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Seán Lester Diary - PDF

September 1938 - March 1939

September 1938

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March 1939

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September 1938

An "échange de vues" will take place between the members of the Council in the Secretary General's room at 6 p.m.

This is the formula for a "secret" discussion to prepare for a later public discussion of thorny questions. E.g., the Chinese demand for the application of Art. 17 in their conflict with the Japanese last night. Each member of the Council can have an adviser & the High Director of the Secretariat also attends.

In the chair was Garcia Caldera, Peruvian Minister at Paris, fast & reliable. He handed me a note (preparing for a job for a colleague's son). Catholic faith, & rather like so many Latin-Americans; a man of culture. ~~We see~~ old friends since I frequented

the Pan-Colombia Ctee about 6 years ago.

Paul Barcarot, small of stature, smooth faced with a white roll of hair. Advocate at Paris & Permanent Delegate of France in Geneva - ex. Minister ex. President du Conseil. He does not stand high in my esteem - a bit too fluent, a suspicion of insincerity - I don't quite know. A fair successor to the shabby-looking (those cigarette ashes!) but brilliant Borriand.

R A Butler, Cranborne's successor as Under Sec of State for F.A., represents G.B. a youngish man, new to the job he seemed slightly "lost" when I first met him at General's Council luncheon. Walters fears he is "a small edition of Linnar", but I suspend judgement.

Elia rather liked him after sitting together through a long dinner which is not a mauvais signe. He has been first delegate, so, for the first time in 15 years, the Ex. Secy himself has not been at Geneva. Behind him sits Ralph Stevenson, now going to Barcelona as Charge. Young-looking Fitzmaurice, assistant legal adviser, & Makins, tall, gauntish and a young man with ham & character.

Letvinoff, fat face & heavy lips but a goodish pair of eyes, speaks his own brand of English. He puts up with a lot, for the repres. of a great task, as well as giving plenty of trouble. Somebody referred to him the other day as "the last loyal member of the League" & as "the hard head of today".

The Foreign Minister of Iran, wary
dark hair, square face, professorish;
behind him Sepahbadi, Amb. at Paris
now

And Palato, who ~~also~~ looks old
compared with a couple of years ago.
the most brilliant draftsman in
Geneva; dapper, incisive and
clear & a very useful delegate.

Bourquin, on the Professor
of International Law, represents
Belgium, and Under, who
inspires confidence as a man
of integrity & know-its-bands
the "Man about Paris" Coiba du Kels.

Wellington Kuo is China's best
diplomat, fighting for something
to help after 18 months Japanese
aggression. Reasonable & gets
the maximum possible today

Walter, Sobolius, Kaiski (USSR)
Pasdevant (Fr.) Feldman (Lat),
Wilson, Vigier, & Koden, follow with
somewhat disinterested ears, the
discussion at the table

For a time it takes one's
mind of the drama of Geneva,
moving rapidly outside, to listen
to China's woes and watch the
turning out of phrases.

October 8th 1938

France and Britain have retired behind their Chinese wall in Europe - the Maginot Line - and abandoned the rest of the Continent to Germany. I do not think this is an exaggerated view of what has happened during the past month: even a few weeks ago France still had allies in Europe and an actual and potential strength: to-day she has none.

De Valera as President of the Assembly, on the 30th of September said that Europe had come to the brink of the abyss and had shrunk back appalled by what they saw.

Since May, when the Anglo-French intervention checked the German threat to Czechoslovakia, Hitler has been preparing; towards the end of August, 1 million and 1/2 men were under arms in Germany and for months a violent blast of propaganda was emitted daily by Goebbels, magnificent propaganda machine: Britain and France, uneasy, looked on. Heinlein claimed complete autonomy within the Czech State and even the right to decide on foreign policy in respect of the Franco-Russian alliances. The Czechs had negotiated and drawn up various schemes to meet Sudeten claims, but early in September, it was apparent that the Sudeten's case - and of course they had one, though not as much as the Germans in Poland and the Germans in Italy - was being used as a pretext. Czechoslovakia must be destroyed. Britain and France began to stiffen. I came back from my holidays saying there would be no war because I believed that France and England had at last reached the point where they would have to stand. The Czechs on the whole remained cool and remarkably restrained.

The Sudeten's claims advanced week by week and we had in Europe a period of such tense emotion and fear under the threat of a world war as people have rarely experienced. Germany concentrated mechanized troops on the Czech frontier. The Czechs had one of the best armies in the world and was probably the best equipped. Nuremberg came and the speech of hysterical violence from Hitler. The French called half a million men to the colours. * One night at the dinner for the British Commonwealth of Nations Delegates - at which by the way de Valera attended for the first time and drank the toast to His Majesty - it was announced that Chamberlain would the following day fly to Germany to see Hitler. Tremendous enthusiasm. I sat by Andrews, the South-African Delegate and remarked that I supposed he would sell Czechoslovakia; I, no more than others, doubted the man's sincerity, but I doubted his judgement, his knowledge of the Nazi. Hitler received Chamberlain in Berchtesgaden and agreed to the cession of all Sudeten land where there was

* The British F.O. issued a belated announcement indicating that France & Britain & even Russia would stand side by side

W. Churchill to P. Boncour, in a private letter -

"Nous avons eu la choix entre la guerre
et la deshonneur; nous avons choisi la
deshonneur mais, quand même, nous
aurons la guerre."

"Today they ring their bells; tomorrow they
will wring their hands" - Robert Walpole

more than 50% of Germans, etc. He returned home jubilant and obtaining the consent of the French, forced the acquiescence from Czechoslovakia. A meeting had been arranged a week later, but in the meantime the German press and radio were increasing their demands; the British Prime Minister flew back a week later to Germany; it was no great surprise to those who knew the Nazi method to find that during the week the price had gone up. Fresh demands were made upon Chamberlain and even he - as he later said - "bitterly reproached the Chancellor". The armies were mobilized in nearly every country in Europe. In Switzerland we had a black out; the bridges to all frontiers were mined and the tank troops prepared and the British fleet was mobilized. Clinging to the hope of peace by negotiation, Chamberlain asked Mussolini to intervene and a few hours before the German general mobilization was to take place, it was agreed that Mussolini, Hitler, Chamberlain and Daladier would meet in Munich. The 1st of October had been fixed for the German advance in Czechoslovakia. On the night of the 29th, the four Powers came to an agreement. The Czechs withdrew to the line agreed upon; Chamberlain on his return to London waved a paper into the air and announced that he had, like *Beaumont* come back from Germany "carrying peace with honour". There is something indecent in this. "Peace for our time" he said, but that remains to be seen. The peoples of the world have accepted the peace with a great sigh of relief and Chamberlain's reception in London, as Daladier's in Paris and Mussolini's in Rome were those for a great hero; here and there a voice of warning was raised: Duff Cooper, who was First Lord of the Admiralty resigned; no Minister resigned in Paris.

It has changed the face of Europe. Poland has snatched her bit from the Czechoslovakian carcass and Hungary is to get her share. The Czechs are offered an Anglo-French guarantee which seems a shameful kind of farce and worth nothing. The way to the South-East of Europe is opened to the Germans. The Polish Inspector General of the Army celebrating the transfer of Tsechen has announced that the ~~era~~ ^{era} of brute force in Europe now begins and spoke of the illu~~sions~~ ^{visions} of the Western democracies. Of course, there is the fact that the German people themselves were psychologically even less prepared for war than the French and British. There is the possibility still that something can be built on the new contacts between the four Leaders; there is a talk of a Four Power Pact. It may be, as Chamberlain hopes, the time of negotiation has come back again. Hitler has declared he has no more territorial pretentions in Europe. Some people believe it. In fact I

think he does not need to move a soldier for some years; the way is open to him for economic and political progress through Hungary, Roumania, Yugoslavia. There is no counterpoise to his weight now; I think Poland will probably be left alone for some time; the small countries have lost any vestige of confidence they had in France and Britain. Komarnicki, the Polish Delegate met me during the crisis and with his swarthy smile asked me: Was not Beck right? I sought an elucidation: "Who would believe in the word of France now?"

It is too soon really to form very definite opinions, but the first words in this note represent mine.

What Chamberlain has done is a logical sequence of the policy pursued by Britain and France during the past two years; they paralysed the League of Nations; they gave no help to the weak attacked by the strong; they ran away every time a threat was uttered; now they have given Germany, for nothing but temporary peace, the fruits of a great campaign.

I believe they could, even a few weeks ago, have convinced Hitler they were ready to act in defence of their undertakings; they certainly could have prevented these developments even 2 or 3 months ago. The Nazi and Fascist systems have made so great a victory that one wonders seriously now how long it may be before even France and even England are forced to adopt something of their system and methods. Democracy in a way does not matter, but the other makes decent life for civilized men entirely ^{impossible} ~~obscure~~: there is still the garden and the river.

copy of letter from Arthur Smeets to Lewis Herwin
in ALSA - 5/10/1938

Dear

I deeply wish I could give you an adequate picture of this past amazing month in Geneva. We have never had anything in any degree comparable.

The Nineteenth Assembly was the most extraordinary in the League's existence. It opened the day of the Nuremberg speech; continued throughout the negotiations; and concluded the day after the Munich Agreement.

The scene was extraordinary. War was on the threshold; mobilisation orders were following one on the other; report and rumour flew wild; even the usually stoic Swiss had soldiers mounted on many bridges and plunged Geneva into an ominous blackout at the most critical moment.

Several hundred delegates and experts from over fifty countries, plus a couple of hundred journalists from even more, paced anxiously back and forth in the Assembly lobbies, trying to do their daily work but in reality affixed to the latest rumour, telephone, or broadcast. It was almost impossible for them to keep their minds on their normal activities; indeed there was a tragic air of unreality about them which made it remarkable that they accomplished as much as they did.

Geneva was practically completely outside the negotiations except for the startling speech of Litvinov defining Soviet policy for the first time and throwing a beam of light on previous private discussions. Unexpectedly enough, the Czechs did not even present their case; they took the view that they were too hurt and wounded and their position too clear to justify explanation. For the first time since Locarno, neither the British nor the French Foreign Minister was present. Despite this, nearly a score of other Foreign Ministers were on hand, particularly from the smaller States, and Geneva again proved to be the clearest and most impartial observation post in Europe. It would be rash to attempt to estimate what the long-term effect will be of the ceaseless discussions which took place at this international centre at the moment of Europe's greatest crisis.

Geneva circles, as a rough generalisation, viewed the release from war with a relief as great as any others, perhaps even greater in the sense that war would have destroyed everything that the League for eighteen years has been trying to build. Equally, however, they perhaps viewed the method with more alarm than others because they saw it as a startling triumph of violence in opposition to all the methods of peaceful negotiation and discussion which the League has tried, however unsuccessfully, to establish.

Opinion as to the eventual consequences is divided. Some feel that the League has had a terrible blow, which weakens it greatly; others that there will inevitably be a comeback at a not too distant date. Perhaps the truth is between the two. The present debacle has certainly vividly illustrated the necessity of international cooperation. Its

biggest lesson, perhaps, is that the world is now unmistakably and irresistibly in the international era; that a conflict in Central Europe has brought in everyone, including the Presidents of the United States and many Latin-American countries; that the days of isolationism, particularism, and provincialism are gone; that even the most obdurate foes of the consultative method, such as Hitler and Mussolini, have had to come to it; and that the very rawness of a settlement under ultimatum show the necessity of a better and cleaner method. Already, within the first few days, a reaction is setting in; many elements in the big countries are becoming critical; and practically all elements in the smaller countries are frightened.

It is a tribute to the soundness and toughness of the League that even in these circumstances the regular work of the Assembly was carried through. The Committees kept up their various agendas; a large section of the worldlife of today was submitted to review and given what further stimulus was possible. This showed more dramatically than anything else possibly could that much of the League at least is grounded deep into the international life of today and is sure to build up even stronger in the future.

The most general and long-term question was, perhaps, how best organise international relations. The League took the opportunity, after recent shocks and experiences, to tidy up a bit as it were and to concentrate its organisation. On the much discussed question of sanctions many important declarations were made which, while not formally amending the Covenant, tend nevertheless to make Article 16 voluntary rather than automatic. As regards mediation and peaceful settlement, a preponderance of opinion was in favour of a freer application of Article 11 by not including the votes of the disputants in the assessment of unanimity. On the psychological question of the separation of the Covenant from the peace treaties, a protocol was opened for signature giving the former a wholly independent status. As regards the cooperation of non-Member States in the League's technical and non-political work a wide resolution was adopted welcoming such cooperation in these world services and offering non-Members the opportunity of making any suggestions they may desire to make for its extension. The budget was tightened up once again, despite the good news of a surplus of over 4,500,000 Swiss francs. Detailed plans for making better known both the ideals and work of the League were also approved, including a generous appropriation of 1,200,000 Swiss francs for participation in the New York World's Fair.

Specific political questions bulked large in the Assembly. Armed conflict in China and Spain provided an unhappy accompaniment to the major crisis in Europe. In the former, Japan having refused the invitation to the Council under Article 17, the Assembly reaffirmed that her military actions could be justified neither by law nor self-defence, stressed the obligation of all States to help China "in her heroic struggle against invasion", and, while deciding that all elements necessary for coordinated action "are not yet assured", held, nevertheless, that League Members are entitled "to adopt individually the measures provided for in Article 16". As regards Spain, the Assembly received an unexpected proposal from the Spanish Government to carry out the immediate and

complete withdrawal of all non-Spanish combattants on its side, accompanied by a request for an international commission to see that the offer was fully executed. While certain elements opposed this on the grounds that Spain was a matter for the London non-Intervention Committee and not for the League, the proposal was eventually accepted and the Commission is now in formation. Similarly the League authorised an enquiry on the spot in connection with Spain's request for technical assistance in providing foodstuffs for refugees. A question common to both Spain and China was as to the protection of civilian populations against bombing from the air. The Assembly decided as regards Spain to arrange with Great Britain that the reports of its committee of investigation already operative be sent to the League for publication and circulation and that, as regards other countries, the Council should consider any appropriate action through an international commission.

And now the pity of it all - - - - to think that the big and constructive work which the League is so well equipped to do for the betterment of mankind has to be held up or crippled by war and violence in three major parts of the world! Never did the contrast between what is and what might be stand out more clearly than when one came out of one of the Committee rooms with all its hopes and promises of something better for the human race and found oneself in a group of anxious and strained individuals trying to see if the latest bit of news meant the irrevocable decision of war. At times tempers were thin and emotions were expressed with violence against this indescribable folly. It must regretfully be recorded, however, that there was rather more a tendency to run away from the disaster of war than to concentrate with redoubled energy on the organisation of peace.

Probably the most substantial and constructive work was in the broad field of economics and finance. Two reports of a dozen or so special Committees, the general memorandum of the Secretary-General on the present world economic situation, the speech of Mr. Bruce as Chairman of the Coordination Committee, and the debates at the Assembly indicated that the League has built up a kind of economic international General Staff of the utmost importance. That General Staff is approaching its vast problem from three angles: the gathering of facts, information and statistics, the coordination of inter-governmental cooperation, and the development of a new international social-economic policy in fields such as nutrition and housing. Nothing comparable has ever before existed in international life; there can be no question but that today it is only at its beginning. Impulses will emanate from Geneva which are certain to have a profound effect on world life.

The Assembly went in detail into all these questions, having all the greater confidence in that States associated in its work accounted in 1937 for over 86% of world trade. As regards increasing such trade by governmental arrangements, it spoke of Mr. Hull's work "as one of the most powerful forces on the side of economic unity in the world today". As regards more specific problems, it decided on special studies for such questions as demographic problems, agricultural credits, specifically in the Argentine and Uruguay, the provision of medium-term credits to industry, measures to combat deforestation and soil erosion, the fluctuation in the balance of payments, principles of fiscal legislation, standards of living, etc.

The nutrition and housing work of the League, which have opened up wholly new fields of the greatest promise, were also gone into with care, particularly in connection with the meetings of the representatives of nineteen National Nutrition Committees in October and of the European Conference on Rural Life in July.

Now describe all the other social and humanitarian work, the kind of thing that civilisation really exists for, the approval, for instance, of the world-wide health work of the League, the consolidation of the League's refugee work in a single organisation which will cooperate with that initiated by President which, in the Committee stage, the United States has effectively cooperated, the discussions on social questions such as child welfare, traffic in women, and assistance to indigent foreigners, the development of penal and penitentiary questions, and last, but by no means least, the work of intellectual cooperation and the organisation of cultural relations among nations? One who goes through this long record cannot but burn with indignation at the double fact, first, that it is not more actively and courageously supported by those people who believe that this type of thing is the ideal for which civilisation should be built, and second that it is so completely thrown off balance by others who feel they seek to achieve their ends by violence.

The United States, while absent from all these deliberations except for an unimportant attendance at the Council in connection with Opium, was definitely a part of the situation. American policy both affected it vitally and was vitally affected by it. Her non-Membership in the League has been perhaps the greatest single element in the League's history. President Roosevelt's two interventions in the Czechoslovak crisis were profoundly important. Many actions by the Assembly will have profound repercussions upon the United States. It cannot be a matter of indifference to any Government how international life is organised; the policies of the League in China and Spain will have their effect everywhere; endorsement of Mr. Hull's commercial treaty policy is not without importance; the organisation of world services in economics, finance, transit, health, opium, nutrition, housing, intellectual cooperation, and the like, on which, incidentally, the United States will have opportunity to express its views, is of importance to everybody. Some day this will become clear and an eager constructive policy will be adopted.

And the future? Few would be categorical at this moment. Some feel that the world has merely postponed its crisis for an even greater one; others that we are at the beginning of a slow readjustment towards a calmer Europe. Both would agree, however, that we face a period of Big Power domination where for the time being force will be more powerful than law, where the small nations will feel uncomfortable and ill at ease, and where the technical humanising and civilising activities of the League will have to struggle more bitterly than before for recognition. It is that concentration of power in a few hands without organisation or control, plus the apathy of others who should be aggressively active for another system, which constitute the greatest danger to the movement for a central world agency of international cooperation based on law and justice. Little fear is felt of the ultimate outcome over generations; the question is: What price chaos? In other words, the question in many minds is not whether the League method is right; it is rather as to how long it will be before the better, more positive, more constructive elements in human society wake up from their lethargy and demand that the rich opportunities which life has to offer be given full freedom of expression unhindered by relics of barbarism.

5.10.38.

October 10th 1938.

My dear Smyllie,

I have been reading the leading articles in the Irish Times during recent months with the greatest interest; they are a great consolation to me as I am convinced that our people must for their own sake take a greater and more intelligent interest in international affairs. I am precluded myself from expressing any views, but I read few articles in any newspaper so well informed on the ~~present~~ elements in the dangerous international situation of to-day.

De Valera was a very good President of the Assembly and holds a very solid position now in the international community. Has it ever occurred to you how much any small State in our circumstances would feel justified in expending in order to secure such a recognized position as the League has given to our new State, with all the consequent imponderable returns? Or has it occurred to you to reflect on the influence de Valera's visits to Geneva have had upon our vital Anglo-Irish relationship? In spite of the League's temporary "obscurissement" in the field of high politics, Geneva remains the most remarkable and valuable ^{school} place for statesmen and diplomats and especially for those of the small countries which would have no other window opened on the world.

I read the other day a copy of a letter sent by an American to another, and although it is marked by the conditions under which it was hurriedly written, I thought it would interest you. I enclose a copy but think it would be better if you did not feel tempted to publish anything about it.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

2,
the "Irish Times",

Beginish,
Crosthwaite Park,
Dunleery,
Co. Dublin.

11. XI. 1938

Dear Seán,

I note, to my shame & confusion, that your welcome letter is exactly a month old today, & it is doubtful if I can save any shred of decency even by replying to it hot-foot this morning! You were quite right in thinking that I would be extremely interested in the 'American impressions' of the League during the crisis. I found the letter extremely vivid & straightforward. What a time you must have had! I saw your photograph several times in our press here during Assembly. Time: beside 'the Long Fellow' - I'm sure he made an excellent chairman & President. As the year pass,

As the crisis developed and war seemed to be approaching - we saw plans in operation for the evacuation by columns of the frontier zone, the mining of all Swiss frontier bridges and the opening of the "tank traps" etc - we considered what could be done for the family.

Owing to my position any hasty or panicky action was out of the question. But, under strong pressure, Elsie agreed that if war came she would start with them en route for Ireland. The car was out of question. Even if it was not seized being a voiture diplomatique there might be great difficulty in getting petrol - stocks had already been placed under the military in force - and the roads would be crowded with frontier refugees and

I grow more & more mellow towards him, although this change lets me in for an occasional awkward moment with mutual friends of ours!

I hope you are all flourishing. Tell Mrs. Lester that I forgot to ask her sufficient questions about the French cookery book which I had foolishly volunteered to bring home, & received a severe 'dressing down' for my negligence! But a more reliable messenger has been despatched since then & returned with five different books, for safety!

Do you remember how fussy I was about the saddle? Quite unnecessarily as it turned out, for the Customs officials here - whether through amissia, special relaxations (it was Horse Show time), or just general benevolence - told me there was no duty to pay.

When are you likely to be in Ireland next? I dare say you will ~~not~~ hardly be tempted here during the winter. But whatever time you come I hope you will let me know.

Please give my best wishes to Mrs. Lester & the girls, & believe me
Yours sincerely
D. B. B. B. B.

military transport. And at the
point the car would probably have
had to be abandoned. So we
decided they would try to get ^{away} by train.
It would have been a difficult
journey & dangerous. But I secretly
felt grave fears that Dubzland would
be used as an approach by Germany
or even forced by French.

We got the fur coats out of
the summer cued storage - bought a
new haversack to carry food - & 2 dozen
blocks of chocolate as "war rations".

I changed money to give them
adequate French & English currencies.

Then we waited.

I was to stay at my post, of course,
unless Geneva was invaded! I had
^{not} told Elsie I would, while alone, have

a 100% better chance of getting through
than if I had other to think of if flight
became eventually necessary. She
had agreed to go on the understanding
that once the children were
safely in Ireland she would come
back. I said "yes", knowing
that such a return would be
impossible. Miss Minns, the
girls' old governess, was with us
a visit from Roumania, &
we agreed that as she couldn't
go back though Europe is war
she would go with them to
the Curriers house & take charge
of their schooling again for a time.

I tried not to think of the
bombs that would be falling
on Paris & London during that
journey!

We said nothing to the children from the International School they reported the daily discussion between the pupils - the haste with withdrawal of some English children, their return when ~~had~~ the clouds temporarily lifted, & their new departure when Godesberg led to the fleet mobilisation.

We feared for the household treasures in case war came into Europe. I asked E. to get a lot of labels so that when I packed some things later for storage I could label the contents of boxes. The labels were seen by the wains and they jumped immediately to correct conclusions.

They must have been discussing the situation pretty thoroughly because they at once presented a united front and declared there would be a stay-in strike if any attempt were made to ship them off. (They had not disclosed the knowledge that Arthur Sweetser had sent his youngest to the U.S.A.) Next day they entered the house jubilant. Some English children had arrived from London "to escape the air raids!"

"Daddy, how could you send us through London at such a time!" - with a triumphant air.

One heard, confidentially, that Mr. W. (my father) had decided to leave promptly for U.S.A. with his

American wife if war were declared
sacrificing, if necessary, 17 years'
pension rights. Close hewday
told me that while he would
have held on he would have
committed suicide rather than
fall into German or Italian
hands. I said I would
at the last moment have
set out on foot if necessary
and escape but that suicide
never entered my head. He added
he supposed he wd have
tried to escape, too.

An interesting thing was
Devalera's support of Chamberlain
expressed in several public
messages. Good politics, no doubt.

with Partition problem in the air.

"What" he said to me, "can you
do if you meet an armed madman
who demands your watch?"

14 XI 38

Mother died on November 7th, just over 86 years of age. I had been with her a week before, but had returned to Geneva.

She was the sweetest, the most unselfish, & most Christian soul I have known. Her kindness and charity, unswerving faith, devotion, and love made her shine like a lamp in darkness.

16th Nov. '38

Following the assassination of a secretary at the German Embassy in Paris by a frenzied Polish-Jewish youth of 17, whose parents had been maltreated, the Nazis launched a pogrom burning synagogues & destroying houses & shops, & imprisoning thousands of poor wretches. Then a fine of 1,000,000,000 marks as a levy on what is left of Jewish property, compulsory restitution of property destroyed prior to turning it over to Aryans, & exclusion from all retail trades, etc etc

The world has been aghast - horrified once more by the monster. And one looks to see Chamberlain's diffidence in a policy of appeasement still further increased. Attacks on Cardinal Faulhaber's palace in

Munich, Bromley & destruction of
sacred the Cross etc. have brought
the Catholics again into line with
the persecuted Jew & Evangelical

It is only a few weeks since
the German Archbishop here in Vienna
was practically sacked. He, who had
asked his people to vote for the
Austrians a few months ago.

Walter, back from London, indicates
that the F.O. doesn't want any sign of
League life about Danzig. Perfectly natural,
in the present situation. But do they
care if the League gets another kick?
I don't know.

6-12-38

At last a letter from Danzig whose
anti-Jewish excesses and ~~the~~ some of the
" " laws of Nürnberg were giving
Borchardt trouble. (See my note of
3.1.38. to S.G. anticipating further
difficulties, & supporting Walter's view
that our commitments there sh^d. now
be reduced).

Poland is nervous again. The
destruction of Czechoslovakia & her share
in the spoils - & particularly the
failure though German opposition to
hand over Russian Carpathia (Ruthenia)
to Hungary & thus give Poland
& Hungary a common frontier
led Beck to make a pro-Soviet
demonstration - as he had thought
of in Jul 1936 -. It doesn't go

very far but is a hint to
Germany. Poland's policy
definitely played a considerable
part in producing the situation.

There have been some
tentative & vague approaches by
Germany already in the Danzig
question.

Winn, South African Minister for
Defence - after visiting London
Berlin, Rome, Paris, Brussels etc.
announced today that the drift
to war was accelerating & that
the explosion might well take
place in the Spring.

Bishop O'Shea, a charming
mild old gentleman, of New Zealand
called on me today. He is touring
Europe, & says Cardinal Faulhaber
in Munich is most pessimistic
as to the future of religion in Germany.
Austrian Catholics were putting
up no fight.

Avenol & on Economics (he
is reducing the League budget
- mainly salaries - by 25%. Clearing
the decks & making shipshape for
a difficult time when we may
or may not as an institution weather
the gale.

01/10/38
P1/8 (2)

3/10/38

Confidential

SECRETARY-GENERAL

Mr. Walters has shown to me his Memorandum of the 24th of October regarding Danzig. As you know, I share his and your anxiety as to what our position may be there in the near future. For some years now, there has been no formal appeal of any kind to the High Commissioner regarding disputes between the two Governments, and while the High Commissioner may have been able occasionally to oil the machinery, his duties in this connection are in abeyance. But his position generally has been much weakened by a series of events. His duty in the matter of protecting Danzig from Poland has been taken over by the Reich; his value to Poland in this connection seems to be little more than a "point d'appui" for bringing in the Western Powers in case a situation should arise. But even on this point this value to Poland has been decreasing and there is no evidence (except for Colonel Beck's attitude at the time of Mr. Burckhardt's appointment) that they regard the post as still of great importance to them. Nevertheless, in the absence of any indication of a change, I suppose we must assume that Poland would resent a proposal to abolish the post. The question here is would the Council be faced with the resignation of Poland from the League? I am not at all sure, although Colonel Beck threatened it in January 1937.

Nevertheless I agree that we should take the earliest possibility of reducing to a minimum the commitments of the League in respect to Danzig. In view of the policy of various Members of the League, including Poland and the principal Powers, I foresee little but the danger of a further humiliation for us.

Alternative B in Mr. Walters' Memorandum certainly appeals to me.

As to the opportunity, this could be made at any time by a report by the High Commissioner, but it

might seem more natural if a specific occasion arose in connection with Danzig affairs. For example, the High Commissioner has made the formal application in Danzig of the Aryan Law a touchstone of his influence and prestige; several times he has skilfully succeeded in having action postponed (although in fact a great deal of the Aryan Law is in practice applied in the Free City). If the Authorities in Danzig again show themselves to be dissatisfied with the virtual application of anti-semitic principles and wish formally to enact the equivalent of the Reich law, Burckhardt could make this the opportunity for a general report on the lines suggested (and which represent his personal conviction) that the functions of the High Commissioner cannot be properly carried out and that the responsibility of the League ought to be reduced.

I do not regard the presence of the High Commissioner in Danzig as a serious element in maintaining the status quo. I do not believe the transfer to the Reich would now be a casus belli. The ultimate future of Danzig was settled in the Autumn of 1936, and subsequent events have confirmed it. The present arrangement may last one year or two years, but I do not expect either the League or its High Commissioner to be allowed to play a part in the final discussion. I should like to think that we should then be able to retire with dignity but nothing in recent history encourages such hope. It is a pity Colonel Beck has not been in Geneva for the past ten months, but he has himself publicly deplored the undertaking by the League of tasks which it cannot fulfil and has pointed to Danzig as a case in point.

S. LESTER

November 3rd 1938.

13/12/38

Dr Christian Lange, Nobel Peace Prize winner some years ago, died in Oslo yesterday. A fine old man.

I remember in a c'tee mtg on minorities a few years ago Lange had been blamed in the "JL de katerni" for some action friendly to the Germans.

January 1939.

A terrible year - historical upheavals - & no one can be optimistic about the next. Much now clearly a ghastly failure.

(See letter from John McSullivan which echoes many of my own reflections).

Chamberlain & Halifax, that disappointing man, on the way to Rome after the Italian preparations with eyes of "Turin, Nice, Corsica", & then Livorno & Suez. Ch. has undertaken v. à v. the French (Daladier's course was "not an acre") not to be a mediator. The visit is more like another blunder - I'm afraid I see Ch. as a weak obstinate & rather stupid person - "riding the tiger".

Sokolov says Stein - USSR ambas.
in Rome, is certain that if he cannot
get it otherwise the Duce will
invade Tunisian territory in
February. I can hardly think it
possible. May we leave ^{to France}
Bizerta (naval base) & count on
France giving way rather than
fighting. He says military
preparations are now on foot.

Aronov, like myself, is
sceptical as to this form of crisis
although we all expect one is some
form. France more united than
for years, etc

ABERFOYLE,

19. Dec. 1938. ORWELL ROAD,

RATHGAR.

My dear Sean,

This is to wish you, Elsie and the 'children' on Agnes behalf and on my own a very happy Christmas and a Bright New Year. To wish any one the latter betrays a sudden access of optimism on my part. But still I do join with Agnes in wishing it to you both and to your family. After all some mental and emotional repose is due to the few of you! As a reminder of Christmas - which at the present time is necessary - and of Ireland, which in their case is quite unnecessary - Agnes asked me to send Constantia Maxwell's book on Dublin to the Messes Lester. If they

have it already ⁽⁵⁾ Cambridge will negotiate
the change - "within reasonable time".

Now it remains to thank you
very warmly for your kind thought
in letting me have the volume - it
deserves to be called a volume - on
Nazism. I look forward, quite
genuinely, to reading it, for my
interest in International politics,
especially certain phases of it
and of European politics engage, I fear
more of my time and thoughts than
do our home politics, which for the
moment have grown so dull that
I shall not further refer to them.

As I am on the subject of 'lectures'
perhaps sometime or other you might
be able to find out for me whether
nos 21 to 66 (inclusive) of a propa-
ganda publication called "Völkerverbund"

Given out in Geneva, ⁽³⁾ are available in
either English, French or German.
I am sent it regularly by the editors
but these numbers are messy and
with a fussy mind I should like
to have my set complete. I know I
could write direct - but some considerable
time ago I got a hint that they
would appreciate a subscription;
but notwithstanding my failure to
'bite' the numbers (current) have
come regularly ever since. Now I have
objections to paying for what I can
get for nothing, and I have strong
objections to doing so for Nazi
propaganda! As I am on the
subject now of cadging are there any
League publications to be had for
application?

We were sorry that we saw so

4
little of Elsie during her last visit
On the one occasion on which I
met her she proved a most doughty
ally - or shall I say leader - in
a wordy and strenuous defence
of blackest pessimism. I fear
that I am still unregenerate. I
admit that although it was very
unlikely that Hitler would have
given any trouble if England and
France had made up their minds in
July or even August that they would
stand by C. S. and made that gentle
clear ball apt with the publication
of the Times' article it was either
fight or surrender. Personally
and selfishly I am very glad war
was avoided, intellectually -!
As a very selfish individual I fear
a time may come when England

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may make up ^(E) her mind that much
more is involved than honors, and that
she cannot yield any further. It
is difficult to believe - and this is a
disturbing thought - that those who
control her destinies will be in a
position to meet the crisis. A very
disturbing thought for us here, for
whatever lack of ideas Chamberlain
may have I fear that other states -
men whose action or inaction will
prove decisive for us, have fewer
clear views. As regard England
how can one believe in its future,
when men who behaved as those
at present in power have behaved
in the last three years, two years,
twelve months, six months, still
enjoy the confidence of the people!

And who is to replace them? Eden??
Labour??!!!

However, it seems absurd for me who is merely on the periphery - for the first time I appreciate the advantage of being on the periphery - of European affairs to open up like this to one who is in the very centre, if not of control of observation.

By the way I listened into Chamberlain speaking to the International Journalists I say nothing of the speech - the holy season prevents me; but the almost stony silence of its reception (I pass a few perfunctory "hear hears") was not devoid of interest. They gave prolonged applause when they could

(7)
and that was strictly limited to
four short sentences (a) good relations
with U.S.A. (b) reference to German
attack on Baldwin, (c) 'We are ready
to fulfil our obligations -- (??) -
(d) We are bound to France by ties
stronger than legal obligations
- luckily he avoided saying that
an attack on France would not
find them indifferent!

However enough of this. Agnes is
in bed with a cold - not very
serious I am glad to say. All others
of our friends are in good health
and in good form - some, the
legal members of our group, working
too hard. But of this they don't
complain. Gloom was of course
cast upon us by James MacNeill's

death. One could wish that he had
been appreciated as he deserved! but
this is, perhaps, too much to expect.
Certainly he can't be "fitted the bill"
in a way that will, I fear, not be
equalled for a considerable time.

Now forgive this long, in-
adequate and - if you will be
so good, return in kind!

Again the very best wishes
from us both to you all

Yours sincerely,

John Sullivan.

P.S. The book was sent to you c/o S. L.
Asscher & Co. Large St. Geneva. as I
hadn't your address when in Cambridge
and time was of the essence.

We are having an internal crisis
of a minor order, having to reduce
~~of~~ our expenditure by 2 millions francs
- mostly on salaries & officials. I have
been drawn into the ^{Lidors} annual - Reichman
feud - trying to make his departure
as little troublesome as possible.

Some time ago after a year's effort
to secure confidence & cooperation
between them I threw in my hand
& came to the conclusion the
same house cannot hold both.

Halifax is coming to the Council
mtg. next week-end - 15/1/39 - & will
stay one day!! I went home to Elsin
after fuming over this - and said I
must again hold myself free to
consider my position here. I have
kept my courage well enough, & courtesy

It a service to endeavor to hold the
great & unique machine in being through
the lean and neglected years - & dangerous
years - but a situation may arise &
a time come when it would cease to
be a worthwhile service and when
it would be cleaner to
cut out from it - at some
personal & immediate sacrifice -
than to wait for a ^{humiliating} debacle &
crawl from the ruins.

12/11/1939. Walter, back from London, has
written ^{9/11/39} a confidential note to Cadogan
(Sullivan) saying all indications point to
"imminent danger of a fresh & this time
probably fatal crisis within a few weeks"
The Duce counts on & needs to provoke a
crisis & Genay intends a move in
the East in Feb. or March. Hungarian
Govt. preparing to enter anti Comintern
Pact (& leave L/N) although popular opinion
in Hungary is substantially anti Genay.
This is explained by a fresh diplomatic
as due to Gen's information as to
Genay's imminent move & desire
to get Genay friendship as the only
means of satisfying Hungarian aspirations
in Roumania

Frank concludes "no normal diplomatic
action can prevent War & that a bad

crash in Italy w^d be the real chance.
"Germany seems to be invulnerable
otherwise but that w^d give her something
to think about both in its external &
internal effects". "It may be," he
concludes probably with an eye on
Chamberlain in Rome, "that such
a crash is not a remote contingency
if nothing intervenes to avert it".

Backnell, US Consul, who has just
left me, also reports many of his
colleagues are convinced that war is
now coming; indeed, making due
allowance for the factors, not
by any means negligible, against
war it is hard to see any
other end to the present chaos
v crisis v smothered war.

I said to Bucknell that if war
came U.S. we'd be in it & pretty
soon. He agreed.

Since Munich, he said, the American
people had begun to feel they
were in the front trenches.

Prevention, of course, is
better than that - & we can't
the old idea



University of
Travancore,
Department of
Fine Arts,

Trivandrum,
South India,
July 30, 1939

My dear Sean Lester,
I learn from a friend
that your career
goes "on and on, and
up and up." I learn
also that you have an
item in your file of
friendly remembrance
labelled "Cousines." I
am happy over both
items of news. Our
contact in Geneva
was short, but it gave
me a touch that
I have never lost, though
the outside of my mind

has been enjoyed elsewhere. I remember your interest in literature, and am sending you separately my latest contribution. I hope you will find in it something of the spiritual romance that lit up my youth still glowing in the evening sky.

I am trying to get art into education here. I have created half a dozen museums and galleries in South India, and hope to do the same in North India before the curtain falls.

I am also working out an Irish myth-poem - drama which I hope to finish soon.

Mr. Cousins joins me in congratulations and good wishes.
Yours very sincerely,
J. H. Cousins

Coláiste Ollsgoile,
Corcaigh.

University College,
Cork.

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Xmas Day 1938

Dear Seán

Many thanks for your kind remembrance. Please remember me to Mrs Lester and my three "nieces" who must now be grown up — but I hope not sophisticated. Please also give my kind regards to E.J. Phelan.

I am afraid I am now quite cut off from Geneva. Not being a good "party man", I am not acceptable to the powers that be. So I am afraid I haven't much influence in political & social matters. So I have retired, except for an occasional growl.

As things are, I don't envy you your job. It is hard not to despair just at present.

I published this year an enormous book on physics which — being quite unorthodox — has nearly bankrupted me. So I am anxious to have it sold; for otherwise I see no hope of getting two other volumes published, though they are practically ready in manuscript. In this book I give a great backing to a Swiss writer

called Ritz (+1909) as against Einstein.
So I might have a chance of selling a
few copies in Switzerland. If therefore
you come across any Physicist in
Geneva, he might be able to supply
the name + address of the best
Swiss scientific periodical which
publishes reviews, so that I could
have a review copy sent to it.
But don't go to any trouble.

Again all good wishes to yourself
& family, of whose kindness I retain
a very pleasant memory.

Ever yours sincerely

Alfred O'Rahilly

If you see Mortsted, please thank him for
his postcard

"Electromagnetics"
a reply to Einstein!

Colaiste Ollsgoile,

University College,

Corcaigh.

Cork.

27 Feb 39

Dear Sean /

Very many thanks for your letter & enclosure. Excuse my delay. I have a dreadful lot of lectures to give this year. I now lecture on Sociology also!

I met Rappard - & we didn't get on too well. "Ah, j'aime les Irlandais", m'a-t-il dit. Et moi de répondre: "Comme vous aimez les chiens, Monsieur, n'est-ce pas?"!

Apparently they don't review scientific books in Switzerland. Which is peculiar. I met someone in Geneva who gave me the address of Ritz's brother who is still alive. Unfortunately I lost it.

I shall be bankrupt if the infernal book doesn't sell. That is why I was hoping the Swiss Universities would buy a few copies.

I see you haven't changed into top-hatted aloofness & remain your simple self. Which is a consolation to me, as most of my friends have become dreadfully

important while I remain in obscurity.

I don't envy you your job, & I
am glad you have Conmemara to
fall back on.

Kindest regards to Mrs Lester
& to mes chères nièces!

Ever yrs sincerely
A O' Rahilly

February

Elsie has been helping supply the
camps of Spanish refugees established
in France near the frontier. Herse cleared
of all spare clothes. The refugees were
in a wretched condition.

We get regular "calls", flyers
from Germany, & seeking help, on route
a 19-year old girl today - without parents
able to speak any German.

It is not easy to distinguish
the possible "fakes".

I have been chairman of the
"axe" etc - reorganizing & reducing
this big institution with its 40 odd
nationalities & multifarious activities.

The budget had to be reduced, I
suppose, on acc of defections. We
have still 50 members or more.

It has been a hard task
& unpleasant, to.

The marvellous Spanish
art treasures from the Prado,
& other Museums & private
collections of art in Spain -
stored in Catalonia - were evacuated
when the war came up towards
the frontier. They have been
lodged in an building - an
anxious care - & an inventory
is to be made. all sorts
of personal & political
complications

Rubio - the gentle "Red"
curator, ^{artist} who stuck by his
treasures & was like a
skeleton when he came into

France; Sert, the man who
painted on Canal room (on
Burgos side) & his colleague
Eugenio d'Ors. The latter hate
each other even more than
their opposite number. d'Ors
especially has been making
all kinds of trouble.

He has to be handled like
a temperamental prima donna.

Behind the scenes collecting
efforts to have an exhibition
(1) in Geneva (2) in Paris (3) in
Italy before they are handed
back.

Several being absent on
holiday I have been kept
occupied with the affair

France & Britain have
recognized Franco (end of Feb)
and the end of the Madrid
sectors' resistance is now
taken for granted as a matter
of days or weeks.

Big diplomatic game
in full swing. Will France
play neutral to get U.S. &
British money & good will?
Or line up more openly with
his German & Italian friends?
Some chagrin in Rome
& Berlin is a goodish sign.
But it is too soon to
see clear.

March

1st Prentiss Gilbert, for years
U.S. "Counsel" in Geneva & first
American to sit at the League
Council table (I was there too
on that occasion) died a
few days ago in Berlin
while chargé d'affaires at
the U.S. Embassy. We were
much together in the Monachuan
crisis days. Being buried
in Geneva.

6 March '39

P.S. (Patrick Sarsfield)
O'Hearty, (Irish Dept Posts & Tele)
at a conference in Montreux
spent the week-end with us.

It's nearly 30 years since we first
met. P.S. was in British Postal
Service & member of the Supreme
Council of the I.R.B. when I
joined in 1909 or 1910. Wrote
historical & political articles
in "Irish Freedom" & "Sun Fein"
under name of "Lucan". A man
of brusque manner P.S. is known
from the rock of pure honesty.

His moral courage (& physical, too)
was one of the characteristics of
the best of that smallish group

of what he calls "the years
of the Captivity".

As we talked of old days
he remarked on the "fairness"
of the English, & recalled how, at
his last £10 note in the
Irish Book Shop (his war time
occupation on leaving the C.S.)
he received a cheque for
£40 odd - due as salary on
some retroactive decision.

Of Germany (we wd both
have been classed as "pro-Germans"
during the war) he said that
if Hitler launched Europe
again into war he wd be beaten
& every old tiny German State
reconstructed with a garrison
to see to it!

Bulmer Hobson & Claire
came sadly into our talk.
Claire had been for years
living with Ned Johnston
(Tom's son) & Bulmer is "mummy
about" with "a china-faced
young woman. C. also
drinking. We concurred in
blaming Claire for the debacle
- unfulfilled ambitions: she
thought to be Prime Minister

Bulmer is 'mad' on
Social Credit - which is 90%
cronkism. Asked by P.S.
a year ago if he would not
put the 1914-16 period on paper
he said it didn't interest him
any more. I can understand
it but it's a pity. No 2

one has his wide knowledge
of that time.

P.S. says that in agreement
to admit Redmondites, to
the Volunteer Council in 1914
B. acted against direct orders
from the Supreme Council of
which he was a member.

I recalled (almost forgotten)
that when B. was sent to
U.S.A. in Spring of 1914
Tom Clarke & Deakin (a
Dublin Protestant chemist long out
of politics) asked me to
act as a member of the
S.C. of the I.R.B. in his absence.
I agreed but no meeting was
held. Tom had a great
deal of confidence in me, I

P.S., like myself, is very critical
of the Cosgrave opposition - "they are
doing all Dev. did," and looking for
no common ground e.g. an external
policy. Has mellowed much
about Dev. but blames him
still for the loss of a great opportunity
(re. the North) in 1922. Thinks
partition will last 100 years -
I say at least 10.

The Ministry leave P.S.
much alone. rather afraid of him!

~~More & even~~ Vaster expenditure
on arms in Britain. Two hundred
warships on the stocks. Hundreds
of millions of pounds per year.

It's very impressive & is giving
more confidence.

But what a pity! They w^d
make no sacrifice in peace &
for peace.

Cordinal Pacelli elected
Pope. Not very pleasing to
Fascist & Nazi. A great
Church diplomat. It was
said that Ciano (F.M. in Ital)
had spoken against such a
possible choice.

Dear Monsieur Avenol,

London, 9 Feb 39

You have probably observed the sharp change of tone which has taken place in England with regard to foreign affairs. Such indication of it as appears in the public press is a true reflection of a firmer attitude and greater confidence which run through the whole country. This is no doubt due in the first place to the big progress made in national armaments, which enables leaders of the country to speak with greater assurance, both at home and abroad, and removes from the ordinary individual the feeling of frustration which had depressed him for some time. Another thing has been the recovery in France, and a third is the attitude of America. There is a further matter also to be taken account of. Despite the continued attacks on the Government's Spanish policy, there has been a turn in the tide. The controversy about intervention or non-intervention, in its familiar form, is now rather out of date and attention is directed to immediate problems on which the Government is pursuing a stronger and more active policy. The Prime Minister, in his quiet way, has made one or two laconic references to his expectation that Italy will carry out promises made, and has several times referred to Germany's failure to make any contribution to appeasement. But the outstanding event has been his emphatic assurance to France. This has won universal approval and brought considerable relief. Many feared that his previous assurances, which were well understood at home, had not made a sufficient impression in other countries, and that he might fatally delay making the unequivocal announcement to which he has now given utterance. The danger was that he might make it too late to give others a chance of reconsidering their policy and so let the country in for war, which by an undelayed engagement to France might otherwise have been avoided. He was reluctant to do so at first because he felt he had been sufficiently explicit on the subject in Rome, and because he thought it might complicate and harden the situation. But the Italian press campaign on the lines that England would not stand by France if she were menaced or attacked, convinced him that it was no longer possible to refrain from publicly and definitely putting all doubts on the matter to rest. The statement was everywhere welcomed, not only because it is felt to be inevitable that England and France must stand together, but also because a sure

knowledge of this beforehand gives an additional hope that it may be a deterrent to any actively aggressive steps. It is partly a reflection of the belief, held for years in many directions, that if England had acted similarly in 1914 the last war might have been averted.

These three things - the increasing ^{armed} strength of the country, a revival in France, and the American trend of policy - are mainly responsible for the new spirit which is to be noted not only in ministerial speeches but in daily conversation everywhere. This I think there is any truth in the suggestion that influence, ~~was~~ deliberately engineered as a psychological from doing so when the leaders of the country refrained advanced. Incidentally, ^{the} state of preparedness was less the Government deliberately ^{emphasize} the charge that ~~ness~~, or that they deliberately allowed ~~an~~ unpreparedness to grow in order ~~that~~ by relief from the probability of war to have the people behind an already determined policy to sacrifice Czechoslovakia, is nonsense. It is not a charge often heard now, but it appears from time to time in extremist quarters and occasionally, I am told, in America.

Hitler's speech to the Reichstag, muddled and menacing as in several respects it was, fell short of what had been anticipated and to that extent brought relief, but it has had no soporific effect. Everything is going forward, much of it with obvious urgency. Indeed, one of the deductions from Hitler's speech and recent diplomatic movements in Europe, is that the next crisis will be in the West and not in the East, and any comforting expectation that Hitler was looking the other way has, for the present, been dissipated. Speculation, of course, is rife regarding Hitler's real intentions in connection with Italy's "natural aspirations", and also regarding the effect upon his actions of the serious internal conditions of Germany. It may lead him to a desperate throw. This is not lost sight of, but it is a tremendous proposition now, for the prolonged attempt to divide England and France has conclusively failed, both Powers have grown in strength and material and moral support from America has increased.

The Party political situation has also undergone a notable change recently. The Prime Minister's stiffening has responded to the instincts of the mass of people, including his own supporters, and his position has accordingly strengthened. It has become clear, too, that whatever criticism may be levelled at him, he has won the confidence of the people of Germany and Italy. This is a point of great significance, and Harold Nicholson, for example, who is one of the most independent critics among Government supporters in Parliament, told me

yesterday that he thought it was a fact, important enough in itself, to retain the Prime Minister in office. He also said that he and others, including Eden, had influenced the Prime Minister from within ministerial ranks in a way that would have been almost impossible if they were in open opposition, and that I believe to be true, although to what degree it is hard to say.

While the Prime Minister and the Government have gained ground recently, the Opposition has certainly lost ground. There is a great deal of division in the rank and file of the Party over the question of unity of Government opposition on one platform. Sir Stafford Cripps, one of the more advanced but also one of the abler leaders of the Labour Party, has been expelled for advocating unity, and although his expulsion was voted by all but two members of the Labour Party Executive, this by no means represents the state of things in the Party generally, and it has weakened its reputation as well as its position. It is probably this fact that has persuaded some members of the Government, like Sir Kingsley Wood, that it would be a good moment for a general election, but the Prime Minister is so far against it.

The uncertainty in international developments is still hampering trade, though conditions have improved somewhat since the Reichstag speech, and there seems to be general agreement that there would be a rapid improvement with any real lessening of tension. They now await Mussolini's next word, but here again there is a rising feeling that it is time to assume the initiative wherever possible and not to allow the ups and downs to be governed by speeches in Berlin or Rome.

Yours sincerely,

HR Lumsden

This note from
Cammings
Cotterides with
Sommerville
most of my own
impressions

8/3/39

Hermann Kauschnig, deformed of his
Damping citizenship after publication
of "Revolution des Nihilismus", writing
to speaking in England lately.

Declares Nazi objective to be world
domination to be realized by revolutionary
upheavals against existing regimes.

Tom Casement found drowned in
a Dublin Canal, aged 73. Amazing
career. Went to sea at 13, & did everything,
including a couple of wars, before he
came back to Ireland. Smyly in the
Irish Times (7/3) says Tom was fighting under
Smuts in "South Africa" when he heard
of Roger's execution.

luncheon S.G. Wednesday March 8th 12.30

- M. David Weill, Président des Musées Nationaux,
Membre de l'Institut
- M. Jaujard, Sous-Directeur du Musée du Louvre
- M. Carl Dreyfus (Experts du Louvre
- M. Vergnet Ruiz (
- Mr. McLaran Expert Britannique
- M. Deonna Directeur du Musée d'Art et d'Histoire
de Genève
- M. Gielly Conservateur d°
- M. Paul Lachenal
- M. Sert — (BURGOS)
- M. Giner Pentoja } MADRID } -
- M. Perez Rubio }
- M. Aghnides
- M. Ganem
- M. Valléry-Radot

15th March 39

The consequences of the "Munich" appeasement come steadily on wards. The partition of Czecho-Slovakia is complete. It came out of a near tranquil sky.

A German plot in Slovakia, a quarrel between Bratislava & Prague. President Hacha goes to Berlin.

Within 2 or 3 days "Cz-Sl." is placed in the hands of the ~~Furber~~ German troops are in Prague. No resistance but the occupying regiments were hushed & hooded.

The arms of 40 divisions, Skoda & its 50,000 workmen, & 25 other armament factories pass into German hands. Ruthenia is occupied by Hungary. The Czechs are to have a regime less than a "protectorate".

Here Halifax says this action is not in accordance with the spirit of Munich. He is bold! But I don't agree with him.

Chamberlain ("I'mine Berlin", as D.M. says) says we must not be deflected from our objects of peace & appeasement. It sounds rather abject, and his credulity is "astronomisch".

His reactions are peculiar but slowness may be the most charitable description of them. Even he cannot go on.

The moral reaction in the world will be certain.

An American paper says - "The Twilight of Liberty in Europe".

Hitler's objective of at least continental domination cannot now be hidden behind "unity of race" or "self-determination".

Hitler's ^{first} thought was a strengthening of the rear to enable him to face west. Poland & Hungary - were they accomplices before the fact? Berlin has raised no larger the objection to a Polish-Hungarian front. Some people look on it as a check to Hitler's Eastward or South Eastward march. Nonsense!

I look for more serious consequences in the Mediterranean area. We had been awaiting Mussolini's move when Berlin jumped again.

Did Churchill know & acquiesce
before hand? How did he get
a definite promise? Is he again
to see the Senior Partner get all
the fruits? Will he become
desperate now? Or will he
(so late) he moves to get a price
from the Democrats.

Some of the girls were going
to Venice for Easter. Not now.
A new move may come almost
at once for home.

It is sickening to see
a decent little country wiped
off the map.

And without a blow.
"Freedom shrieks" again.

I think the British were taken by
surprise. Less than a week ago
Sir Samuel Hoare was ^{gaily} talking of a
conference between the three dictators
& France & Britain as a means
of introducing an era of
peace prosperity & paradise.

A British under minister was
to go to Berlin this week to
discuss trade developments.

Another League member has gone.

Our position here is sufficiently
discouraging. Chamberlain a fortnight
ago again spoke ~~also~~ in an unfair
& unfriendly way of the League.

17/3/39. St Patrick's Day.

We are on the whole a fortunate & happy country in spite of our partition problem.

Alexandre Guravescu, new Romanian minister, who has served in Bulgaria, Belgrade, Vienna, Bern etc, made his "call" this morning.

He summarised the situation by saying that the events of this week would end in a Franco-British occupation of Berlin - not, perhaps, in a year, or two years, but a logical result.

The German plan of domination was now in the open, and the step outside German racial &

sympathetic boundaries would be fatal.

He was in Vienna till the Anschluss. 35% of population was opposed; 30% (young generation) Nazi & pro-Anschluss; & 35% followed the winning side.

He had just returned for a visit to his brother-in-law, Romanian ambassador in Warsaw; & said the Poles were not cognizant of the German plan, & were alarmed again by the developments.

Germany, above all, wanted Romanian oil. Her ^(R) military attaché in Berlin, had reported that the synthetic petrol had turned out to be a fiasco.

Else & I are again wishing
we had our goods & chattels
stowed in Ireland.

18/3/39.

Chamberlain spoke last night and
reversed British policy.

Five minutes apology for his
cold, lame, & inadequate remarks
in Parliament on Wednesday night; 20
minutes defence of "Munich"; &
half an hour's attack on Hitler. Politely
he called him a liar, without
using Duff-Cooper's "a traitor's throat
perjured". He quoted Hitler's
promises & undertakings, private
& public, & asked who could trust
him. Again, is it the beginning
of his attempt to dominate the
world? If so G.B. will resist him.

The "Manchester Guardian" says it is
the gravest warning speech made since
Sir E. Grey's in August, 1914.

G.B., France, USA, & Russia seem to refuse to recognize the new annexations - w/ "colonial protectorate" in Europe. G.B. taking a vigorous lead; Russia at least approached for what seems to be alliances. Smaller powers, & Poland, more or less invited to come in.

Great anxiety about Rumania - an economic ultimatum from Berlin - suppression of industries & complete control of trade in exchange for "guarantee" of frontiers. Rumania sends on Army corps to the frontiers. Oil! oil!

Deladier gets full powers from French Parliament.

No message of congratulation from Mussolini to Hitler.

Burkhardt, who was allowed to go back to Donyis (I opposed it strongly) was there 3 days. On

Sunday 12th March, he reached Berlin & had a talk with Weizacker (Präsident head of 40.) who had been (through Krael) urging Burkhardt to return a week before. W. Donyis frank, said he was most anxious and wished, for B's sake & the League's, he was not going to Donyis. "These people are going mad". B. learned of the plan to occupy Prague: I believe British & French did not know at the time. Donyis & Krael were not safe.

He called on Lupski, Polish ambassador,
& found him a-twitter. Had an
appointment with von Ribbentrop but
was told he could not be found.

So went on to Danzig. Greiser
discussed normal problems, Jews, etc
in Broeltcher's presence. Forster was
"in hospital for a serious operation"
(I am very sceptical). Later Greiser
said he had recently seen Hitler
who was annoyed with the Poles
& said that if they behaved he
would still leave Danzig but
if not "he wd show them who
was master". So B. stayed 3
days in Danzig.

I hope the Poles won't begin
a war over Danzig. It wd
be the worst ground.

Such is the mentality of the day.

Prepared a note for Walter
(+ F.O.) suggesting the use of
Gneiss as a rallying point
- in spite of its smash - alongside
the alliance system they seem to
be working on. But Avenol
says "no"; the League's time is
not yet. I wonder if, in any
case, Chamberlain wd have the
courage to eat some of his hard
words about the League. Are we
still to lie on the shelf.

Avenol says he at one
time simply contemplated closing

down the Secretariat if war
broke out; now he is not so
sure. Sokoline says its seat
sh^d. be moved to Dublin.

There are signs that
Halifax is showing independence
and favours a strong policy -
including conscription. It appears
the F.O. was shocked by the
semi-official optimism of ten
days ago & that it emanated
from Chamberlain's entourage.
"What price" Hoare's speech. He
must be feeling rather small.

There is fear in Switzerland
and in Holland, too. The Swiss
franc has been going down in the
London exchange market. Dutch
& Swiss capital is going into
France - "behind the Maginot
line". Most of the big Swiss
gold reserve is in New York;
the remainder is hidden in
the high alps - not in
exposed Zurich.

War loan, which was 98 $\frac{1}{2}$
a week ago, fell to 95 yesterday.

Friday Oct 3/1939

For a week G.B. has been trying to establish a front against aggression. France, Russia, & Poland at any rate have been invited to agree to a common declaration. Contents not yet certain. ? Consultation in case of threat anywhere in Europe. Russia & France seem agreed but Poland asks for more definite military commitments. Others will be asked later to join.

It's an effort, belated, to set up a kind of limited collective security. ^{Chamberlain has in the} already attacked the ^{cards against it.} Poland holds the key.

It will be difficult to help her, of course.

Memel has been annexed in "agreement" with the Lithuanian Govt & under the usual threat. It's not a case anybody felt to be on the same plane as Cz-Sl. ~~is~~ in spite of a 5 Powers guarantee (including Ital & Japan). German planes flew over Memel while Kaunas Parliament was discussing the ultimatum. Polish Press bitter. There is still speculation about Italy. Mussolini will speak next Sunday.

Burkhardt called to see me yesterday. Very anxious about his belongings in Danzig. Weizacher advised him to bring his car with him (he had proposed to leave it in Baln); it might be very useful!!

The entourage of Hitler say he has not yet read Chamberlain's speech.

I wish the Danzig question were out of the way. As I wrote last October, it is being kept by Germans as a pawn for bigger gains.

Poles tried last December but the Germans wouldn't talk.

Pelt, back from 3 months in Paris, says the spirit is very different to that of September. Very calm & more confident in themselves.

Howard Bucknell called with an idea (partial fleet mobilisation without any explanation) based on the assumption that G.B. w^d want to back out if the bluff were called in a more open undertaking. Albion!

A new Anglo-French guarantee to intervene if Holland or Luxembourg were attacked is reported, as President Lebrun visits London in state.

Joe Wilson thinks a special mtg. of the Assembly sh^d be summoned in Dublin.

Le Water told Jacklin a few days ago that London would be assumed that U.S.A. w^d declare war if they became involved.

I hope it is true. But I wonder if might of course explain the change of front. Bucknell thinks the administration w^d favour it but there w^d be great difficulties & delay.

Memel, dirty & insignificant
as an Irish provincial town, doesn't
seem much of a prize. But it
brings Germany another step up the
Baltic, & gives her control of the
mouth of Poland's second river,
the Niemen, as she controls
the Vistula at Danzig. Lithuania
loses her only port & economically
falls into German hands. The
port was neglected by the Germans
before 1918; used only for wood
export, & the Lithuanians had done
much to develop it.

Wadding's job comes to an
end. He is not a League official.
The princess close in Poland.

Rumania has signed a trade treaty
with Germany, giving very substantial
concessions. Compared with the
reported ultimatum some we say
it is like Godesberg & Munich.
But they did not get all they
wanted, it is clear. "The Journal" says
however that in 3 weeks at the
latest Germany will have her largest petro-
monopoly of the petrol.

Hungary is in German hands to 90%
Hungary claims 2,000,000 of a
minority in Rumania; a move
could be initiated without the
slightest difficulty & on most
plausible grounds.

Ashton Gwatkin, one of the principal British Economic Experts talking to Charron in Paris two days after the Prague coup, said that the reason the Czech frontiers were not guaranteed after Munich was that they did not believe it was the end of the movement. What they had expected was another Munich and that this would have given Germany the same results; the shock came because of the slightly different method. He said he was astonished at the pessimism in Paris, pessimism as to the outlook for peace. He went on to indicate that his outlook was that Hungary and Roumania would be incorporated as servants of the five years plan without any territorial changes and when this was done Germany would turn to open her discussions with the West. There would be no danger of conflict, he thought, during this preparatory period, but the colonial question which would then be raised, could very easily produce a conflict.

I don't mind the cold-bloodedness, but it does seem extraordinary that the whole preparations for a test with Britain and France should be looked on with such equanimity and in completely certain anticipation that they would have to fight the reinforced Germany in the end.

Charron reports conditions in France as excellent from a financial point of view and as to the unity and morale of the people. The air force is still lacking, good plans are in progress, but there is a lag. He is sending me a letter from Grady, the United States Member of the Financial Economic Committee which meets next week and which puts up proposals more or less for an economic defence and which he regards as very revealing as to the attitude of Washington.

March 25th 1939

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What they had expected was another Munich and that this would have given Germany the same results, but about some because of the slightly different method. He said he was as to the possibility of a Munich in Paris, possibly in London, an economic conference and which he regarded as very necessary next week and which he proposed some of the members of the International Economic Committee which meets in London, should be invited from Czech, the United States, Germany, Poland, France and in progress, but there is a lot of work and money of the people. The air force is still excellent from a financial point of view and as to the Charron reports conditions in France as the end.

30/3/39

Almost unnoticed in the midst of other important events, heralds has quietly crumpled into France's hands after 30 months' siege.

Successes of the siege and while mentioning Britain, Paris, Czech and did not make specific territorial claims. Belloc has announced firmly - "has an export" but the way is open to negotiations on frontier + France if the will is there. He can force the work steps.

Germany has started an anti-British campaign causing great anxiety. Is it no more than an effort to prevent Beck's visit to London next week?

Britain proposes to double her territorial army. Not easy.

Leith-Ross with whom I dined a couple of nights ago says one of the principal ~~of~~ the non-political difficulties about conscription is absence of equipment.

Still closer military relations between France & England are showing.

Our personal plans for a holiday have swayed to & fro. I decided not to go to Ireland. Could leave neither office nor family. Then all to Riviera. But that's not good enough. So again decided for Ireland, this time all together.

I can leave them there & come back if the crisis develops. It may go on for weeks, to fade out till the autumn again. Or -

A couple of days ago a general called Walter Jockle, & myself to discuss our League position in case of emergency. Jockle will send duplicates of a few important papers to a place in western France - as banks in London & Paris are preparing - It will be chaotic at the best but some preliminary work will be invaluable. Helon pushed him, I think, with his plans for D.L.O. evacuation.

I don't think the mobilisations
are yet so great as last Sept
but it is uncertain.

Polish-German relations
continue to attract most
interest & concern at the
moment; after assisting
Germany during recent years,
attacking & weakening the League;
showing in the destruction of
C.S.; she finds the diplomatic
game of Berlin beginning to
swing towards her own frontiers.

Her people's spirit
& readiness to fight will
delay or prevent any aggressive
plans towards her.

Feldman today recalled
the terms of Hausmann's letter as
to Kell's plan in the East.

Sat
1/4

Last night Chamberlain
announced a Franco-British
guarantee for Poland!!! To cover
the week-end? or the period before
more definite steps made. German
demands have been made on Poland
but not yet an ultimatum form.

The course of British Policy
now complete.

General List.

Consul Robert Adam
Mr. & Mrs. & Miss Bligh

List of Senators -

Dr. Rauschning

Vice President Greiser

Senator Batzer (propaganda + Winter help)

Senator Boeck

Dr. Hoppenrath senator finance

Senator Luth

Senator Kluck

Senator Wierinski. Kaiser

Senator von Knuck

