

Box 9

President's Secretary's File  
Confidential File  
State Dept 1939-1940

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January 26, 1939

Dear Bill:

I have read with a great deal of interest your letter of January 5 and the accompanying memorandum of your conversation with Mussolini concerning the Jewish refugee situation.

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Although I was naturally disappointed that the Duce was not receptive to my suggestion concerning the settlement of refugees on the East African plateau, I am gratified that he at least appreciates the desirability of finding a real solution of the refugee problem and that he indicated a willingness to be helpful in this connection. I have taken note of his expressed willingness to give sympathetic consideration to a specific plan.

282  
PSF 764

It was a real pleasure to have had the opportunity to talk with you at such length when you were here.

With warmest regards, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable  
William Phillips,  
American Ambassador,  
Rome.

2-3-4  
PSF 764

Copy placed in PSF:EF-Stat by JCF 7/7/98

Mistakenly filed in PSF: Diplomatic-Italy  
Lm PH:nc 1979

Rome, January 5, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I am sending you a memorandum of my conversation with Mussolini, which I trust will meet with your approval. As I reported in my cable despatch, I am disappointed that I could make no progress with your suggestion regarding the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia, Kenya, and adjoining territory. On the other hand, if Mussolini will live up to his expressions of genuine willingness to help in solving the international problem, we may have accomplished something. At any rate, thanks to your letter I was able to explain to him in no uncertain terms the magnitude of the problem which he and the Germans together were forcing upon the United States and the rest of the world.

Mussolini had returned to Rome that afternoon from his two weeks' absence and was still in skiing costume  
when

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

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when he received me. As usual, he looked the picture of health and vitality and I can vouch for the fact that the rumors current about his failing health and mental debility are utterly without foundation. He received me courteously and gave me ample time to talk to him and seemed in no haste to have me leave. Ciano was present throughout the interview and, dressed in his new civilian uniform (livery), standing for the most part in respectful attitude without moving and without venturing a word during the entire time, gave me the impression of a thoroughly well disciplined footman.

Since my return I am impressed by the growing popular sentiment here against the party leaders. Mussolini himself has not, I think, lost prestige with the masses, though among the intellectuals he is outspokenly criticized for his pro-German leanings and for permitting the development of the anti-Semitic campaign. But the three or four principal party leaders who are thought to have assumed too much control of domestic and foreign policies, are coming in for such outspoken condemnation as has not previously been noticeable. If I am not mistaken, there is a cleavage beginning in the Fascist Party ranks, but it is of course too

soon

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soon to predict the extent to which it may develop. The Italians are not cruel people, quite the reverse. They are a happy, cheerful lot and they do not approve of the measures which are being taken against the Jews, who, as you know so well, have never been regarded as a problem in Italy. The pro-German policy is becoming more unpopular day by day as Hitler extends his domain and his influence in eastern Europe.

It is a highly interesting situation to watch. My French colleague is fearful of the result of Chamberlain's visit, thinking that the latter unintentionally may give the impression to the Italian Government of weakness and that the Italians, always quick on the trigger, may decide to take advantage, in their relations with the French, of this assumed weakness. Perth is not disturbed in this connection and reminds me that Chamberlain can be a tough customer to deal with. My own impression is that Chamberlain's visit is a good move, - his coming is a compliment to the Italians and they love above all things compliments. He will be received with genuine enthusiasm by the Italian people,

who

who are most anxious for a restoration of former friendly relations with the British. No one takes seriously any territorial demand on Tunisia. The Italians, however, feel that they have a grievance with regard to the treatment of Italian nationals in Tunisia and I gather that, should this subject come up in the Chamberlain-Mussolini conversations, Chamberlain might not be unwilling to act as the medium, although not the mediator, in communicating the Italian complaints to the French.

May I say once more how keenly I appreciated our conversations in Washington and in Warm Springs? It was a great privilege to see so much of you, and our talks have been most helpful to me in every way and have given me probably a new prestige, which I needed over here in my dealings with the Italian authorities.

I cannot close without telling you how delighted I am with your reference to dictatorships in your speech before Congress yesterday. I have sent the full text, as received by us in our nightly bulletin, to a Catholic friend in the Vatican, hoping that parts of it at least may find their way into the Catholic organ "Osservatore Romano". This paper, as you know, has a considerable

circulation

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circulation in Italy and is the only one which is not controlled by the Italian Government.

With every good wish for the New Year,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name "Sincerely yours,".

Enclosure.

state Dept. copy  
Published in

Foreign Relations of the United States  
Vol. II

1939 General, The British Commonwealth,  
and Europe

pages 57-60.

In accordance with instructions, I arrived at the Palazzo Venezia at six-fifty, ten minutes before the appointed hour for my reception by the Duce. While I was waiting in the ante-room, Ciano and Alfieri (Minister of Popular Culture) passed me and were cloistered with the Duce for fifteen or twenty minutes. Ciano asked me for a copy of the President's letter, which I gave him and which he took with him to the Duce. It was quite evident, therefore, that the Duce spent this intervening time studying with his two advisers the copy of the President's message in advance of the delivery of the original.

When I entered the Duce's office, Alfieri had already left. Ciano was present, however, throughout the entire conversation although he contributed nothing to it. After expressing my pleasure in having this occasion to see His Excellency, I handed him the President's letter, which he went through the form of reading carefully. When he had finished, I read to him slowly the memorandum which I had been instructed to present with the letter. Having concluded that part of the memorandum dealing with the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia and Kenya, the Duce interrupted by saying that this suggestion was impracticable, - that this particular region in Ethiopia was inhabited by a people who were wholly unsympathetic to the Jews, and that he had already offered a far better region northeast of Addis Ababa, a proposal which, however, the Jews themselves had not received favorably. Thereupon, he

opened

opened a map of Ethiopia, examined the suggested Plateau region, and showed me somewhat vaguely the area which he had already suggested for Jewish colonization.

When I had concluded the memorandum, I said that, with his permission, I would like to express certain personal views, and I hoped that he would not misunderstand if I spoke with frankness. Mussolini asked me to proceed. He was aware, I said, of the strained relations between the United States and Germany. This unfortunate situation was largely the result of the methods (and I emphasized "methods") which had been and were continuing to be employed by the German Government in forcing certain elements of the population to leave the country. These methods had greatly shocked public sentiment in America. The Duce interrupted me by recounting the iniquities of the German Jews and of Jews in general, their lack of loyalty to the country of their residence, their intrigues, and the fact that they never could assimilate with any other race. He admitted that this lack of assimilation was a strong point in their favor and showed their remarkable racial strength. He told me of the financial frauds which were being practiced by the Jews and showed me a little book in German containing photographs of counterfeit bills for huge amounts of German marks. I was impressed by his apparently genuine antagonism to the Jews. He went on to say that, in his opinion, there would not be one Jew left in Germany, and that other European countries - and he mentioned in particular

Rumania

Rumania and Hungary - were confronted with the same problem and were finding it necessary to rid themselves of their Jewish elements. There was no room for Jews in Europe, and eventually, he thought, they would all have to go. I reminded him that this forced emigration from Europe had created an international problem and one with which we in the United States were vitally concerned. It was not a question solely for those states from which the emigrants departed, but it had become a serious world problem. Mussolini mentioned Russia as the natural continent which had ample spare room for Jews, although he admitted that Jews did not appear to be anxious to go there. No one, he said, seemed to have thought seriously of Russia in this connection. He mentioned the vast tracts of unoccupied lands in North America and compared this with the congested areas in Europe. I replied that we Americans seemed already to be doing our part in that we had already a large Jewish population and that Jewish emigrants from Germany were free to come to the United States within our quota. I told him of the work of the London Committee and that certain progress had been made, largely through the efforts of the State Department, in ascertaining what other countries were willing to do with regard to admission of these refugees, but I gave him no particulars concerning the numbers of Jews which individual countries might be willing to absorb.

Mussolini felt that the present program of finding refugees for these emigrants in various countries was more in the nature of a palliative than a solution. He expressed

the

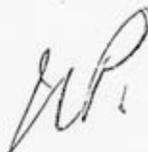
the opinion that the Jews should have a state of their own which need not be necessarily a large or important one but at least a territory where there could be a Jewish capital and government. In this way, he said, the Jews in other parts of the world would occupy a position similar to other foreigners living abroad and could be handled accordingly. He admitted that it would be difficult to find a suitable place on the globe for a bona fide Jewish state but he seemed convinced that that was the only answer to the problem.

I found it necessary to bring him back several times to the original inquiry as to whether he would join with other leaders and states in trying to find a solution. Finally he agreed to do so and said that I could assure the President that he and the Italian Government would gladly cooperate with the President and with other states in this international endeavor. I reminded him of the importance of the forthcoming meeting in London between the representatives of the London Committee and the German Government, and I asked him whether he could do anything to be of assistance in this connection. He replied that he would do so but he did not elaborate as to how far he would be willing to go in this direction. He said that the continual public condemnation of Germany's actions had immensely stiffened the German attitude and actually had increased the determination to deal drastically with the situation. He thought that probably very little could

be done with the German authorities unless there was a cessation of these attacks. I interjected that, in view of the widespread public opinion in America against Germany because of the methods employed by the German Government, it would be next to impossible to suppress the attitude of Americans in general. I expressed appreciation of his offer to help and said that I would convey it to Washington and that I was sure the President would be also highly appreciative. I ventured to express the hope that he would find some occasion on which he could publicly ally himself with the movement, and he seemed to think that this might be done.

During this entire discussion, Count Ciano remained standing and offered no comment or suggestion.

Although I was disappointed by the Duce's rejection of the President's suggestion regarding the use of the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia and Kenya, I left with the feeling that something had been accomplished in enlisting his appreciation of the magnitude of the international problem. That he was willing to help in solving it seemed to me something gained.



William Phillips.

Rome, January 3, 1939.

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COPY OF LONGHEND LETTER

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Feb. 12th  
1940

Your Holiness: xPP7 4129

xPP7 423  
x3865

In my letter of December 23, 1939 I had the honor to suggest that it would give me great satisfaction to send to you my own representative in order that our parallel endeavors for peace and the alleviation of suffering might be assisted. Your Holiness was good enough to reply that the choice of Mr. Myron C. Taylor as my representative was acceptable and that you would receive him.

I am entrusting this special mission to Mr. Taylor who is a very old friend of mine, and in whom I repose the utmost confidence.

His humanitarian efforts in behalf of those whom political disruption has rendered homeless are well known to Your Holiness. I shall be happy to feel that he may be the channel of communication for any views you and I may wish to exchange in the interest of concord among the peoples of the world.

I am asking Mr. Taylor to convey my cordial greetings to you, my old and good Friend, and my sincere hope that the common ideals of religion and of humanity itself can have united expression for the reestablishment of a more permanent peace on the foundations of freedom, and an assurance of life and integrity of all nations under God.

Cordially your friend,

(signed) FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT

x6. State  
xPP718  
x76-B  
xPP7180  
x463-b  
x434-b

MR. INGERS:  
This is a copy of a personal letter kept in the President's files. We had to make a copy for State Dept. but thought you might like a copy for your "confidential files". P.L.S.

Originally filed in PSF:CF:State;  
Misfiled in OF 3865, returned to  
PSF:CF:State 4/30/76 DRB

*U.S. State  
European War*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

May 28, 1940.

MEMORANDUM FOR  
THE STATE DEPARTMENT x 2<sup>0</sup>

I think someone should  
look into this.

F. D. R.

x198  
x198-A

Copy of "Facts in Review" issued by the  
German Library of Information, 17 Battery  
Place, N.Y.C., Vol. 11, No. 21, 5/20/40,  
in which are articles on "The German Memorandum  
to the Dutch and Belgian Governments",  
"Statement of the German General Staff" and  
"Germany Calling", which was sent in by  
Mr. R. L. Holt, Finlay, Holt and Co., Ltd.,  
24 State St., NYC.

x

x246  
x14

x463-6  
x6. State

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*76/11*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

*20*

May 31, 1940

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

The publisher of this, the German x  
Library of Information, 17 Battery Place,  
New York City, has registered as the agent  
of a foreign principal, namely, as agent  
of the German Government. It required some  
pressure by the State Department to force  
its registration.

*x198*

I am suggesting that publications  
issued by agents of foreign principals  
must be plainly labeled on the front page  
that the publication is made by such an  
agent.

*C.F. State*  
*European War*

December 30, 1940

*"S.W.  
O.K.  
F.D.R."*

My dear Mr. President:

In accordance with our conversation of this morning, I have redrafted the proposed message for you to send to Mr. Churchill. Both Secretary Hull and Norman Davis are in accord with the redraft.

*x 20  
x 48  
x 124*

If this meets with your approval, will you let me have it back and I will then have it sent immediately to our Embassy in London.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Sumner Welles

Enclosure.

The President,  
The White House.

*x C.F. State*

December 30, 1940

AMERICAN EMBASSY

LONDON (ENGLAND).

~~\_\_\_\_\_~~  
Please communicate the following message from the President to the former naval person:

2842  
x568  
x463-C  
x203-A  
QUOTE For some time I have thought that for humanitarian and also political reasons limited quantities of milk and vitamin concentrates for children should be sent to unoccupied France to be distributed under the strict control and supervision of the American Red Cross. I discussed this matter with Lord Lothian before his death and Norman Davis also submitted to him a proposal on behalf of the American Red Cross which Lothian recommended to your Government. The British blockade authorities, while expressing sympathy with the idea, refused to permit the Red Cross to send even limited quantities of milk for children on the ground that it would be difficult to make a distinction between occupied and unoccupied territories; that it would weaken the blockade to make an exception for

REGRADED  
UNCLASSIFIED

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unoccupied France; and that British public opinion would be hostile.

My belief is that it is logical and expedient to make a distinction between occupied and unoccupied territories. This distinction would apply to unoccupied France and likewise, of course, to Spain. I know you will appreciate that this Government has not the slightest intention of undertaking any policy which would weaken or militate against the efficacy of the British blockade. It is Germany's responsibility to feed those in territories occupied by German forces and it is difficult to see how any scheme can be devised for others to feed them without aiding Germany directly or indirectly.

Our information is that in addition to certain medical supplies there is a serious need of milk and vitamin concentrates for children and also layettes in unoccupied France and I am convinced that to supply these supplies under definite conditions and adequate safeguards would not benefit Germany but would help to win over the French people whose sentiment is turning more favorably towards Great Britain and becoming more hostile to joining with Germany. We are making every effort with the

x422-A

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Vichy Government to hold them in line but it would strengthen our hand materially to be able to assure them of limited assistance as long as the Vichy Government is friendly to us and refuses to assist Germany against Great Britain.

I think it would be an expedient and wise policy for the American Red Cross to send one ship immediately to Seville and to Barcelona and thence to Marseille. Roughly two-thirds of the cargo would comprise flour and milk for distribution through the American Red Cross in Spain to the Spanish civilian population, and the remaining third of the cargo would be unloaded at Marseille and would comprise medical supplies, milk, vitamin concentrates, and layettes for the children of unoccupied France for distribution under the supervision of the American Red Cross. If the despatch of this first ship is attended with satisfactory results, other individual ships could be sent subsequently. In this way we could, of course, keep control of the situation. At no time would there be despatched to unoccupied France or to Spain enough supplies to be of any appreciable assistance to Germany if she should occupy those regions.

-4-

As you know, our desire to afford relief to the civilian population in Spain is in part due to the desire expressed by your Government that we should take such action. I feel that it is of the utmost importance to make every practical effort to keep Spain out of the war or from aiding the Axis powers. If the policy of affording relief is to be undertaken, I am convinced that it should be undertaken now without further delay. Furthermore, if Spain is given assistance and this Government is not able to send even milk for the relief of the children in unoccupied France, the distinction made between the two countries by this Government would, in my judgment, help to weaken the resistance of the Vichy Government to the pressure now being exercised upon that government by Germany. To make these isolated and conditional exceptions to your Government's general blockade policy would not in my judgment weaken the blockade nor jeopardize its successful maintenance.

If practicable and desirable, packages for British and other prisoners of war in Germany could likewise be included in the shipment and be unloaded at Marseille for transshipment to Geneva. UNQUOTE

U:SW:IJ

*"Roosevelt"*