Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

17th May, 1939.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

I am most grateful to you for acceding to my request yesterday and not putting the Question you proposed down on the Paper.

I promised to let you know when we heard an account from Bucharest of the recent incidents in the Dobrudja. Perhaps the simplest thing to do would be to give you the information as we have it from Sofia and Bucharest.

Our first news reached the Foreign Office on Sunday morning (May 14th) from Sofia, and was to the effect that, according to accounts said to have been brought by a few wounded survivors who had escaped to Bulgaria, the Roumanian authorities had decided to round up the male inhabitants of a Bulgarian village in the Dobrudja who had shown irredentist tendencies. As these men were being taken to Silistra they were

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The Right Honourable
the Lord Noel-Buxton.

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The Right Honourable
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When our Minister at Sofia saw the President of the Council on the evening of the 13th he was told that the incident was even more serious than had at first been thought, and M. Kiosseivanoff read him an account, based also on narratives of survivors, from which it appeared that the murder of the 22 victims had been carefully planned and particularly brutal. Rendel understands that both the President of the Council and the King are extremely anxious lest this affair should lead to a serious deterioration of the situation. It is also understood that the news is being kept as far as possible out of the Bulgarian press, although various accounts of the story have already spread throughout north eastern Bulgaria, where they are said to be

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Reports received from Bucharest, on the other hand, tend to minimise the importance of the incident. For instance, the Rador agency has telegraphed a Roumanian version of the incident to the effect that its origin is to be found in an act of brigandage committed against a local proprietor of the commune of Belita; the band, which included a few Roumanians, was arrested and, while they were being taken to appear before the magistrate, a fight with the escort ensued. The same message states that the Roumanian President of the Council has received a representative of the Bulgarian members of the National Front offering co-operation in the suppression of brigandage, and that he has decided to send the Under-Secretary of the Interior, accompanied by three representatives of the Bulgarian minority, to make a tour of inspection in the Dobrudja.

On May 12th our Minister at Bucharest learnt from Constanza that on or about May 4th three Roumanians had attempted to reach Bulgaria by sailing boat; they murdered their boatmen and were subsequently arrested

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and, under cross-examination, denounced a gang of Bulgarian agents spread over the Dobrudja. Another report from Constanza was to the effect that 20 Roumanian subjects of Bulgarian origin in the frontier district had been arrested and shot. Our Acting Consul at Constanza said that he could obtain no definite confirmation of this shooting although he believed the story about the boatmen to be true.

On May 13th our Minister at Bucharest heard again from the Acting Consul at Constanza, this time to the effect that the 20 men in question had fled during the recent Roumanian mobilisation to Bulgaria, where they were armed and sent back to the Dobrudja and subsequently ambushed by Roumanian forces and all killed.

When our Minister saw him on the 15th, the Roumanian President of the Council was of the opinion that the affair was pure brigandage, although he appeared uncomfortable when discussing the attempted escape. He maintained that two or three gendarmes were wounded in the fight, nineteen brigands being killed and five having escaped. He is taking disciplinary action

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against the gendarmerie for the general handling of the matter.

We have, so far, no means of deciding definitely which of these many variations is the correct account of the incident; and of course it is not for us but for the Roumanian Government to institute enquiries in the matter, a course which the Roumanian Government seem to be taking. We are however taking steps to make the Roumanian Government acquainted with the concern that the affair, with its evident possibilities, is causing us.

F. Drucy
Halifax

Copy
from Cowley St

Dear Halifax

May I say a word in regard to the problem which will arise in the event of an attempt by the German government to make peace on the basis of a restored Poland.

Our press would be ready to condemn such proposals as providing no security against renewed aggression. but a great body of public opinion would in reality be anxious to consider any grounds for confidence which such proposals contained.

& I should like to assure you of the wide support which you would receive if you should decide that adequate security for future peace was contained in the proposals.

If we must assume that Danzig & the Corridor would not be restored to Poland, a counterveiling offer would evidently form part of any German plan designed to secure our acceptance. e.g. an offer to join in a genuine scheme of disarmament, in a scheme of European cooperation, & in the settlement of East European questions on a federal basis, involving the setting up of a Polish as well as a Bohemian State.

As we have offered to negotiate

with 'any peace loving government' it might be considered that such a peace could be concluded as containing on a balance greater advantages & fewer risks than the continuance of war. If your opinion should lie in that direction, it is certain that you would find an immense body of support.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

1st March, 1938.

Dear Noel-Buxton,

Thank you for your letter of the 25th February. I much appreciated your approaching me about the invitation which you have received from the Burgermeister of Stuttgart to address the Foreign Affairs Institute there on the colonial question. I have carefully thought over the point whether there is any question of your address being misunderstood, and have come to the conclusion that it is not a case in which I should wish to influence your judgment one way or another. In short I should like to leave it entirely to your own discretion.

Yours sincerely,

Halifax

The Right Honourable
Lord Noel-Buxton, P.C.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

29th April, 1938.

My dear Noel Buxton

Very many thanks for your letter of today. I am very grateful to you for sending me your further memorandum on the proposal for a plebiscite in the German districts of Czechoslovakia.

Yours sincerely
Halifax

The Right Honourable
Lord Noel-Buxton.

Thanks

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.
4th July, 1938.

CONFIDENTIAL.

Noel

My dear Noel-Buxton,

I am sending to you herewith for your confidential information a copy of a memorandum which has been drawn up in the Foreign Office on certain aspects of the proposal to hold a plebiscite in connexion with the Sudeten problem in Czechoslovakia. Whilst I do not necessarily endorse all that is said in the memorandum, nor is it in fact intended to represent our last word, it does I feel raise important considerations which merit very careful attention.

Yours sincerely,

Halifax

The Right Honourable
The Lord Noel-Buxton.

I agree w last sentence – better another

I r u urged plebs since Hen's demands
u incl plebs.

Some pts in favour are omitted.
Esp control of imp.
Certainly settlt best wt it if can be got.
b if deadlock, I proposal shd be used
to push Gr & autonl.
If deadlock, many pts of mere fall.

Debate?

18 COWLEY STREET
WESTMINSTER.

11th.July 1938.

Dear Halifax,

It occurs to me, ~~and others have suggested it to me~~, that you may think it desirable to ~~show your attitude in the Czech question~~ ~~to the parties in the controversy, and may therefore desire an opportunity to report progress in bringing the Czechs to the point of definite proposals, and also to show the Germans that peaceful change is really a practical alternative to blood and iron.~~ ~~If it is the case that you would welcome a debate in the Lords, I am of course at your service, in putting down a motion on any day that you prefer.~~

Let me enclose a note that includes some points that I think could be

In view of Czech situation, & especially of Herr Hitler's negative announcement of policy, make a statement on (1) to bring Czechs to necessary concessions. (2) to bring home to Germans that we mean business.

In case you should wish for such an opportunity for speaking in the House of Commons on question.

~~Let me say that I am sorry to be away when you fall out with Hitler.~~

made in a speech without weakening the impression in Germany's mind that aggression would be opposed.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

12th July, 1938.

Hx re Jly 9 letter suggesting blackmail

Dear Noel Buxton,

Thank you very much for your interesting letter of the 9th July about Czechoslovakia. I will certainly keep in mind the arguments and suggestions which you set out.

Yours sincerely
Halifax

The Right Honourable
Lord Noel-Buxton.

Czech Accept. terms

18 Cowley Street,
Westminster,
S.W.1.

27th.September 1938.
(worst day)

My dear Halifax,

May I say a word on the question of supporting France in her defence of Czechoslovakia? I remember your saying to me that we should not necessarily be drawn in if France fought.

Hitler seems to want a war now; but should we not do better not to oblige him? However difficult to condone his terms, it is just possible to do so, having already accepted the former drastic terms. Hitler may want to aggress beyond the Sudetenland, but on the other hand he may not; and he could not carry his own people with him in going further, as he can for his present demands. He can make a case for these, which appeals even to moderate Germans.

Harsh demands provoke indignation, and if they certainly mean unbounded aggression, we must resist, choosing the time when our chance of success is greatest. The explanation given by the Times' Rome correspondent (Times, 27th.September) of Mussolini's policy throws light on this question.

Cool calculation is needed. Hitler's brutality is deplorable; but before plunging into war, the German outlook is to be studied. The letter of Powys Greenwood, a good authority, in the Times of September 27th, throws light on this aspect of the

situation. German exasperation can be justified by the long delay of revision. The Germans look on Czechoslovakia as we should look upon an independent Wales, used for enemy air bases. The folly of putting the Sudeten Germans into such a State has been widely admitted since 1919. The Carlsbad statement of claims was made on March 24th; no really serious reply was given until September 4th. Meanwhile, German lives had been lost, and fury was natural to the German public. We urged reforms on Benes for years past, and our advice was ignored; finally, when the Czechs had accepted cession, the Government was changed, and it is still not clear whether the new Government confirms the acceptance. Mobilisation took place without our advice (Times of September 26th). In view of all this, brusque action on the part of the Germans is to be expected.

A demand for resistance to it comes from those who opposed cession; but we cannot now go back upon that. We have swalloed the camel of revision; we cannot strain at the gnat of procedure. Humiliation, such as it was, may be worth accepting, when weighed against the alternative evil of war. We should not be fighting against a time limit, but about the duration of it, which is not a war aim easy to explain. If we coolly weigh the evil and risk of war at this stage against the gain in view, our aim is not over-clear. If our aim is the defence of Czechoslovakia, that is part of the French system of alliances, which was never approved in England, and France should

fall in with our views. Victory would not restore the Sudetens to the Czechs.

If the aim is to forestall a general German domination, throughout Eastern Europe, it is worth remembering Lord Balfour's view that, if we broke up Austria-Hungary, Germany must inevitably be strengthened. Or if the aim is to destroy the Nazi regime, war is as likely to confirm it.

In any case, we must beware of natural indignation and romantic emotion, and coolly balance the inevitable loss against the possible gain.

Private Hx & N.C.

Peace

Foreign Office, S.W.1.

September 27th. 1939.

Dear Noel-Buxton,

A line to thank you for your letter of September 26th. We cannot, of course, tell whether the German Government are likely to make any such proposals, or, if so, of what nature they will be.

Apart from the proposals themselves, the deepest point of difficulty, as I see it, is what assurance anyone can possibly have that any undertakings accepted would be observed. I would, as I suppose would everybody else, give nearly everything I possess to see a secure and honourable peace made early, but I am not prepared to do this unless it is, in fact, secure.

Yours very sincerely,

(SIGNED) Halifax.

---

10 Downing Street,
Whitehall,

28th. September 1939.

Dear Noel-Buxton,

Many thanks for your letter of September 26th. I am grateful to you for having let me know your views.

I do not think I need say in replying to you more than is said in Halifax's letter to you, a copy of which I have seen. As he says, there is nothing which we more eagerly desire than a genuine peace, but we must be sure that it is a peace that will last.

Yours sincerely,

(SIGNED) Neville Chamberlain.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

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Yours sincerely
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The Lord Noel-Buxton.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

16th October, 1939.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

Thank you very much for your letter of the 13th October.

It was good of you to send me your note on the question of negotiation with Germany, which I was interested to read.

Yours
Halifax

The Right Honourable
the Lord Noel-Buxton.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

9th November, 1939.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

Thank you very much for your letter of yesterday, enclosing a note on behalf of Harmsworth, Brocket, Arnold and yourself about the message from the Queen of the Netherlands and the King of the Belgians.

Yours sincerely,

Halifax

The Right Honourable the Lord Noel-Buxton.

COPY.

CONFIDENTIAL

Foreign Office,

S.W. 1.

4th March, 1940.

Personal.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

Thank you for your note enclosing the statement on war aims.

There is a great deal in it with which I can readily agree, but I also feel difficulty about the conclusion at which you arrive on the last page which appears to infer that on the whole the balance of probability is to-day that by a conference now Hitler would be likely to contribute his share to what you call "guarantees of real value". These, if I read your memorandum aright are:

(1) German disinclination for war resulting from the genuine restoration of Poland less Danzig and the Corridor, and a genuine restoration of Bohemia less the Sudetenland;

(2) that Germany should be willing to join in European co-operation - economic and political; and

(3) that she should be willing honestly to take part in disarmament.

I find it difficult to believe that these conditions are at all likely to be fulfilled or that the United States would be willing to play the part that you assign to her in your statement and which you rightly regard as another guarantee of real value if it could be obtained.

All this quite apart from the question whether or not the ingenious Goebbels could represent such a settlement as sufficient of a success for Hitler to nullify what I feel strongly as to the importance of making plain to the German people that the Hitler system of force has failed.

But I should be very ready - if you so wished - to exchange views about it all.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) Halifax.

March 6th, 1940.

Dear Halifax,

Thanks for your letter commenting on my note on war aims.

I fully admit that Hitler may not be ready to make concessions as yet, but I wished to put the point that the absence of any public statement by him in this direction does not prove that he may not be prepared to show to you, behind the scenes, that he is ready to make such concessions, provided that his face is saved from such a degree of humiliation that he prefers to fight on and risk greater disaster at a later date. You will have the means of ascertaining this.

I submit the argument that you may be convinced that concessions would result from a Conference, and that thus the terms you require might be obtained at an earlier momen

May I say a word on your second point, namely that the terms I suggested would not look like failure to the German people? I am afraid the fact is that Goebbels and Co. will persuade the mass of German people that Hitler has succeeded, whatever the end of the war may be. Even a total disaster would be excused, as the result of treachery. I do not see how this is to be avoided. We can only aim at what is in fact a failure to achieve Hitler's avowed ambitions, and the

most vaunted of these was that he should settle Polish affairs regardless of the Western Powers.

I respond with pleasure to your suggestion of an exchange of views and will gladly keep any appointment that you may like to make.

U

Halt

ah 5-'40

April 5th Interview.

The question is whether to deal with Hitler. Welles asked the P.M. the question. P.M. against. H. would, on conditions, if assured of Allied preponderance, and changed system of Government, and restored Poland, etc. Seems to assume German military defeat.

Our guarantees.

Competition of wills, both of belligerents and of parties in Germany.

Big war unlikely. Instinct of both sides against it. No more Paschendaele.

See Van. Would not agree with him. I said, nor would he with you. He said, yes, but must not say so.

I might negotiate and find could have done better if went on.

Against knock-out.

Cosmo ditto.

Would like views of Oecumenical Council.

Feelers: Yes, apparently from Goering, but Oslo Bishop said saw Goering, and no good.

Publicity and precedent action. Agrees possible, and public opinion would not make difficulty.

America.

Cannot hope America, but America might change any day.

I said America depends on whether invited join settlement. He said, you realise ticklish, because of France. ? This was let down.

Might be assured without America.

I mentioned Spring-Rice and House - Grey. He was ignorant of it.

Colonies.

March 5th, 1938, offered discuss Colonies definitely. N.H. put in his book. H. told him to cut out. A great pity. at Private Lords' Meeting: he did not mean would act during war. I urged opportunity, because question of restoring Colonies to Germany would not arise.

After war changed status, but German sovereignty would offend both ~~my~~ a Slavy school and Page-Croft.

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INTERVIEW WITH LORD HALIFAX. April 5th, 1940.

You said: differed two points:

Germany not ready;

America isolated.

Point 1: We, the public, know nothing, and should still not know if negotiation on foot, as Smuts and Mensdorf.

My point is, whe you negotiate, two things to urge:

Knock-out dangerous;

Publicity not necessary, nor precedent withdrawal.

Ebor's point: letters, conviction possible, America, German situation, Italy, Russia.

America: Grey, 1916.

Depends invite America take part settlement.

Daily Telegraph: 1. U.S.A. more anti-German

2. Less afraid of G.

3. Less greedy.

Knock-out: G. will anyhow say success, because got Danzig.

More than Danzig advisable, corridor, ?pre-1914 frontiers

Test is less than Hitler said.

Mandation: he said, private meeting, not against action during war.

Council of Churches.

A gesture which would get believed and get across.

Would he like scheme.

Negotiation would have public support.

Cecil, public opinion would not tolerate, now says Lansdowne perhaps right.

Group in Lords, weekly. Some withhold name, fearing advice not welcome. Many silent, because encourage enemy.

Public meetings considered, but fear Government would speak more stiffly.

Ebor would lead opinion.

Many would think meetings necessary if Govt. showed knock-out policy, as Ll.G. led to Lansdowne.

Was Lansdowne useful?

Questions:

Armistice helps which side?

Peace best with Hitler, Goering, other?

Feelers taken place?

Send notes of my points?

Vansittart?

See leaflets here?

GREY (America and peace in 1916).

America does not keep promises.

France was right, even before 1933, and in 1936 ought to have logically acted by herself, invading Germany about re-armament. Hitler would have been brought to an end.

Even before H., Stresemann was intriguing. His papers show his policy was only tactics aimed at domination.

Germany could be held down by supervision of aerodromes.

Neutrals ought to be overridden.

We ought to have fought for Finland.

Neutrals contemptible.

Sweden corrupt and selfish.

Sebaud Hend

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yes — Send notes of my points?

yes — Vansittart?

See leaflets here?

June 21st, 1940.

Dear Halifax,

May I send a word on a point which arose in our last conversation on the subject of relations with the United States, as affected by our new relation. You may remember that when we discussed the question of war aims just before total war began, you dwelt on the difficulty of securing the participation of the United States in guaranteeing a settlement, giving the reason that France would be unwilling to invite the U.S.A. to take part in arranging terms, on the ground that the U.S.A. let France down in 1919.

I want to suggest that the new situation vis-a-vis France makes a radical difference to our relation with the U.S.A. You have often dwelt on the fact that the chief aim of war policy is that the settlement following the war should be durable. The problem has been to find a guarantee of durability, and no one has been able to suggest any material guarantee other than the commit-

ment of the United States. The alternative policy of dismemberment of Germany, if a crushing victory were secured, appealed to public opinion in France, but, not being approved in America, made another ground of discord. Until recent events, the hope of American participation has savoured of wishful thinking. The United States would not guarantee a settlement unless invited to take part in it, but such an invitation was precluded by French opinion. If France ceases to be our intimate partner in war policy, then close association with the United States has become far more accessible. Taken together with the new realisation in the U.S.A. that they are definitely in danger from a German victory, and that their safety is bound up with the power of the British fleet, the new situation throws a fresh light upon the question of war aims in general, and particularly on the problem whether Germany would, in the event of a negotiated peace, be in a position to renew the war at a moment favourable to herself.

We have hitherto been handicapped in our policy towards the U.S.A. by the attitude of France. If H.M.G.

are able to take advantage of the opening for closer friendship with the U.S.A., they would have the strongest support of public opinion.

July 12th, 1940.

Dear Halifax,

I had a talk with Butler yesterday, and he persuaded me to leave with him a rough note that I had made for the purpose of condensing my remarks. He spoke of forwarding this note to you, so let me just say that it is far too crude, and I ought to have submitted a note in proper form. Will you let me have an opportunity of putting the point that I want to make when you find it possible to spare the time?

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

15th July, 1940.

ans to mine saying note to Rab vague. for cd I enlarge.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

Thank you very much for your letter of July 12th.

I should like to have a talk with you one of these days, and if I may I will let you know when I can suggest a time.

Yours sincerely,

Halifax

The Right Honourable
Lord Noel-Buxton.

Halifax
WSC Notes

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

22nd October, 1940.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

I write to thank you, rather belatedly, for your note of the 16th October covering the paper you sent to the Prime Minister. I will not attempt to comment on this in detail. I think there is a good deal to be said for a fuller declaration of war aims and this matter has been receiving a good deal of consideration at our hands. But it is, as you will be the first to know if you have tried your hand at it, not an easy thing to produce in compact form.

In regard to the general arguments that you develop in your note, there are a good many points on which I should differ from you, but apart from these I think the main point of difficulty remains as to the complete impossibility of trusting Hitler. And I am afraid that a United States guarantee, even if this was forthcoming, which I should greatly doubt, does not really offer a solution.

× We didn't trust Kaiser or Napoleon.

Why not? Reckant trust them?

Halifax

The Right Honourable
Lord Noel-Buxton.

Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

(New bd. 1) Best wishes
2) Intentions
(Newton sd. Pro Rag.)
W. encourage war feeling

December 11th, 1940.

My dear Noel-Buxton,

Many thanks for your note and a copy of the motion which you are putting down in the House of Lords on Tuesday next, December 17th. I am not altogether in agreement with you when you say that the Debate on Newton's motion did not seem to be completed, since I cannot think of anything that there was more to say on the subject when that debate took place or what further could be said today. I am afraid, therefore, that, if you feel obliged to adhere to your motion, it will not be possible for anyone who answers you to add anything to the reply that was given the other day to Newton.

Halifax

The Lord Noel-Buxton.