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September 1, 1938.

Personal and Confidential

Dear Senator Pittman:

I have read with very much interest your speech delivered before the Thirty-ninth Annual Encampment of the Veterans of Foreign Wars at Columbus, Ohio, on August 22. I had read the press accounts but have been very glad to have the opportunity to read it as a whole. It is a very fine and effective presentation and I am very glad indeed that you found the opportunity and the time to make this helpful address.

The international situation is really approaching, if not already in it, the most serious crisis since 1914. I think there is ample evidence that Mr. Hitler had made up his mind to go ahead in Czechoslovakia irrespective of whatever Mr. Runciman might be able to accomplish or what the Czechs might be willing to concede. Anyone who knows the real objectives of the present regime must realize that just as the present regime had no intention of observing its pledges to maintain Austrian sovereignty, so it has no intention of maintaining any pledge of Czech sovereignty which it may give. The only solution which can satisfy the present Government in Germany is the complete absorption of Czechoslovakia and this would be followed very rapidly by what would be equivalent to the assumption of sovereignty over Hungary. The way would then be open to Rumanian oil and the granary of South-eastern Europe would be at the disposal of Germany. This is what she needs to be able to make what she believes would be a successful war in the furtherance of her other objectives. It is quite clear that they are sincere in protestations of no desire to attack France or England at this time as this is to come after the objectives in Southeastern Europe are gained and after Belgium, Holland

and

The Honorable  
Key Pittman,  
United States Senator,  
Care of Vail Pittman,  
Ely, Nevada.

*Pittman, Key*

and Denmark have been brought within the German order. Ambitious as this program may seem, even mad as it may seem, it is the program of the present German Government, and my own personal opinion has been for some years, and remains, that there can be no peace in Europe as long as this present Government remains in power in Germany. The German Army at present is exerting what influence it may have in trying to avoid war, but its influence in the determination of policy is almost nil under existing conditions.

The danger of war lies in the fact, not that Germany is ready to make war, because she is not; and not in the weakness of England and France, but in the fact that Hitler must be able to gain his complete objective in Czechoslovakia or his whole external program will be stopped. The National Socialist regime in Germany cannot change any of its internal or external objectives without the danger of complete collapse of the regime. They know this. Hitler knows, therefore, that, if he does not gain his ends now in Czechoslovakia, internal disintegration of his regime in Germany will begin. His position is in danger if he goes to war and if he does not. You and I know that it is situations like that which precipitate these unholy struggles. In other words, the war of desperation on the part of the present regime in Germany, which used to be very much in the realm of possibility, is now very much brought into the realm of probability, and I frankly believe that the circumstances in Europe are such that Hitler may provoke what will turn into a general European struggle almost any day.

There is still hope that it may be averted and I believe that an absolutely clear and unequivocal attitude by England would prevent it. We are following the situation here very closely and I need not tell you with what concern.

With all good wishes to you and Mrs. Pittman and hoping that you are having a pleasant stay at home,

Cordially and sincerely yours,