjust, not to have fulfilled its mission justly, and that therefore it did not prove worth while, pursued a policy of "fictions" and a policy of the equality of States and nations inconsistent with the actual political facts.

This would mean that the policy of the League of Nations and collective security was, it is true, ideologically, ideally and on principle correct, but that in practice it was wrongly carried out. Good,

let us criticise its execution, but not combat and destroy its foundations and its principle! After all, there were times when Germany and Italy unconditionally accepted it, emphatically defended it and were actually much more emphatic and consistent than the other States. Why, therefore, should Czechoslovakia be blamed for loyalty to this policy, loyalty dictated by conviction, principles and her vital interests as State and nation?

11. In connection with this very question of the League of Nations it is necessary to say *a few important words about Czechoslovakia's policy with regard to the Soviet Union.*

It appears that at one time Germany's greatest complaint against Czechoslovakia concerned her policy regarding Soviet Russia and her treaty of mutual aid with it. This was unjust, mainly because the connection between the development of Czechoslovakia's former policy towards Soviet Russia and her policy in this respect to-day is not comprehended. We are of the opinion that Czechoslovakia's policy with regard to post-War Russia will one day from the angle of historical developments be appreciated more justly and considered perhaps as more correct than the policy of any other European State. It is no longer remarkable that our policy towards Russia and the Soviets was objected to during the War, in 1918, by the Allies as friendly to the Soviets—by France in particular—then later, towards the end of the War and until

1921, we were actually in arms against Soviet Russia, and until the year 1928 Soviet public opinion—in spite of all our attempts to bring about an agreement between Europe and the Soviets—considered us the most determined of the Soviets opponents and an instrument of the French policy directed against it, on account of our principle of avoiding intervention in the domestic concerns of any other State, while very close co-operation was achieved between the Soviets and Germany (Rapallo!). And finally we have become—in Germany's radical circles' present opinion—a branch office of Soviet Russia in Europe. What explanation should be given for all these circumstances?

The reason for this is, firstly, that Czechoslovakia's foreign policy is really not at all subject to the fluctuations of general domestic politics—or at least not to the extent that the policy of other States is. We try to create a fixed line of foreign policy towards each country, based on the actual natural circumstances and conditions in both countries; retaining this line in principle, we adapt it to the given conditions of normal day-to-day politics. In the question of Soviet Russia and the Soviet Union, too, without considering *its* domestic régime and without considering *her own* internal conditions, Czechoslovakia always sought the fixed line of her foreign policy. This was all the easier because Czechoslovakia's home politics are very stable—ever since the War we have had a coalition

government, composed almost continually of essentially the same political factors.

The second reason is that Czechoslovakia tried genuinely not to interfere in Russia's internal affairs, and not to exploit them for any purpose connected with her own attitude. It was for this reason that during the War she advised the Allies to leave the development of Russian affairs to the Russian people and not to interfere—the Allies sometimes took this *amiss*, as friendship for the Bolsheviks, occasionally almost as friendship for Germany. In our case it was a question of principle and of course also of political foresight; we did not believe—events proved us right—that the Russian revolution could be mastered by foreign intervention.

When, however, our policy of non-intervention in the Ukraine and Siberia in 1918 and 1919 was misunderstood by the Soviets, so that we came into armed conflict with them, we defended ourselves, and our defence was successful in our Siberian campaign. But soon after 1922, i. e. after the conference of Genoa, still consistently pursuing a policy of non-intervention, we started to do our best for a rapprochement between Soviet Russia and Europe.

This is the logical consequence of the third principle of our general policy. The Czechoslovak policy, founded on the recognition that after the War it was necessary to reconstruct and stabilise

Europe as quickly as possible and to ensure for it a long period of universal peace and economic prosperity, was in principle always and in everything in favour of European agreement and the co-operation of all its important political elements. To Czechoslovakia, this meant preparing the way for collaboration and agreement between Germany and France, between Russia and the whole of the rest of Europe—and consequently also securing the stability of Central Europe. *Czechoslovakia was, therefore, fundamentally opposed to any policy of any kind of isolation of either Germany or Soviet Russia, and she was therefore opposed to any exclusion of either from the general co-operation*; for this reason she herself strove for agreement between Germany and France, between Russia and Europe and above all, of course, to bring Russia into the League of Nations, considering it a necessary condition and guarantee of normal relations between the other States and the Soviets (also, of course, of non-intervention in the internal affairs of any State).

12. We know that there was some difficulty in this. Objection was rightly raised to the provocation, propaganda and interference of the Third International in the domestic affairs of the European States. We ourselves emphatically rejected it, made an end of it in our country, and defended ourselves successfully against the danger of Communism by maintaining healthy internal conditions

in our own State. We are therefore not afraid even to-day of Communism in our own country—we defended ourselves successfully and will continue to do so. We do not object to this internal defence on the part of anyone else, including Germany. At the same time, however, we recognise Russia's internal régime, which, of course, does not mean that we approve or accept it.

We were and are convinced, however, that a reasonable and normal development of Soviet Russia and the maintenance of permanent peace in Europe is possible only if it cooperates loyally with the rest of Europe. We are convinced that Europe and every single European State, in particular, of course, the Great Powers, will not overcome the present chaos, unless—each defending its own internal régime—it admits in principle the possibility of the simultaneous existence of various régimes, the principle of sincere abstention from interference in the domestic affairs of other States, and the principle that the different existing European régimes must gradually adapt themselves one to the other. *If Europe does not find its way to harmonious relations between these régimes and a gradual mutual rapprochement and reconciliation of the democratic, Fascist, National Socialist and Communist régimes, there must inevitably succeed a series of great revolutions and consequently, of course, a series of different European conflicts.* Spain is a good example of this.

We do not say this because we are afraid for our own sake. Her social and economic system has made Czechoslovakia one of the most stable countries in Europe, and one in which no great social or political changes can come from either Right or Left. What we are concerned about is Europe, its peaceful development, and the gradual return to normal and stabilisation of conditions in Europe generally. What we are above all concerned about, is *European peace*.

13. If we add to these principles, which determined our attitude towards Soviet Russia that has undergone no essential change since the year 1918, the fundamental principle of our foreign policy already discussed here at length—*the principle of an equilibrium of power in Europe maintained and guarded by the League of Nations*—we arrive at the only correct explanation of our policy towards Soviet Russia. This policy of ours is no renewal of the expansive tendencies of Slavdom and pan-Slavism; the Soviets, too, are decidedly opposed to it. Nor is our policy merely egoistically Czecho-slovak—Soviet Russian. It is based on the general conception of peace and equilibrium in Europe. We believe that this peace and equilibrium is not and will not be possible if either Germany or Russia is excluded from European co-operation. We do not reckon with any artificial constructions, by which for a moment or for some short time, in

accordance with the momentary need of the day and the momentary combination of circumstances or temporary régime, either Germany or Russia would be excluded from the European equilibrium. Peace in Europe is possible only on the basis of sound co-operation among all parties without regard to their internal régime even if this does not call into being the ideal situation in which there is no rivalry. In politics such an ideal situation is impossible. Possible and necessary, however, is the situation in which all the great nations and States will and must co-operate, in order to ensure for themselves at least as long and lasting a period of genuine peace as is possible.

For this reason Czechoslovakia was in favour of the entrance of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations (it should not be forgotten that mutual recognition and normal relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union were really not achieved until the entrance of the Soviet Union into the League of Nations), for this reason she was in favour of a Western Pact between Great Britain and France on the one hand and Germany on the other, for this reason in favour of an Eastern Pact between Germany, Poland and Russia. She may have been wrong on this point or that, but no-one can deny her goodwill, her genuine desire for peace and general co-operation, her desire for recognition of the vital interests of all the States

in question. For this reason she signed a pact with Soviet Russia based on these wishes and opinions, *strictly within the scope of the League of Nations, irrespective of the internal régime of the individual States, binding it to the policy of France and Great Britain towards the League of Nations.* She considered it as the first step towards an Eastern Pact, hoping that after all, in spite of all difficulties, this might at some later time be realised. We must state, however, that this hope till to-day was not realized.

Czechoslovakia knows that her system of treaties, her policy of collective security, would *fall, if the League of Nations were to be definitely robbed of all real influence on European politics. With this, too, she calculates as a possible eventuality. And she would act accordingly:* She will find out in which sense and in which direction she will be obliged to adapt or change her general foreign policy. Until now, however, this policy has scraped through, and Czechoslovakia remains true to her signature and her existing political course, not wishing to break the word she has given to the League of Nations, i. e. to all member States, above all, of course, to her friends, who to-day defend this policy of a reasonable European equilibrium.

IV.

NO IDEOLOGICAL CRUSADES

14. It is our desire that this our policy be correctly understood, and nothing sought in it which is not there, in particular the foundation of an ideological block of any kind. In 1919 Czechoslovakia was in arms against the Soviets, in 1921 she had a severe struggle with Communism at home, won it and today she is immune. Her policy of peace was and still is pursued in collaboration with States orientated towards the Left and towards the Right as well. Her policy towards Soviet Russia has always been a policy which, repudiating interference in the domestic affairs of any State by anyone, is opposed to all wars of prevention and intervention, opposed to any sort of ideological crusade from the Left or the Right; it was intended to secure European peace, stabilise conditions and the equilibrium of strength between the Great Powers—each European Power, Western Europe as well as Germany and Russia, being allotted the place to which it is entitled in the development, co-operation and rivalry of the European forces. *For this reason it is Czechoslovakia's policy neither to-day nor in future to enter or be manoeuvred into any conflict of ideological coalitions or camps.*

This is how our friendly policy towards Soviet Russia should be comprehended and explained. If the Soviet or Western European policy tended to

manoeuvre Czechoslovakia in any other direction than that of the defence of peace, the stabilisation and normalisation of conditions, the League of Nations and European equilibrium, the Czechoslovak policy could not be linked up with it. In all of this there is no hostility to Germany or Poland, nothing prevents Czechoslovakia from arriving at an agreement at any time with either Germany or Poland.

It is possible that States in which the danger of Communism is greater may understand or see these matters differently, perhaps it is more difficult for them to create a normal basis for peaceful co-operation with Soviet Russia; we could understand that. But then it would be just that States whose social and economic structure and political stability minimise the danger of Communism—in addition to Czechoslovakia these include Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, who also maintain friendly relations with Soviet Russia—are not denounced to the world as “bolshevised”, as a danger to their neighbours, a gateway for the Soviets and Communism, etc., etc.

If we were in favour of the isolation of Russia, we should be in favour of the acceleration and provocation of social and political revolutions in Europe and possibly a war between isolated Russia and its neighbours. This we wish to prevent at all costs.

15. For this reason Czechoslovakia's treaty of mutual aid with Russia, too, is nothing but these principles put into practice, containing no hostility to anyone. Czechoslovakia would be willing to sign such a treaty with each of her neighbours; she believed sincerely and genuinely that within the scope of the Eastern Pact she could undertake a treaty of mutual help with Germany and Poland, and would always fulfil her obligations under such a pact towards Germany and Poland. We know that in the German and Polish opinion this was not in the interests of these two countries in recent years. But are they sure in Germany or Poland that this will always be so? Why, then, denounce Czechoslovakia as pursuing a policy of isolating Germany, or supporting Soviet Russia in her expansive policy, and why accuse her of desiring to come to an agreement with all States except only her most powerful neighbour?

Czechoslovakia would be the first to oppose the use of such treaties for purposes not in accordance with the spirit and letter of the League of Nations Covenant, not permitted or provided for by it. To impute her other intentions would be absurd, because it would be above all against her own interests; and Czechoslovak politicians are not so unreasonable as to undertake to do something not in accordance with the interests of their country.

We repeat that Czechoslovakia refuses and will always refuse consistently and on principle to adapt

her foreign policy to ideological camps, Right or Left tendencies, democratic, Fascist or Communist systems and internal régimes, because her domestic political and social structure, her system of coalition government—which in our case cannot be replaced by any kind of “popular front”—the balanced, highly-developed political sense of all classes of the population, both Right and Left, would simply not tolerate or permit it.

From the articles in the “Frankfurter Zeitung”, discussing during the Summer of 1937 the German-Czechoslovak relations, we learn that all the above points of difference could be overcome in their entirety, that neither the treaty with France nor the treaty with Russia as such is an insuperable hindrance to an agreement between Germany and Czechoslovakia. In addition, it is said, Germany has never, either directly or indirectly, demanded their cancellation. Still less would our policy with regard to the League of Nations prove a hindrance, as the latter, in consequence of the generally-admitted wane in its influence, plays on the whole an inferior part in our differences of opinion with Germany and in concrete questions of our policy. The Austrian and Central European problem is not German-Czechoslovak, but European; Czechoslovakia will accept any solution of it accepted by the other interested parties. Here too, therefore, there is no serious obstacle.

On the other hand, in the opinion of the "Frankfurter Zeitung", our minority policy and so-called oppression of the Germans here has a much more important effect on the relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia. We will discuss this particular question in detail in a special study.

Here we desired, however, first of all, to meet the complaints made by Germany regarding our *general foreign policy* by giving certain fundamental *explanations and arguments, for us of permanent validity, which will throw some light on the really permanent facts of Czechoslovakia's foreign policy, which will always determine its direction. These are vital questions for Czechoslovakia, principles to which she is and will remain loyal.* Czechoslovakia always meets her engagements and will always do so. She fulfils them and will always loyally fulfil them to Germany too. *Czechoslovakia's policy is not and will never be calculating, insincere, based on momentary combinations of circumstances, speciously friendly, with insincere promises which she would repudiate as soon as the situation changes in this way or that.* In other words, Czechoslovakia is and will remain a loyal partner, trusty, always, cost what it may, to all her partners. To Germany too.

We will pause now for a few reflections as to how these principles of ours have been put into practice, and what has been the spirit and essence

of our policy towards Germany up to now we shall discuss in the following chapter. This, too, will furnish considerable instruction for our further discussions.

III.
THE SPIRIT IN WHICH
OUR POLICY TOWARDS GERMANY
WAS PUT INTO PRACTICE

A. DURING THE WAR 1914-18
AND IN THE YEAR 1919

1. We have described here the fundamental direction and doctrine of our foreign policy towards Germany. In consideration of the complaints advanced by Germany against the practical application of this direction and doctrine of the Czechoslovak foreign policy, we ask ourselves to-day in what spirit Czechoslovakia's foreign policy towards Germany really was pursued from the year 1919 until to-day. We shall here reveal sincerely a number of very important facts, many of which have up to now not been generally known, although it is just these facts which rightly characterise the attempts of our international policy.

The main and absolutely fundamental principle of our practical international policy ever since the year 1919 has been—and remains to-day—to create

a basis for *permanent agreement with Germany*. We never concealed this from any one, we have always acted accordingly, and have always consciously and consistently conducted ourselves in such a way that nothing *irreparable* could come between us. We observed, of course, complete loyalty and fidelity to our friends.

Moreover, even during the War we thought of this. In Masaryk's and Beneš's speeches during wartime, when nations and people expressed their feelings and moods most freely, there will be found neither brutal attacks, insulting statements, nor libels against the honour of Germany and the German nation, as is the case with so many who are to-day declared to be friends of Germany. This was neither calculation nor merely a kind of caution. Our policy has always had this trend. In spite of all the complaints against Germany during the War or to-day, for us the German nation is a great nation, it has done great things for the civilisation of mankind, we ourselves as a nation have learned much from it and received much from it. We have therefore retained this dignified, objective and unprejudiced attitude towards Germany until to-day, and will retain it in future.

Just in passing, as a slight proof of this, we quote the following example:

Dr. Beneš, in his book: "The World War and our Revolution" (Prague, 1927),¹ speaks, it is true,

¹ In English "My War Memoirs", London, 1928.

critically of pre-War and wartime Germany, but concludes his remarks about wartime Germany with the statement: "A nation which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave the world so many prominent lights of science, literature and philosophy, and music like German music, is a great nation".

Regarding his personal attitude towards Germany and the Germans in the pre-War years and at the time when he studied in Berlin, Dr. Beneš, in addition to his critical remarks, said:

"The development of the economic system, the perseverance, industry and painstaking character of the German people compelled my admiration; the showy parade of German strength and the self-confidence of certain prominent sections of the German population repelled me. I appreciated the struggle for a higher, robust culture, though I feared nationalist excesses. I reconciled myself entirely to Germany in the course of my study of German philosophy and literature. Afterwards, at home, I consciously and consistently laboured to achieve an objective and unbiassed judgment of Germany and its civilisation."

Hundreds of such testimonies could be found in the writings, speeches and reflections of all our important cultural, scientific, and political workers before and after the War. Masaryk, Goll, Pekař, Krofta, Šusta, Rádl, Bráf, Kaizl, Švehla, Tusar, Hodža, and many more voiced similar opinions.

All our serious public men have always tried to achieve an impartial, objective and unbiassed attitude towards Germany, even if their opinion and the interest of their nation forced them into a different political camp.

During the War the Allies frequently commented unfavourably on our fundamental opposition to Austria-Hungary at that time and on our attitude towards the future post-War Germany and the German nation as such, which was on the whole more moderate, although our campaign always emphasised the necessity of a final military victory before the future peacetime Europe could be organised. It has already been said that Czechoslovak wartime propaganda, accepting in principle the theory of the nations' right to self-determination, at first judged in good faith that German Austria would probably fall to Germany, although this would be against our interests. We abandoned this opinion when it was clearly shown that Italy, France and Great Britain could not consent to it. We ourselves did not choose between the two sides. We at that time did not know the Allies' plans and opinions, and now we say it only because it shows that on our side there was nothing but loyalty and good faith even to Germany.

In this connection let us say only a few words here on one other matter :

The Czechoslovak memoranda to the Peace Conference at Paris were recently published in Ger-

many; the event was treated as a great sensation and utilised for propaganda, Czechoslovakia was attacked and the imperialist spirit of the Czechoslovak policy at that time and her fundamental hostility to Germany pointed out. We shall discuss these questions in great detail in a succeeding study. We emphasise here and now, however, that the Czechoslovak peace memoranda were discussed in the Czechoslovak press and Parliament in the very early post-War years, and all their main points published. They contain, therefore, nothing either new or sensational. For the time being we will only say that the German propaganda does not put these documents before the German public in the daily press in the complete version, it distorts their essence and significance, and consequently the political conclusions drawn from them, too, are incorrect.

2. When Dr. E. Beneš, the first Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, returned from the Peace Conference and for the first time—in his speech of September 30th, 1919—laid down the fundamental principles of the new State's foreign policy before the Prague Parliament, he made, among others, the following remarks:

“We shall therefore pursue our policy in agreement and friendship with our former allies, and remain true to our programme and the traditions of our revolutionary period. *This does not mean*

that we are in any way subservient or become the instrument of any of the great Allies. There could be no greater mistake than to interpret our union with the Allies in this form. Our alliance with these States consists of the fact that we are imbued with a democratic spirit and the same principles which were followed by these States during the War; the ideas proclaimed by us and by them will be put into effect after the War as well. As honest men we must remain, now that we have become independent, what we were, when we convinced our present allies that they must help us."

"At that time, however, we were just and honourable even to our foes. We shall, therefore, be just and honourable not only to our Allies, but *we shall be just and honourable even to those neighbours of ours who were formerly our foes.* If, however, any one were to threaten us once more, we should defend ourselves stubbornly to the utmost of our strength, just as we defended ourselves in the period of our revolution."

"As far as our future relations with Germany are concerned, they are a *vital problem* for our young republic, and we must therefore study this question with extreme care and the utmost caution. Present-day Germany is an unfinished product; it will be fully occupied by its internal crises for some years to come. It will certainly soon try to have its say in world affairs, but for a long time will be unable to force its will upon even a State much

less powerful than is, for example, the Czechoslovak Republic. *It is in our interest to pursue a loyal and proper policy towards Germany, and thereby early to establish a tradition in our relationship; but we can never allow ourselves to become an instrument in the hands of our neighbour, and consequently to lose our liberty, our political, diplomatic and military importance.*"

This was our first post-War public, official statement regarding Czechoslovakia's attitude towards Germany: there were no reproaches, no recrimination, no declarations of hostility or prejudice at a period when Germany was in a very, very bad situation. Principles were laid down which were afterwards consistently followed: loyalty, fairness, recognition that the problem of our attitude towards Germany is a vital problem, and consequently the unhesitating decision to create a tradition of neighbourliness. Even then we were aware that Germany would regain its strength and once more play its part in Europe and the world; we emphasised, however, that we should never be able to permit ourselves to become an instrument in the hands of our powerful neighbour. At the same time, however, we equally emphatically stressed that our friendship with the Allies did not mean that we are in any way subservient to them and become an instrument in the hands of one of the great Allies.

B. AFTER THE GREAT WAR TILL THE YEARS 1934-35

3. We conducted our policy towards Germany in practice in the same spirit. For a number of years Germany's relations with the rest of Europe were determined by the question of reparations. We were not interested in this, having no right to reparations; in a certain sense we even had interests in common with Germany, as we had to pay for the State demesnes and pay liberation dues. Retaining complete loyalty to our wartime Allies and to our friends in these matters, we adopted a neutral attitude in this question, helping wherever possible to the best of our ability towards an agreement and a reasonable compromise between Germany and France. We ourselves, immediately after the amount of the German reparation payments was fixed in London in 1921, offered Germany *on our own initiative to renounce the important rights accruing to us under the Treaty of Versailles regarding the sequestration of German property on the territory of the Republic*. Sums amounting to thousands of millions were concerned. We were the only European state to do this without any compensation, in the interest of future friendly relations with our neighbour.

We were the first of the Allies to conclude a good economic treaty with Germany. In the year 1921, when Wirth and Briand were in power, in collaboration with Tusar, the Czechoslovak Minister to Berlin, Dr. Beneš did all in his power to

bring about a rapprochement between Paris and Berlin. It was at that time that the first pacific and conciliatory official speech was made in the Paris Chamber intended for Berlin. This was done after lengthy negotiations between Beneš and Briand and Berthelot. In the same spirit, at the time of the occupation of the Rhineland on account of non-payment of reparations—having at that time no concrete obligations in these questions towards our Allies—we remained neutral, and when the conflict matured, Dr. Beneš strove to the best of his ability, with the consent of some of our French friends (Marshal Foch, Jules Cambon) and some high German officials to induce the Poincaré Government to agree to a reasonable compromise and a definite Franco-German agreement. And when, years after, the former Chancellor Cuno paid a visit to Prague and to Dr. Beneš, our Minister of Foreign Affairs, he returned to the question on his own initiative and expressed once more his thanks for Prague's goodwill and services at that time.

4. In the first few post-War years the entire Czechoslovak policy was conducted in this spirit. We should stress here very emphatically and clearly that Prague's policy was based on the idea of consistent and continual endeavours for an agreement between Berlin and Paris. The Prague politicians always considered good relations between France and Germany as their own programme, too, for

they regarded this condition as the basis of general European peace, and were of the opinion that friendly relations between Paris and Berlin constitute at the same time a permanent solution of the problem of the relations between Berlin and Prague. And so, not only on the occasions when this question came up for discussion, but publicly, as one of our principles, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs declared, and informed each successive French Minister of Foreign Affairs, that Prague would never oppose a treaty of any kind between Paris and Berlin, would never be an obstacle in the way of friendly relations between Paris and Berlin, and on the contrary desired such a state of affairs, as was and always would be in Prague's own interest.

It must be emphasised that Prague did not change its policy even when the National Socialist régime assumed power in Germany, and that here, too, its attitude was as consistent in recent years as ever before. Its policy is the same to-day, too. We have sometimes been reproached by some of our friends regarding this policy, and in Poland, in particular, it was taken amiss, as though we had wished or been able, by our efforts for an agreement between Paris and Berlin, to harm Polish interests. This was not the case—in principle we regarded the relations between Germany and France from the angle of a pacification of Europe

in general¹⁾) and were of the opinion that this would be of advantage to both Poland and Czechoslovakia.

It was for this reason that we contributed to agreement regarding the Dawes Plan, for this reason that when Stresemann submitted a draft of the Locarno Pact to E. Herriot and Austen Chamberlain, and Paris, in February, asked Prague's opinion, Dr. Beneš immediately replied that the offer should be accepted and that Czechoslovakia would proceed in a manner calculated to facilitate agreement, placing no demands impossible to fulfil—for, as Dr. Beneš said at that time, to Czechoslovakia peace on the Rhine meant also peace on the Danube.

It was for this reason, too, that at Locarno Dr. Beneš used all his influence to bring about an agreement, trying at the same time to cooperate loyally with Skrzyński and always proceeding jointly with him, not for or against Germany, but for the achievement of agreement among all the

¹⁾ It is really strange that R. K. in the "Frankfurter Zeitung", at the conclusion of his articles on the relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia, arrived at the conclusion that Czechoslovakia is an obstacle in the path of Franco-German agreement. Such a biased and tendencious statement should not be made in a serious discussion! It shows too clearly the attempt to evoke misunderstandings between Prague and Paris, not the attempt to achieve agreement between Berlin and Paris and Berlin and Prague, full co-operation between all three.

Locarno powers. In passing we may say that the Locarno Pact affected our domestic politics as well: it made possible the enrolment of the "activist" Czechoslovak German parties in the Government.

5. At the same time Prague took another step in the direction of friendly relations with Berlin. Knowing Germany's sensitiveness with regard to certain clauses of the Peace of Versailles, in which Germany saw a question of its national honour, Czechoslovakia behaved towards Germany in these matters with dignity, it is true, but with consideration and due regard, not desiring to offend Germany in its national honour. The Treaty of Versailles gave Czechoslovakia—in addition to general clauses allowing certain rights to all the signatories of the treaty—two important advantages affecting Czechoslovakia alone: the sequestration of German property and the internationalisation of the Elbe and Oder, with a free zone in Hamburg and Stettin.

As has already been remarked, Prague renounced the first of these rights as early as 1921, immediately after the amount of the reparations was fixed. In 1925 Prague spontaneously took a second step: the Government sent Dr. Krofta—now Minister of Foreign Affairs—to Berlin with an offer of direct agreement regarding both rivers and the zone in Hamburg, adding that if the Berlin Government would make an offer securing for Prague the rights on the Elbe and in Hamburg which are

essential and economically indispensable for it, Prague would renounce the rights granted it in these questions by the Treaty of Versailles. This was made subject only to the consent of the Allies, i. e. of the International Elbe Committee. Berlin accepted the offer gratefully and the agreement was concluded, so that when the river clauses of the Versailles Treaty were recently annulled, the former position between Czechoslovakia and Germany was not affected. We quote this merely as a document of Prague's behaviour and as characteristic of the spirit in which Prague's policy towards Berlin was conceived.

Let us recall another episode equally characteristic of the situation between Berlin and Prague at that time. Prague consistently supported Briand's policy of rapprochement and when, on Germany's joining the League of Nations, the well-known difficulties in connection with a permanent seat on the Council of the League of Nations for Brazil and Spain arose, and there was a danger of dissolution and of the withdrawal of Germany as well, then Dr. Beneš placed his seat on the Council at the disposal of the Great Powers with the aim that, prompt satisfaction being granted to the others, the permanent seat for Germany could be immediately established and consequently the whole policy of agreement with Germany saved. At that time there were also long discussions at Geneva between Dr. Beneš on the one hand and Reich

Chancellor Luther, Stresemann and von Schubert, the Secretary of State, on the other; the German politicians spoke highly of Prague's policy of reconciliation, discussed the further development of the relations between the two neighbouring States with the Czechoslovak delegate, and a period of relations ensued which were considered by both parties to be friendly. When Stresemann first participated in a session of the Council of the League of Nations as Germany's delegate on the Council, he gave expression to this fact in a public speech full of praise for Czechoslovakia.

The relations between Prague and Berlin in the succeeding years 1926 and 1927 were governed by the same spirit. Czechoslovakia considered her Locarno Pact with Germany, even though the Rhine Pact did not affect her directly, to be the main and definite basis of her relations with Germany, the foundation on which future construction would take place and which would certainly lead to that system of collective security which, in the scope of the League of Nations and European equilibrium, has been and will remain the final aim of Czechoslovak policy.

Later, in the years 1927 and 1928, when the economic and financial problem of Austria became once more acute, and at the same time the question of disarmament was first discussed, Dr. Beneš procured an invitation from the Berlin Government for an official visit to Berlin, in order that an

exchange of opinions could take place between Prague and Berlin regarding these questions. Dr. Beneš visited Berlin in April 1928 on his return journey from London, had important political discussions with Reich Chancellor Marx, the president of the Reichsbank, Schacht, Reichswirtschaftsminister Curtius and von Schubert (Stresemann was at that time already seriously ill and died soon afterwards) regarding Central European questions, German-Czechoslovak economic co-operation, the Austrian problem and the progress of disarmament work at Geneva. The negotiations were sincere, cordial, friendly, even when Dr. Beneš at that time openly and loyally stated in Berlin what resistance would be raised in Europe to any attempt by Germany at an "Anschluss" with Austria. The friendly relations between Berlin and Prague were only improved by this visit.

6. These relations continued in succeeding years—in spite of the dispute which arose in Geneva and at The Hague about the well-known Curtius-Schober agreement for an Austro-German customs union—and found expression in particular in friendly contact between Czechoslovakia and Germany at various international conferences, between the delegations of both States at Geneva, on the Elbe Commission, etc. This applies particularly to the relations between the German delegation and the Czechoslovak delegation at the Disarmament Conference from 1932 until the withdrawal of the

German delegation in October 1933. Dr. Beneš was general reporter, and his attitude towards the German delegation was strictly loyal and correct—as was stated and appreciated by Germany on more than one occasion. The German delegation was aware, too, that it was from Dr. Beneš that one of the proposals—prepared at the beginning of the year 1932—originated, to grant Germany in principle complete equality of rights in the matter of armaments, immediately to put it into actual practice and gradually to realise it over a certain number of years. At that time few in Geneva ventured to realise the fact that if agreement in this question were not reached in time, the Disarmament Conference would break up and Europe would drift in an unknown direction.

When, in the year 1933, the National Socialist régime assumed power, and the German Government, on October 14th 1933, decided to withdraw from the League of Nations, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Beneš, in a speech in Parliament on October 31st 1933, formulated the direction of the Czechoslovak foreign policy towards the Third Reich as follows: “In this difficult and complicated situation our policy has not the slightest hesitation or doubt. It will not change in any way its course pursued in the past fifteen years, nor will it change anything in its practice and methods, nor in its theories. In the same way we shall not change in any respect the friendly and

correct relations which we have up to now maintained with our neighbour, Germany, in whatever way matters turn out there; and we hope that the situation will be similar on the other side. We do not at present and never shall interfere with the domestic concerns of any of our neighbours.”

We should like to add that our economic co-operation with Germany throughout the years has been unimpeachable, and that it has been carried out with success on both sides to mutual satisfaction. No disputes of any consequence have arisen, negotiations have always proceeded smoothly, and personal relations have always been excellent. Germany has always occupied the first place in Czechoslovakia's foreign trade, and fundamentally situation is the same to-day, in spite of the present difficulties with clearing systems and self-sufficiency. We do not hesitate to say that in negotiations of any kind our representatives have on the whole had no difficulty in coming to an agreement with the Germans; the two parties understood each other very well, certainly much better than in the case of the Western European or other Central European negotiators with the Germans or with us. We have always been of the opinion that the reason for this lies in the centuries of contact between the two nations and the affinity of the two civilisations, in spite of their great differences in certain respects, and above all, of course, in the generally sound acquaintance of the two

States with each other's economic circumstances and interests, and in the consciousness of the economic ties and interdependence between the two countries.

Consequently until the year 1934-35 there were almost no direct disputes, difficulties or serious conflicts between Czechoslovakia and Germany. Such as did crop up here and there were quickly settled by friendly, direct negotiations without bitterness. The diplomatic relations were unimpeachable, the diplomatic representatives of the two parties were satisfied, and amicably accepted in both countries. It should further be mentioned that until that time the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs was strictly adhered to both by Germany and us, that the minority problem was for Germany our domestic problem and that, where an exchange of opinions in the internal questions of one State or the other ever took place, it was always in a strictly correct manner and in a completely friendly spirit.

For this reason, too, until this year the question of the relations between Germany and Czechoslovakia hardly occurred in international discussions, was of almost no international interest and formed no part at all of the post-War European difficulties. Interest in it was strictly limited to Berlin and Prague, and in European politics manifested itself only in connection with various attempts at some sort of system of collective security,

in which Czechoslovakia was to take part together with Germany.

C. TWO DOCUMENTS

7. Thus it came to pass that, when, in 1935, the German Minister, Dr. W. Koch, who for many years had represented his country here, left Prague, the Czechoslovak Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Beneš, made a farewell speech to him on June 26th, 1935. His remarks included the following:

“You have now done your patriotic duty as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary of Germany in Prague for nearly fourteen years. Even if Germany were not a State of such importance for us, the largest of our neighbours, with which we have such old and profound relations, this circumstance alone would be sufficient to induce me to take this opportunity of appreciating your political activities, performed for such a long period in such an important and very responsible position.”

“Permit me, Mr. Minister, to emphasise these undeniable facts: in the past fourteen years’ post-War politics we have frequently had the opportunity of confirming in complete agreement that between our two States there are no direct conflicts or material for such. We have, however, been aware of the important circumstance that the effects of the general European situation have been likely to create a situation between our two States

conducive to considerable difficulties in the path of our friendly relations. But in each such case I have found that, in complete harmony with my attitude, you have always adopted a course calculated speedily to reduce the difficulties, and have found a way and method by which a solution, preserving the dignity of both States, could promptly be achieved, always laying most emphasis on those things which we have in common and which assist us to co-operate together, rather than upon those things which might separate us, emphasising the mutual respect felt on both sides for the legitimate interests and sentiments of the other State and the other nation."

"In addition to this, however, how many fruitful discussions and successful initiatives have there been, how many treaties negotiated and signed, how many adjustments agreed upon, how many economic, financial, social, administrative and political agreements have been discussed, negotiated and put into practice! In this way a considerable amount of successful work has been done between Berlin and Prague, and at the head of these operations you have always played an active and constructive part."

"I think it will not be indiscreet if I say that we both would have wished to achieve, in the course of this long and friendly co-operation, much better results still than have actually been shown. In the years 1927-1928 the progress in this direction was

really exceptionally great, and I am sure that I am expressing your conviction as well as my own if I maintain my optimism and express not only confidence, but certainty, that the aim for which we have worked fourteen years with conviction and devotion will ultimately be achieved.”

Dr. Koch replied to Dr. Beneš as follows :

“When one leaves one’s position after a long period of service one can have no better satisfaction than this, that one has earned the praise of one’s prominent contemporaries, and although, as is obvious, I must leave the final judgment of my activities in Prague to the decision of my Government in Berlin, I am very happy to have found approval and appreciation of the critical spirit with which I have had the pleasure of collaborating for so long in calm times and turbulent, which has observed me closely with a watchful eye—and in addition a man whose opinion is heard, appreciated and studied in all countries in the world.”

“You have called me a man of goodwill. I accept this. I have always been led by the wish and firm intention to improve the relations between our two States, to effect a rapprochement between our nations, and remove the hindrances which part them. But in politics one man of goodwill can achieve but little. He must have, opposite him, a person dominated by the same feeling and the same desires. If my attempts sometimes had a modest success,

I am indebted to you for it, Dr. Beneš, and I thank you for it with all my heart. I agree with you that our joint endeavours have not yet been crowned with a success corresponding to our wishes. But I share, too, your hope and your confidence that this aim will one day be reached. We are not of those who think that ideals are given to mortals in order that they may not attain them.”

“You have found handsome words for our fourteen year’s co-operation. I, too, shall always think with deep satisfaction of this collaboration, often calm and full of confidence, often, too, somewhat thorny, but always permeated with the sincere wish to achieve understanding and agreement. Our tone together was very open and considerably facilitated the success of our discussion. I thank you in this hour of parting that you were so open to me and allowed me to adopt exactly the same attitude towards you.”

“Although I am happy to return to my beloved fatherland, I leave your beautiful country with deep regret. You know, Dr. Beneš, the active interest which I have felt since my youth in your language, your history, your customs and in everything concerning your nation and your country. This interest will accompany me into my retirement. I wish to say with all sincerity in this last moment that during the fourteen years of my stay in Czechoslovakia both I personally and my family

have been shown exemplary hospitality by your countrymen, whatever the political situation may have been. For this, too, I am heartily thankful.”

These words on both sides exactly characterise the spirit in which the Czechoslovak policy towards Germany was conducted in the first sixteen years after the Great War.

IV.
CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S
REPROACHES AGAINST GERMANY

I.
THE GERMAN POLICY AND PRESS CAMPAIGNS
CONCERNING CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. In view of what has already been said about the lines and doctrines, the endeavours, intentions and actual doings of Czechoslovak foreign policy in respect of Germany we will now ask the question of what has been the reaction in Germany to these endeavours, intentions and actual doings.

Let it be said at once that immediately after the War, in the years 1918 and 1919, official Germany, her diplomats and her democratic factors all were correct, loyal and proper in their attitude and behaviour towards official Czechoslovakia. Weimar Germany—its official and democratic factors—was over and above that correct in its attitude to us in the matter of our minority policy and in the matter of our Germans. That does not always apply to the German radical parties—particularly not to

the German Nationalist fractions of Weimar Germany. These were, it is true, more reserved and respectful in their opposition to us than for example to Poland, and in official diplomatic and other negotiations we arrived at satisfactory agreement with them. In public, however, they were against us, wrote about us in their press in a manner which showed they rejected our principles and often attacked us sharply (just as did our radical nationalist elements in the case of Germany), and discussed our internal affairs not only always with reticence but also frequently with disapproval.

All this, however, did not on the whole go beyond certain limits and always permitted, as we have already shown, official relations that were generally correct and tolerable to both sides, that developed towards good neighbourly contacts, and prepared the way for a new tradition of friendly intercourse.

We have, notwithstanding, a number of reproaches to bring up against official Weimar Germany. In the first place official Weimar Germany was very well acquainted with our endeavours to bring about good relations between Paris and Berlin—endeavours that issued from the principles and permanent programme of our foreign policy. What we have said of our foreign policy towards Germany and have put forward as positive proofs of our efforts to secure good relations and to create a new tradition in respect of Germany was well known to German circles, was acknowledged in

private conversations and recognized in general. During the years when Tusar and Krofta were successively Czechoslovak Ministers in Berlin this fact was more than once mutually emphasised with satisfaction. Dr. Beneš, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, never omitted any opportunity of publicly speaking of the "correct", the "good", the "normally neighbourly" and finally even "friendly" relations between Czechoslovakia and Germany.

This was, as we have said, our programme, but it was at a time when Germany's was at her weakest, and when there was but little understanding elsewhere for this policy. Nevertheless throughout the 17 years during which he was Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Beneš never had the satisfaction of hearing a single public utterance in the same sense on the part of Germany. Apart from Stresemann's speech in Geneva, to which we have already referred, no public reference was made in Berlin, in the German Parliament or by the official German circles—even of Weimar Germany—to all these declarations and acts of which we have just spoken. Not a word at any time!

We had not, nor can we have, any objection if German policy, public opinion or press look with other eyes than ours upon our conduct in abiding by the peace treaties, by a Geneva policy, by our standpoint against the so-called "Drang nach Osten" policy. In these matters our interests were opposed, and criticism or reticence could be natural

and only what was to be expected. But why did neither official nor unofficial Germany, why did not Weimar Germany show more recognition of Czechoslovakia, why did they not acknowledge at least the things that deserved even a limited measure of recognition, why did they not respond just once throughout 17 years to the proffered hand, and why did they always look exclusively on the negative side, only at things where our interests were opposed, why did they not bring themselves to see good will at least where it actually existed?

2. We have, moreover, a number of other reproaches to make. It would seem as if *post-War Germany knows nothing, or almost nothing, positive about Czechoslovakia*. The little she knows is either of negative or unfriendly character—and, it may in particular be emphasized—unjust, exaggerated or untrue. Pre-War Germany had a great reputation for thoroughness, practical sense, for effort to acquaint itself well with the rest of the world, to study it and act accordingly, although even then Germany sinned much against the non-German and non-Magyars peoples of Austria-Hungary by adopting as her own the all too one-sided attitude of certain Vienna circles, especially that of the Austrian German-Nationalists, and of Budapest, and thus saw all that happened in the Monarchy in a distorted light. For the Czechs and

Slovaks there was—apart from a few personal exceptions— neither recognition nor respect nor an impartial attitude. The War, of course, naturally made all this still worse, for it was precisely the conditions in the Habsburg Monarchy which to such a large extent brought about Germany's defeat in the Great War, and the German War generation naturally put the blame for this pre-eminent-ly upon the Czechs.

It seems to us that post-War Germany has maintained the same line in these respects. To some little extent, it would seem, Germany has changed her attitude to-day towards the Yugoslavs, in the last few years Polish conditions have been given more serious consideration in Germany, conditions in the Baltic States are closely followed, and those in the Balkans are also fairly closely followed; but Germany has not yet, in our opinion, arrived at a just and objective knowledge of Czechoslovakia, her nearest and most immediate neighbour.

When we consider the well-known and justified effort of the Germans to make themselves well acquainted with foreign countries and the world generally, and their justly appreciated thoroughness—it is assuredly disconcerting to note that in post-War Germany there has not yet been published by any German author a single book on Czechoslovakia and the Czechoslovaks that is objective, truthful, and not permeated with hostile prejudice

and inimical tendencies.¹⁾ Even under the Weimar regime German public opinion was fed as it were by daily hostile reports from Czechoslovakia. In Catholic and socialist circles where there was, and still is, less prejudice, but little interest on the whole was displayed in Czechoslovakia, and so German public opinion was exclusively informed by German-Nationalist circles—tendentious, hostile, prejudiced. Since 1933 when the National-Socialists assumed the power, the position has become still worse. Formerly what was written in the Reich about Czechoslovakia was written merely in the spirit of the former German-Nationalist or National-Socialist parties (Kallina, Jung, Krebs, Baerlan) who could hardly be impartial; to-day all this has become intensified into a systematic campaign nourished, if not mainly at least in part, by political exiles from Czechoslovakia.

We repeat, we understand that in Germany they should criticise us, that they should interest themselves in the fate of our minorities, and that they should inform their public of the oppositional policy of our Germans against the Government.

3. But the Czechoslovak Republic is a State of more than 15 million people, from the technical and economic angle the strongest of the minor

¹⁾ It seems that the first attempt has been made just now in Berlin. A little book which tries to be more objective than the previous publications has been published by H. Singule: "Der Staat Masaryk's", Berlin, 1937.

States of Central Europe; the Czechoslovak nation has its own sound national culture and a stirring past in the course of which it often fought against Germany, but also often took the same side as Germany or collaborated with her. Over and above that, this State has since 1919 made tremendous further progress in the cultural, political, economic and technical spheres; it has had an economic crisis, and has overcome it; it has had social crises (in 1921 Bolshevism, in 1926-29 Fascism) and overcame them completely and definitively without violence, without upheaval, without the shedding of blood, without changes in its institutions, and without infringing upon the essential rights of anyone and remaining an evolutionary and progressive democracy which it will in any case remain also in the future.

Czechoslovakia naturally has her problems, her difficulties, and her weak points, but she has also her great forces, her advantages and her successes, a great inner viability and indisputably advancing consolidation in the upbuilding of the State, for her population is mature, educated, intelligent, industrious and disciplined. From unbiassed observers among not merely friends but also the former neutrals—Swiss, Americans, Dutchmen, Swedes, Danes and Norwegians—we frequently hear and read that of all the new States that of the Czechoslovaks has advanced furthest, that the Czechoslovaks have the most highly developed and most

prosperous State, with the greatest stability of internal conditions, with the most balanced social conditions among the individual classes, with property relatively equally distributed among the various classes, and where the differences between the political parties and trends are comparatively small, making violent changes and upheavals impossible.

It is also well known throughout the whole world that the conditions enjoyed by the minorities in Czechoslovakia, alongside those obtaining in Switzerland, are of the fairest, that it is impossible in many other countries to speak of anything like the measure of liberty of the press, of conviction, of opinion and of free intellectual development that exists in Czechoslovakia. In private conversation even the German opponents of Czechoslovakia are ready to admit that the position of the minorities, including the German minority, is incomparably better than for instance in Poland, Hungary or Italy. They will even acknowledge that Czechoslovakia has saved 150,000 Germans in Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia from national extinction by giving them what throughout the whole nineteenth and twentieth centuries Hungary refused, and still refuses, to give them.

The fact is that Czechoslovakia, even though she has a different philosophy and doctrine concerning the nation and the national conception than have the German National-Socialists, bases all her

State organisation upon the fundamental principle of respect for the national individuality of her citizens—including her minorities—demands respect for her nationality because she respects the nationality of others, learnt these doctrines too in Germany from German romanticism and from Herder, and regards nation and nationality altogether as a great spiritual and cultural value, as an inviolable factor of all the modern life of a State, of political science and statesmanship. All this ought to be comprehensible if not sympathetic precisely to present-day National-Socialist Germany.

4. The position is as if nothing at all may be written about this in Germany; not only the reporters and correspondents of the daily press in the Reich who live more or less on the negative and tendentious work of the daily reporting of polemics, but even serious politicians, economists, diplomats, savants, University professors and the like write nothing about it. And even from this they draw no just conclusion for their relations to Czechoslovakia. To be merely negative everywhere and in all things and to refuse to recognize anything positive is no sign of strength. We in Czechoslovakia are not afraid of recognizing the true strength of Germany whether material or intellectual—even of present-day Germany whose national theories are well-known amongst us, and are even systematically propagated in fairly open fashion in the press

of the Sudete German Party. Czechoslovakia is not afraid of this propaganda either. The results which may be perhaps expected of it here and there will not materialise since the primary conditions therefore do not exist in our country.

In Czechoslovakia, after all, good things are none the less accomplished alongside perhaps less meritorious things—just as is the case in other countries, and in Germany itself. To underrate and describe in a tendentious light the work of nearly 11 million Czechoslovak Slavs imbued with intense patriotism, of firm and strong character, with a definite aim and possessed of determination to pursue it, in general very industrious and intelligent (there are less than 2% illiterates among the Czechs), to expatiate on non-existent differences between the Czechs and Slovaks, not to see how the labours of 3 million Germans have for whole centuries been closely bound up with Bohemia, and *not to see that certainly more than one half of all the Germans in Bohemia are desirous of honest agreement with the Czechs, and that they recognize the work, the good qualities, the energy and good will as well as the sense of democracy, humanity and justice shown by the overwhelming majority of Czechs and Slovaks, and that this section of the Germans for a whole series of the most weighty reasons do not desire any other policy even if in this or that matter they bring forward their criticisms in wholly democratic fashion, and adopt*

their own standpoint to political matters, to exert an intellectual and material pressure upon Prague by means of great press campaign behind which the world public at once seeks—*groundlessly so in our opinion*—the possibility of great international conflicts, and in all this to make use of our opposition Germans (the emigrés in Germany)—all this is either prejudice and impartiality or great ignorance of actual conditions, *particularly ignorance of the national psychology of the Czechoslovaks, of their mental and moral situation and of their entire mentality to-day*. All this only causes us to drift mutually further apart.

In Czechoslovakia it all produces the *precisely opposite effect*. Everybody on our side knows that these campaigns are wrong, unjust, and without any real basis, and that in every case they represent amazing exaggerations and absurd distortions of facts and realities. Amongst us everyone without exception knows that everywhere the Germans as a minority, and all other minorities too, are incomparably worse off than they are with us. Yet in Germany attacks are made upon us and we are even described as disturbers of peace. Every simple citizen amongst us must draw his political conclusion from this.

In the present tense situation and in the post-revolution turmoil in Germany much may be explained by revolutionary excitement, prejudice and sometimes by sentiment, passion and repugnance

to all that occurred in the War and after the War, as well as by the opposition with which the existing regime meets in the rest of Europe. We could understand that, and we could also understand a decent, genuine and concrete criticism of all that deserves criticism. But excitement, passion and indignation such as is displayed in the press in the course of these campaigns is no policy and is in particular no *realpolitik*. All such things lead only to further disputes and further misunderstanding.

5. Such typical prejudice and indignation, and above all an absolute ignorance of the psychology of the Czechoslovaks inspired the German reports launched during the press campaigns of the years 1936 and 1937. For nearly eight months German propaganda flooded its press and the international press with false reports about Soviet aerodromes, Soviet air generals and troops in Czechoslovakia. This was supplemented by commentaries upon the Bolshevising of Czechoslovakia, of the strength of Communism, of the Bolshevising of the Czechoslovak intelligentsia, theatre, literature, and art, of a popular front, of Czechoslovakia being a jumping-off ground for the Soviet Union against Europe, of military and other pacts with the Soviets by which Czechoslovakia menaced Europe and the whole civilisation of Europe, etc., etc.

It would be possible to compile whole books showing in detail how these reports were fabricated. Every effort to call attention through of-

ficial and non-official channels, through diplomatic avenues and otherwise, to the fact that all these accusations were mere inventions and untruths, that they were groundless, all official and press *dementis* on the part of Czechoslovakia had no effect worth speaking of. *To Czechoslovakia this campaign and the reaction to it throughout the world has produced valuable political instruction in all directions.*

It is almost incredible that it should have been possible to serve up for eight whole months such obvious untruths for public consumption. It was of course impossible to attain any results by them, for in the end no one outside the frontiers of Germany believed them; the critical judgement of Europe rejected them, and interest in Czechoslovakia grew apace.

In the past two years, as we have already mentioned, an unprecedented number of visitors came here from abroad who found in the midst of perturbed Central Europe a quiet, pacific, conciliatory Czechoslovakia, politically mature and stabilised, with a generally high standard of living, and well-developed in the cultural and technical spheres, in a word: *a mature State with Western European culture, with a high degree of freedom and democracy, absolutely immune from revolution either from Left or Right, fundamentally secured against Communist extremes and tolerant in matters of religion, of culture and nationality, with a popula-*

tion that is patriotic, steadfast, calm, and determined as well as prepared at every moment to defend their country come what may; these foreign visitors found a State with sound public finances and economy, a good administration and a strong, well-developed army completely free from political party influences. In brief, they found the very reverse of what was asserted in that campaign.

We are well aware ourselves that not everything is perfect in our country, and we do not claim that it is. We too have our weaknesses and shortcomings. But we claim that conditions with us are better than in a great number of European countries, that our State is healthy, sound and strong, and that there will be neither upheavals nor revolutions there. Foreign opinion in general recognizes this and the actual conditions in our country are proof of it.

In Germany on the other hand the press continually spreads tendentious reports concerning us, and German public opinion is unfortunately misinformed as regards Czechoslovakia. Recently, as we have said, even the memoranda submitted by Czechoslovakia to the Peace Conference have been produced out of the arsenal of weapons against Czechoslovakia, and laid before the public with ulterior aims. *Official circles in Czechoslovakia have for 19 years endeavoured to achieve undisturbed and positive relations that would mark the beginning of a new tradition, that would mean*

the end of the former pre-War and wartime conditions, that would signify full respect for the rights and the position of Germany in Europe and in the world, *that would, however, also give to the smaller nation, Germany's neighbour, that has suffered so much throughout her centuries of existence from the predominance of Germany, guarantees of independence, of liberty and of the place which rightly belongs to her in Central Europe.* These campaigns work against this.

II.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA'S RIGHT TO SECURITY AND HOPE FOR AGREEMENT WITH GERMANY

6. Thus we arrive at the final question of fundamental importance for our State, a question in which we must register *the least understanding of all in Germany for our point of view.* A State and nation like Czechoslovakia, with its historical experiences, with its specific geographical situation, with its democratic tradition, cannot in present-day Europe where material and military power with all its ideology of force, its *Ideologie der Gewalt*, has once more come into full play, rely upon the good will or the good intentions of anyone. Momentary good relations, relations of temporary mutual confidence between her and her powerful neighbour in this or that period of European politics will not suffice to ensure her

integrity and independence—for this there must be a balance of power in a system of collective security. *In addition to good relations with her powerful neighbour this State must on the one hand be internally consolidated and possess her own military force, while on the other hand she must indispensably have her system of international friendship or a system of collective security.* In the Europe and the world of to-day these are vital conditions for her existence.

For these self-evident matters, based on general views that are also current in Germany, there has never been adequate understanding in that country. From Czechoslovakia everything possible for the radicalising minorities has been demanded, sometimes even the abandonment of existing friendships and of the guarantees of the Peace Treaties, desertion of the policy of the League of Nations, etc., etc. That a small State, however, has a right also to demand or to create the conditions of its own security, integrity and independence is something for which there seems to have been no comprehension whatsoever. What State in Europe to-day can decently and with firm conviction and certainty base its existence only upon the mutual trust of the individual countries of Europe towards one another—at a moment when conditions change so rapidly and when revolutionary governments one after another in various States reject every-

thing to which the governments that preceded them adhered or bound themselves?

As we have already shown, *Czechoslovakia has always had the best intentions of elaborating this system of guarantees and collaboration which she had at heart, in agreement, cooperation and mutual endeavour with Germany.* We repeat that but for one not complete nor fully satisfactory attempt at Locarno, no understanding for these things was forthcoming from Germany. Perhaps our proposals and those of our friends did not fit in with the interests of Germany. Why then were initiatives which might have met those interests not forthcoming from the other side?

How was Czechoslovakia to react to all this? Where in these circumstances was she to find confidence in peaceful development for the future? The German press campaigns of 1936 and 1937 which made so much mischief in Europe did not give us that confidence.

On the other hand, sincere and high appreciation was shown in Czechoslovakia for the speeches made by the German Chancellor in May 1936 in which he spoke of Germany's decision to come to agreement with all her neighbours, and in which express mention was made in this connection of Czechoslovakia. This was regarded by us as that initiative of which we have just spoken. *In Czechoslovakia faith was expressed in that pronouncement, and public opinion reacted to it.* For this

reason we most decidedly disagreed with all suggestions in the foreign press to the effect that last year or this there would be conflict between us and Germany or an attack by Germany upon Czechoslovakia. *We regarded the suggestion as simply absurd, and quite out of keeping with the situation.* Of course none of us understood how this new situation was to be harmonised with the press campaigns. *Nevertheless not even the press campaigns caused us to change our opinion that the two countries sincerely desired peace and agreement, and that those ends would be attained.*

7. We know, of course, that in Germany, too, complaints are raised regarding the attitude of our public opinion towards what is taking place in Germany. We are reproached with the negative attitude adopted by a section of our press towards events in Germany, towards the activities of the existing régime there, towards the doctrines and the ideology of National-Socialism and towards all connected with it. Complaints are also made of our standpoint towards the political exiles from Germany.

In all these matters, however, proofs of good will have been forthcoming from the Czechoslovak side. On Czechoslovak initiative an attempt was made to secure a press agreement. An offer was also made from the Czechoslovak side to negotiate for reciprocal treatment of political emigrés, and agreement was proffered for a precise limitation

of the rights of asylum and everything connected therewith. Nothing came of this. On the other hand, three Czechoslovak fugitives who were under remand in Czechoslovakia and had been allowed bail on giving their word of honour to the Czechoslovak authorities not to flee the country but to place themselves at any moment at the disposal of the courts, have been appointed members of the German Parliament and been given official functions. These fugitives also give the present German press campaigns the benefit of their collaboration.

All this throws a clear light on the whole situation. We do not assert that, for example, the attitude of our press has always been correct or free from exaggerations and unfair criticism, or that it has not in particular failed to appreciate what good the régime in Germany has accomplished—in short we do not say that there has always been sufficient objectivity towards Germany on our side. For this reason too we sincerely considered the matter of negotiations for a press entente. In great political questions, however, in the broad outlines of our general policy, in the whole conception of our relations with Germany *there has always been genuine good will to arrive at agreement*, to respect all that rightly belongs to Germany and to her position in Europe and the world, to avoid interference in her internal affairs, and to labour, with mutual respect for the two

divergent political régimes, for a reasonable co-existence, for a decent *modus vivendi*, and thus for good, neighbourly relations.

We are well aware that doubts about good will on our part have often been entertained in Germany, and that we are reproached on the German side with always being in the opposite camp in the post-War diplomatic struggles. This is to a great extent true because *our own* vital interests are involved, and if Germany were in the same situation she would act in the same way and defend *her* vital interests. In many regards this is not so, because we have sincerely striven for German-French and European agreement. As early as the Genoa Conference, that is, in the year 1922, we acted in this sense, and particularly at Locarno, where the Great Powers negotiated for the most part among themselves, we took part in the negotiations in both camps in loyalty and friendship. It would be possible to produce a whole series of other proofs, as we have already indicated. It is also forgotten that after the War the Czechoslovak Foreign Minister Dr. Beneš, was the first Minister of an Allied State to pay an official visit to Berlin — *a visit which was paid precisely in order to prepare and accelerate the development towards agreement.*

In Czechoslovakia, then, we continue sincerely to believe that in connection with the development of European events we shall arrive at agreement,

and that in Germany as in Czechoslovakia the whole situation will be correctly assessed and appreciated, despite everything which has just been said about the immediate past. We wish to look at the situation calmly, in practical and dignified fashion, to see it as it really is, and we wish to tell ourselves and others candidly how matters stand. *We do not think that the trend of relations between the two countries is a matter for alarm.* We are conscious of our great moral strength, for we have always had good will—and we have it to-day. We are waiting calmly and preparing ourselves morally and politically for future developments without prejudice to anyone, and especially without prejudice to Germany. *And all the time we have firm faith that sooner or later our mutual relations will develop satisfactorily.* To what extent and in what sense this depends upon our minority policy and the position of our Germans in the Republic we shall elucidate in a special study.

Meanwhile we shall strive to create a peaceful atmosphere in the press, in public opinion and in official contacts, and to avoid all unnecessary friction. In this matter, too, there will be good will on our side. In a democratic State, of course, it is not possible to have absolute control over public opinion and to dictate to it, even though in these matters there is unity amongst us as a whole. As far as we are concerned, however, we shall do everything in our power in this direction.

We are convinced that we are acting justly and honourably towards our neighbours. We are also sure that our internal and external policy is correct and that it will fully justify itself as affairs in Europe develop.

It is a policy of sincere and consistent preservation of peace and of all-European understanding among all for collaboration with all.

V.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS CONCERNING CZECHOSLOVAK FOREIGN POLICY

From our reflections on Czechoslovakia's foreign policy we may draw the following general conclusions:

(¹) By virtue of its geographical position the Czechoslovak State might easily become the vassal of its powerful neighbour—particularly in the event of some great international crisis—if in addition to its own resources it were not covered by some international or collective system of security and international collaboration. It is in the same situation—although materially much more powerful—as was Belgium, Switzerland or Serbia to Germany and to Austria-Hungary before the War, or as the Baltic States are today with regard to the Soviet Union. That is, Czechoslovakia's vital interest is to endeavour—together with all other interested parties—to create some such international system in Europe. Therein is nothing hostile to Germany, because this system can be

created in agreement, with the collaboration and participation of Germany.

(²) Up till now Czechoslovakia has always considered the main foundation of such a system to be the League of Nations. She therefore desired it to be strong, she therefore supported it, therefore collaborated with it. For this reason, too, she worked for realisation of Locarno, for this reason again she is in favour of the creation of a new Western Pact, for this reason, too, she was in favour of an Eastern Pact and some kind of Central European Pact. She considers it a *conditio sine qua non* for such pacts to be created, not against Germany, but in agreement and with the participation of Germany, not for any walling-in or isolation, but for co-operation and in order that Germany, too, may hold the place in European politics to which it is entitled. *Only in such a system will Czechoslovakia really have full freedom to decide independently upon her line of action in a crisis, defending right and justice, whoever is concerned.*

(³) Czechoslovakia does not wish to be, and will not be, an instrument of any Great Power's policy, neither Germany's, Russia's, the Western European Powers' (Britain's, France's), nor Italy's. *Her geographical position, however, makes her an important element in the European equilibrium of power.* All the European Powers should realise this, and understand that a reasonable as-

surance of the independence of Czechoslovakia is the one necessary condition, if the European balance of power should not be completely reversed and the peace constantly menaced. If the Great Powers correctly consider the interests of their States and the interests of the European peace, they will all—without exception—arrive at the conclusion that some sort of collective guarantee for the security of Czechoslovakia and consequently of the equilibrium of power in Europe is essential. In our opinion *this is not at all a question of the defence of the Czechoslovak frontier—it is a general European concern*. Moreover, such a system would necessarily not be confined to Czechoslovakia. We do not wish to claim any special concessions for Czechoslovakia alone. Directly or indirectly, this policy of collective security would ensure the safety of the other Central European States as well.

(4) While there is no such expressly agreed and effective system in practice, it has been constituted by the present European and of course Czechoslovak policy with the help of the League of Nations, its treaties of alliance and mutual help, the Little Entente Pact, the old Locarno Pact, Eastern Pact, etc. Those responsible for Czechoslovakia's foreign policy still continue to believe that such an agreement regarding collective security in the form of a new Western Pact will ultimately be concluded—just as the first Locarno Pact was

achieved—and they work to that end. They know Germany's objections in this connection (regarding the admission of small States to direct negotiation between the Great Powers) as they know too Great Britain's objections to new commitments in Central Europe and are of the opinion that these difficulties could easily be overcome, just as they were overcome in the first Locarno negotiations. *So that not even this Czechoslovak policy is a hindrance to any direct agreement between Czechoslovakia and Germany.*

(⁵) The construction of such a system would in particular help to solve the whole Central European problem; it would certainly remove a number of this problem's difficulties and dangers both for Germany and for the other Great Powers, in particular it would immediately render any "exclusion" of Germany from its legitimate Central European interests impossible.

In this whole political system *Czechoslovakia does not ask special help for herself*. She is prepared to offer all her forces and collaboration for the maintenance of the European equilibrium and peace. She puts only the following questions to Europe: Is the independence, integrity and existence of Czechoslovakia of some use and necessity to Western Europe and to European peace in connection with the friendly European collaboration with Germany? Is the friendly collaboration of

Czechoslovakia with Germany of some use and profit to Germany?

Responsible Czechoslovak circles think that their country can fulfill this peaceful and very important European mission and that neither Western Europe nor Germany may disinterest themselves in it.

(⁶) The realisation of this policy would also mean that no anti-Russian, anti-Soviet "front" will now or in future be formed in Central Europe, and that it could not be the policy of the Soviet Union towards Europe in general, and Central Europe in particular, to create any kind of anti-Fascist coalition; the friendly relations between Czechoslovakia and the Soviets could therefore contain nothing capable of threatening anyone in any way.

(⁷) In other respects we really do not see any serious points of difference between Germany and Czechoslovakia, capable *directly* of seriously and permanently threatening the neighbourly relations between them. The proximity, the close economic interdependence of the two States, the centuries of profound cultural relations, which relations still exist and will continue to do so even if anyone were consciously to try to disturb them, the knowledge that serious conflicts between the two States would quite certainly lead to a general European catastrophe—all this induces both parties to seek

paths to a reasonable agreement and co-operation, strenuously, sincerely and with goodwill. Official circles in Czechoslovakia are convinced that these paths will be found.

C O N T E N T S

I. Brief Introduction	7
II. Germany's reproaches to Czechoslovakia	15
III. The spirit in which our Policy towards Germany was put into practice	54
IV. Czechoslovakia's reproaches against Germany	77
V. General conclusions concerning Czechoslovak For- eign Policy	99

