

MINISTERS FINDING SUPPORT IN FRANCE

Czech Partition Plan Opposed Only by Extreme Left, but Defense Work Is Pushed

By P. J. PHILIP

Wireless to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

PARIS, Sept. 20.—Prague's reply to the Anglo-French proposals for the settlement of the Sudeten issue ended another day of acute tension here. It was marked by uncertainty and misgiving mingled with feelings of resentment and chagrin.

There is no doubt that many Frenchmen regret and resent deeply the decision that has been taken and are inclined, like others outside this country, to be critical of their government. There have been those who have expressed the hope that the Czechs would so refuse as to precipitate events and force the hand of the French and ultimately perhaps of the British Government.

Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain will go to Godesberg to continue negotiations with Chancellor Adolf Hitler, and, it is hoped take the opportunity of reopening the much wider question of a general settlement of European affairs.

Here, on the whole, and partly because of that hope, the reaction to the government's decision to support the British proposal has been fairly warmly welcomed. It has been only on the extreme Left among the Communists and Socialists that there has been an effort to make political capital out of Premier Edouard Daladier's "capitulation" to fascism.

Action Not Defended

The government has not yet defended itself publicly, for two reasons. First, its defense would entail accusations against Prague while debate is still in progress. Second, its confession of unreadiness for war would be encouraging to Germany.

The French Ministers, it is said in quarters sympathetic to the government, did not throw away their alliance with Czechoslovakia without weeks of resistance. But at the London meeting they were faced with arguments that they could not contradict.

Mr. Chamberlain's first move was to read Viscount Runciman's report. This, it is declared here, put an enormous burden of responsibility for the situation on President Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia. It was stated that from the time when the Czechoslovak Republic was founded Dr. Benes, sometimes with French approval and at other times despite French warning, had persistently refused to keep old promises and to recognize the gravity of the Sudeten problem or to meet Sudeten wishes.

Lord Runciman is said to have insisted that Dr. Benes could have easily and finally settled the matter on May 20 of this year. But the Czech President, according to reports of Lord Runciman's state-

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ment, did not seize the opportunity to deal generously, but fought every step and every proposal while passions grew more and more violent.

To that report the French Ministers are stated to have made no reply, for their own experience was said to have fully confirmed it.

Military Considerations

Mr. Chamberlain then asked the French Ministers to consider the situation from a military viewpoint. If war should break out, he said, Britain could not do more than send two divisions to France. Russian aid was very doubtful both in quantity and quality. At best, Czechoslovakia herself could resist for only one month and all British reports gave an even shorter estimate owing to the defection of Sudeten soldiers.

From the United States, President Roosevelt had made it clear that nothing could be expected except impotent emotionalism. France would have to bear the brunt of the fighting and Mr. Chamberlain asked the French Ministers if their country was prepared to do so on the issue as it had been placed before them by what he called the unskillful manoeuvring of Dr. Benes.

M. Daladier and Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet are said to have been unable to answer boldly in the affirmative.

They are reported to have known that Paris and all the towns of France would be bombed day and night by the superior German air force, since their own production of airplanes under the administration of recent years had been left far behind. They feared also, it is believed, that they could not count on any change in the national temper.

Last week-end while the crisis was at its worst those Communists, Socialists and labor leaders who are clamoring for a war against fascism called out all men in the building trades, so that today even the road-builders in the Paris district have laid down their tools.

It is declared that all the French Ministers could do was to urge that

the new Czechoslovak State should receive the protection of an international guarantee. To that Mr. Chamberlain consented, and seemed to be satisfied that he would get Herr Hitler's agreement.

What is reported to have been the final argument in the French acceptance was their own conviction that Italy would immediately join Germany if war were declared. With nothing more than two British divisions and sympathy from certain sections of the American public for help, the task that would have confronted this country, weakened as it is financially and by the forty-hour-week and constant politico-labor disputes, would have been far beyond its strength, it is held.

Building Strike Goes On

The government tonight threatened immediately to "requisition such building and construction jobs as are connected with protecting the civilian population against air raids in case of war," but despite the imminence of this drastic measure the building trades strike, which began here yesterday morning, shows no signs of abating.

An estimate of the extent of those involved is now 75,000, approximately 50 per cent of the unionized men in the trades in the area. Earlier figures gave the number of strikers as only between 15,000 and 20,000 and the laydown as 80 per cent effective.

A Ministry of Labor communiqué stresses the fact that only half of the organized building workers responded to the strike appeal inferring that the walkout order met only a lukewarm reception.

Today's strike meeting was attended by approximately 5,000 men. They were not told about the government's threat to apply the same policy in dealing with their layoff as was successfully applied with the Marseille longshoremen, but it is believed that when they are told tomorrow they may decide to return to work voluntarily and await arbitration.

American Purchases Planned

To alleviate the shortage of military airplane motors, the government is planning to purchase 600 American Pratt & Whitney 900-horsepower Twin Wasps in addition to the 100 Curtiss P-36 planes previously ordered.

Although the government holds a French construction license for the Twin Wasps, they could be made here only after a long delay, and

the realization of this is reported to have prompted the new deal.

It is understood that the Twin Wasps will be mounted in pairs on Breguet bombers, which were originally meant to be fitted with pairs of 660-horsepower Hispano Suizas. It is argued that not only will the Twin Wasps increase the bombers' efficiency but will also come cheaper despite the high dollar exchange rate.

Arbitration Plan Rejected

PARIS, Wednesday, Sept. 21 (AP).—Officials in the French Foreign Ministry disclosed early today that France and Britain had refused to accept Czechoslovakia's plan for arbitration of her Sudetenland dispute with Germany and have demanded a flat yes or no answer.

Sources close to the Foreign Ministry said that this demand was a virtual ultimatum, warning that if Czechoslovakia refused to accept the French-British proposals to cede the Sudeten areas to Adolf Hitler it would be impossible to guarantee the future existence of the country.

The Ministers of the two powers were instructed to present the new demand to Prague at once and to demanded an immediate reply.

At the Quai d'Orsay it was said the new demands upon Czechoslovakia were framed last night in a long telephone conversation between the French Foreign Ministry and the British Foreign Office.

It was learned from persons in close contact with M. Bonnet that France and Britain found "absolutely unacceptable" Czechoslovakia's proposal to settle the Sudeten dispute under her 1926 treaty of friendship and arbitration with Germany.

Steaming out of Toulon, yesterday the French Mediterranean Fleet started four days of manoeuvres off the southern coast of France, but it was maintained officially that they were "routine."

It was disclosed that the French Government had issued a Ministerial order suppressing all newsreels and motion pictures taking what authorities considered to be a controversial stand on Czechoslovakia.

March of Time's "Czechoslovakia," depicting the country as "the last center of democracy in Central Europe," was ordered removed from French theatres last week.

The latest order put a blanket ban on all such films.