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PSF Safe: Czechoslovakia

Paris, September 16, 1939.

Personal and
Confidential

Dear Mr. President:

As you know, Benes arrived in Europe intending to set up a "provisional government of Czechoslovakia". He naturally ran into a series of snags.

In the first place, both the French and British took the position that they had refused to admit that Czechoslovakia had ceased to exist as an independent state, and were still recognizing the competence of the Ministers of Czechoslovakia in both Paris and London. They desired to continue to recognize these Ministers as representing the Czechoslovak State until it should be possible to recreate a Czechoslovak State. They could see no basis for a Benes provisional government, except Benes's desire to place himself at the head of something again.

Moreover,

The Honorable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

President of the United States of America,

Washington, D. C.

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Moreover, nearly everyone in political life in both France and England considers that Benes is an utterly selfish small person who, through his cheap smartness in little things and his complete lack of wisdom in large things, permitted the disintegration of his country.

I have been told that Benes has the Czechoslovak Minister in Washington more or less in his pocket, and I am writing you this letter because I think it is important that our Government should take the same line as the French and British Governments.

There will be a Czech Army formed in France. All the agreements necessary for the setting up of this army will be made and signed by Osusky, the Czech Minister in Paris, who will continue to be recognized as the representative of Czechoslovakia on the principle that Czechoslovakia "is not dead but sleepeth".

I think our Government should take the same line. You will get into endless embarrassment, if you try to recognize a provisional government which has no existence and no authority anywhere. We can and should keep up the fiction that the Czech Minister in Washington represents the Czechoslovak State. If he asks for advice, he should be told that he should cooperate fully with the Czech Minister in France who is organizing the Czech Army and is recognized by the French Government

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Government as the sole representative of the Czechoslovak State.

Incidentally, the Czech Minister in Paris, Osusky, was for seventeen years an American citizen, a highly successful lawyer in Chicago, and during the war, one of my hired men when I was running the information on the enemy in the State Department. Indeed, the reputation I then acquired as a prophet was largely due to my use of Osusky's brains.

Our Military Attaché in Prague used to say that all Czechs could be divided into two classes: 1, Masaryk; 2, just Czechs. Osusky has the advantage of being a Slovak!

Good luck.

Bill

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