

1045

REB

GRAY

Praha

Dated October 12, 1938

Rec'd 3:50 p. m.

Secretary of State,

Washington.

294, October 12, 6 p. m.

Associated Press, United Press, individual correspondents such as Whitaker Ghysde and others, suffering from continuing censorship here in getting stories filed with news value time. Stories ultimately get through but sometimes with twelve hours delay. At correspondents' request Legation has discussed situation informally with Foreign Office and General Staff on the basis that to facilitate news by telegraph or telephone circuit to Paris or London was in interests of this country as all American press correspondents here are sympathetic with its plight. The Czech representatives who have been in Berlin on the Delimitation Commission have urged General Staff to censor anything that even remotely might be considered by the Germans as propaganda because such news items in the foreign press seriously increase the difficulties of negotiation which are already very great.

Correspondents

Czechoslovakia

REB

2-#294, From Praha, Oct.12,6p.m.

Correspondents here would appreciate having their agencies or special papers advised of continuing censorship difficulties.

Among the news stories which correspondents are unable to get abroad is one which may be of great importance in respect to refugees. Czechs are driving Social Democrat and Catholic Germans back to their homes in Sudetenland. Although legal base of the action may possibly be found in the Munich Agreement the method adopted is devoid of any sentiment or of consideration of ultimate fate of the unfortunate individuals. In one instance it is alleged that people were driven back at point of bayonets.

Neill Malcolm, League Refugee Commission, left this morning after finding Government completely adamant to situation and insisting on return of refugees within 48 hours to their districts. Legation has copy of circular expulsion order. After much difficulty Malcolm saw Syrový this morning and has left with nothing accomplished.

This is the story press wants to get out but does not know whether it is getting through on account of
censorship.

REB

3-#294, From Praha, Oct.12,6p.m.

censorship. There follows in the second section an account largely prepared by Miss Gellhorn of Colliers which gives the situation as seen by the correspondents. The main points the Legation has confirmed from other sources.

Would appreciate information of any action which has been taken or in contemplation regarding refugee situation here.

(END SECTION ONE)

CARR

HPD

HR

GRAY

Praha

Dated October 12, 1938

Rec'd 9:29 p.m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

294, October 12, 6 p.m. (SECTION TWO)

Blanket order of expulsion within forty-eight hours of refugees from Czechoslovakia back to German occupied areas has been upheld this morning. Neill Malcolm, High Commissioner for Refugees of the League of Nations, and General Faucher late of the French Military Mission, pleaded with General Sirovy to cancel this order for at least two weeks, giving the League and the Evian Committee and private refugee charities an opportunity to save these refugees. This request was flatly and finally refused.

Approximately one million people will be affected by these expulsion orders. Sudeten Germans who are either Social Democrats, Liberals, Communists, Jews, Catholics fleeing from occupied zones must now return. Czechs who have been absorbed in Hitler's occupation total of about 850,000 desiring to migrate to Czechoslovakia proper or already migrated face erratic but equally harsh treatment. Foreign exiles from Nazidom, German and Austrian, to the

number

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number of 10,000 also are included in this expulsion order.

Varying sources (foreign press, local German organizations, Czech Foreign Office) estimated last May that out of the 3,500,000 German population in Czechoslovakia at least a million were not enthusiastic Henleinists. In this number are hundreds of thousands of active political Democrats. It can be assumed that half a million anti-Nazi Germans, Czech citizens, are unwilling and unable to live in the Third Reich. The immediate problem is that the refugees being shipped back to German territory are in grave personal danger. Between the Godesberg and Munich agreements, when the Henleinists started local terrorization, these anti-Nazi Germans fought with the Czech gendarmerie in local guerrilla warfare. For this reason as well as for their political beliefs they are open to Nazi reprisals. Many have been warned that they will be killed, others know that they will be immediately sent to one of the three big new concentration camps which have been opened in the Sudeten land. The people thus personally and immediately endangered can be counted in the tens of thousands.

Families have been broken up ruthlessly in the speed of executing the expulsion order. Men living in refugee camps learn that their wives and children in other refugee

homes

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homes have already been sent back to Sudeten land. They have no possible means of communication with the occupied areas; cases individually arise which clarify the situation. Three days ago twelve young Sudeten anti-Nazi Germans were forcibly returned to Teplitz. Eight of them escaped back to Praha saying that the other four had been caught and arrested by the Gestapo and they did not know where they now were. They announced to the local refugee secretary at the Deutsches Haus that the Czech police would have to kill them because they would not go back to Teplitz. A girl of 18 from Marienbad is in hiding in Praha as she and her friends know that her name is second on the Nazi black list for execution. She worked as Chief of the Social Democrat Youth Group. These cases can be cited again by hundreds.

The Austrian and German exiles are all either under penalty of death in Germany or escaped from concentration camps; placing them on the border is the equivalent of sentence of death.

There is no central welfare organization for handling refugees here, the whole problem has arisen with too great speed. The police handle the matter registering refugees and giving them forty eight hours to return. Some are stopped at the station and sent back immediately. When

there

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there are train loads to be returned it is necessary to send these refugees back to Sudeten land under armed guard.

The refugees have of course come here without any possessions whatsoever, most of them even without extra personal clothing. There is also the problem of health, food, housing, et cetera. None of them came for any temporary reason but simply because it is impossible for them to live in safety in the Third Reich. It is already known that arrests are being performed on Czech citizens in the occupied territory simply on a basis of their patriotism for Czechoslovakia; the suicide toll amongst refugees mounts but it is impossible to convey the figures as the Czech radio station has stopped mentioning these cases unless the dead are prominent citizens such as the editor of the PRAGER TAGEBLATT.

Time is of the essence in this matter. Miss Gellhorn (Colliers) hopes this situation may reach White House. It would seem that Evian Committee must take prompt action in behalf of million or so innocent refugees.

(END MESSAGE).

CARR

HPD