

President's Secretary's File  
Departmental File  
State: Hull, Cordell: Jan-Sep. 1939  
Box 74

RF: Hull  
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Memo to President  
From Sumner Welles  
Feb. 10-1939

Encloses copy of telegram which was sent to  
Myron Taylor and George Rublee from Hull in  
regard to the Program of Emigration which  
the German Government indicated its willingness  
to carry out.

See-Palestine folder-Drawer 1-1939-Foreign File

15. 5/17  
State

Memo to President  
From Cordell Hull  
May 16, 1939

Attaches two statements of the British  
on the Jewish-Palestine situation  
accompanied by an analysis of their  
proposals. Pres. reply to Hull of May 17, 1939  
attached.

See Palestine folder-Foreign file-Draworl -1939.

DSF Hull  
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No. 4977

Paris, September 9, 1939.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Subject: Memorandum of conversations between  
Honorable Hamilton Fish and French  
Ministers of Foreign Affairs and  
Colonies.

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's circular telegram of August 31, 2 P.M., requesting a full report on the recent activities of the Honorable Hamilton Fish and his contacts with government officials, and to enclose a memorandum of conversations which Mr. Fish had on August 10 last with M. Georges Bonnet, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and M. Georges Mandel, Minister of Colonies.

Mr. Fish had asked me to supply an interpreter in connection with these conversations, and in compliance with.....

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with his request, I sent my Counselor of Embassy with him for this purpose. I requested Mr. Murphy to prepare the enclosed memorandum of these conversations. As far as I know, these are the only contacts made by Mr. Fish with French officials during his stay in Paris.

Respectfully yours,

(SIGNED) WILLIAM C. BULLITT.

William C. Bullitt.

Enclosure:

1. Memorandum dated Aug. 10, 1939.

In triplicate

RLM/FP

Enclosure #1 to Despatch No. 65  
dated September 9, 1939.  
from the Embassy in Paris.

Paris, August 10, 1939.

MEMORANDUM

At the Ambassador's direction, I accompanied Mr. Hamilton Fish to the Foreign Office and we were received by M. Bonnet and M. Jules Henry at four o'clock.

Mr. Fish explained to the Minister that he had come to Europe as the President of the American delegation which will participate in the meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Union at Oslo on August 15. He said that he desired to talk to M. Bonnet on a question that was close to his heart, namely, the refugee problem. Mr. Fish said that it was his plan to address the Inter-parliamentary Union on this subject. He represented, he said, a group in the United States, whom he did not describe further, who were interested in the larger aspects of the refugee problem: not as it related to any particular type of refugee, but embracing all types. He emphasized that he was not of Jewish blood and was not more interested in the Jewish refugees than in the Spanish or others. He mentioned his interest in the Balfour Resolution as a result of which approximately four hundred thousand Jews were able to settle in Palestine. He understood that Palestine would not be able to absorb more because of the Arab question.

The Congressman explained further that he had had an interesting talk with Lord Halifax regarding an idea

advanced.....

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advanced by a private American group who authorized the Congressmen to speak in their behalf, looking to the colonization of the area south and west of Lake Tchad with European refugees on land to be provided by Great Britain and France, the colonization to be financed by the American group. Lord Halifax promised to give the plan careful study, and said he would take it up with Mr. MacDonald, Minister for the Colonies. To be perfectly frank, he also planned a similar discussion with Herr von Ribbentrop, and if possible with Herr Hitler.

Mr. Fish said that he was really not interested in a piecemeal treatment of the matter. He contemplated a sweeping attack of the entire problem on a large scale. For example, Mr. Fish had recently made an arrangement with President Trujillo of Santo Domingo, under which Santo Domingo waives the five hundred dollar head tax in favor of one thousand refugees. Mr. Fish said that was all very fine, but what he is interested in now is the plan which will dispose of approximately 2,000,000 or 3,000,000 persons. He suggested that the problem must be of vital importance to France; that it is up to Great Britain and France to make available for this purpose suitable land from their colonial possessions in Africa. The American group, he said, is convinced that the territory which he has described would be most suitable. It is not a question of money as the American group will make available ample funds, as much as one hundred million dollars. What is needed is suitable land. Mr. Fish said that the United States had done all it could and was accepting refugees from Europe at the rate of 35,000 annually. It could absorb no more.

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M. Bonnet replied to the effect that naturally he had given attentive and sympathetic study to the refugee problem. In fact, he is President of the French Commission dealing with that problem. Mr. Fish's suggestion, he thought, would be more properly one for his colleague, M. Mandel, Minister of Colonies. He should say however, that Mr. Fish's thought was most interesting and that he personally would be glad to co-operate to the extent of his facilities.

Mr. Fish emphasized that, of course, his visit was intended merely as an informal and personal sounding, and in no sense an official proposal. He also stressed the point that his interest extended to refugees of all denominations and was not limited to Jewish refugees. Personally, he had no Jewish blood.

Mr. Fish said further that as M. Bonnet had been kind enough to receive him, it might be of interest for Mr. Fish to make reference to the neutrality legislation which had been pending in the congress during the past months. He thought there was a good deal of incomprehension on this subject in Europe, and he referred particularly to the embargo clause of the present neutrality law which prohibited the sale of arms and ammunition and implements of war to countries engaged in war. The Administration's bill proposed the elimination of this embargo entirely. Mr. Fish said he had led the fight in the House of Representatives against the Administration's proposal. His own amendment contemplated the retention of an embargo on arms and ammunition, but eliminated the reference to "implements of war". Under such a provision, in the event of a European war, the United States could have

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sold airplanes to France. Mr. Fish said that in case of a general European conflict, American public opinion believes that the sale of arms and ammunition to countries at war would lead inevitably to the United States' entrance in war. The American public desires to stay out of an European war. Mr. Fish regretted that his amendment was not adopted, as he believed it would have been a happy solution of this difficult problem.

After an exchange of cordialities, we returned to the Embassy where Ambassador Bullitt introduced Mr. Fish to M. Mandel, French Minister of Colonies.

Mr. Fish briefly reviewed the statements he had just made to M. Bonnet.

M. Mandel replied that he and the competent French colonial services had given the problem elaborate study and had concluded that the territory in question was not suitable for the purpose. From the study made thus far, it is his opinion that Madagascar could accommodate several tens of thousands of European refugees, and in addition, New Caledonia, the Hebrides and the Marquis Islands would be available. All of these territories could absorb possibly 50,000 refugees.

He desired to point out too that, in addition to the question of available land, the financial phase is of considerable importance. Their study had shown that approximately 70,000 francs per family are necessary to establish the average family in a French colonial possession. Mr. Fish said that finance did not offer a problem at this time because his group is willing and able to extend all necessary financial assistance. He is certain that it can and will raise one hundred million dollars for the purpose.

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M. Mandel also said that any plan of the caliber suggested by Mr. Fish would have to be accomplished over a long period of years; he considered a ten-year period as a minimum.

M. Mandel said that, in his opinion, this and any other problem must be approached in a practical way. His Ministry is at present occupied with an experiment with fifty white families in the high plateau district of French Guinea. The French plan contemplates the setting up of model villages of approximately 40 agricultural families, a doctor, a pharmacist, a blacksmith, etc.

He added that, while he personally did not believe, from what he had learned of the subject, that Congressman Fish's suggestion concerning the land to be employed a practical one, his advice on that subject certainly was not final as he does not have personal knowledge of the district.

Mr. Fish did not delimit specifically the African territory he had in mind, but roughly it includes apparently portions of the Tchad, Ubangi-Shari, the tip end of the Cameroons, and a large chunk of Nigeria. Mr. Fish seemed to be under the impression that the Cameroons is German territory. He said in that connection, as he had previously stated to M. Bonnet, that he intended to have an interview on this subject this week with Herr von Ribbentrop, and subsequently with Herr Hitler at Berchtesgaden.

M. Mandel manifested a certain amount of perturbation at this point, suggesting that France as the mandate power under the League could not possibly consult Germany on any such proposal. To do so would concede a right

to.....

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to the Germans which they did not possess. Politically it was bad. He doubted also the wisdom of the trans-shipment of large numbers of German refugees to an area which might eventually be the subject of a German claim.

Mr. Fish hastened to explain that his thought only concerned the higher portion of the Cameroons, extending to the Lake Tchad area. He felt that surely some practical solution could be found.

M. Mandel doubted that much of the area in question would be habitable by white population. He said that a recent study made in connection with the national defense program, the story was that certain foreign Powers would be able to fly large numbers of troops to that area. It was proved in that connection that the water supply was totally inadequate to support large number of troops.

M. Mandel said that he found Mr. Fish's suggestion extremely interesting and that as Mr. Fish is returning to Paris after his visit to Oslo, M. Mandel proposed that he call together a number of experts, including the Governor of French West Africa and the Governor of the Tchad, and other specialists, for the purpose of exploring the matter with Mr. Fish further.

Mr. Fish said that he was delighted with this suggestion, which is exactly what he would like to do.

It was agreed that the conference would take place about the 1st of September, and Mr. Fish would let the Embassy know several days in advance of his return to Paris in order that M. Mandel may be informed promptly.

After M. Mandel's departure, I returned with Mr. Fish to his hotel. At that time I inquired whether he would mind telling me who were included in the American  
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group to whom he had referred. He said that the matter boiled down more or less to Bernard Baruch from whom Mr. Fish had got the idea. He said that Mr. Baruch had assured him that it would not be difficult to raise as much as one hundred million dollars for the purpose. Mr. Baruch said that he and a number of his friends would be willing to give ten percent of their fortunes to such a project. Mr. Baruch alone would contribute about three million dollars.

(SIGNED) ROBERT D. MURPHY

Robert D. Murphy  
Counselor of Embassy

RDM/FP

PEF: Hurl  
State

No. 3340

London, September 9, 1939.

SUBJECT: Representative Hamilton Fish

~~PROTECTIVE IDENTIFICATION~~

The Honorable  
The Secretary of State,  
Washington.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to the Department's strictly confidential circular telegram of August 31, 2 p.m., requesting a full report on the recent activities in England of Representative Hamilton Fish and his contacts with Government officials so far as they might be known. The following represents all that is known at this Embassy of Mr. Fish's activities in England:

On August 3rd Mr. Johnson, who was then Chargé d'Affaires, received the following telegram from Mr. Fish who was then in Dublin:

"Would

"Would appreciate your trying to arrange appointment with Prime Minister and Foreign Minister anytime tomorrow Friday afternoon or Saturday morning. Will be at Ritz by 1:30 Friday."

Mr. Johnson communicated to the Foreign Office Mr. Fish's desire to see Lord Halifax, without making any request for an appointment. Lord Halifax sent back word promptly that he would be glad to see Mr. Fish. An appointment was made for Friday, August 4th, at 3 o'clock. Mr. Johnson accompanied Mr. Fish to the Foreign Office and was present during the entire interview. Mr. Fish brought up only one subject in the conversation, and that was, as he expressed it, his desire to acquaint Lord Halifax with a proposal which he intended to place before the Interparliamentary Conference at Oslo containing a suggestion that a large area in Central Africa, which falls mostly in British territory, be set aside for the settlement of Jews and Mr. Fish assured Lord Halifax that the people with whom he was connected in the United States would be able to finance such an undertaking. He also made it clear that he was not attempting to give any sort of official color to his proposition. Lord Halifax told him that the British Government would be very glad to give most careful examination to any proposal for the settlement of the Jewish refugee problem.

Mr. Fish left London the next day for Paris. He returned to England at the close of the Oslo conference and, at his request, I arranged a meeting for him with Mr. MacDonald, Minister for the Colonies. Mr. MacDonald

has

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has since informed me that the only subject discussed was Mr. Fish's proposal, originally suggested to Lord Halifax, that a large area in Central Africa be set aside for the settlement of Jewish refugees. Mr. MacDonald told me that he told Mr. Fish that consideration of any such plan could not be given by the British Government until the end of the present emergency.

I understand that Mr. Fish is still in England and is staying at the Cliff View Hotel, 23 Southgate, Bath, Somerset. I do not know when he plans to return to the United States.

The only statement given out by Mr. Fish in England in recent newspapers is, so far as I am aware, one which appeared in the Daily Telegraph of September 1. Two copies of this statement are enclosed.

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Respectfully yours,

For the Ambassador:

MW

Merschel V. Johnson  
Counselor of Embassy

Enclosures:

1. Statement, in duplicate.

HVJ/MW

PAPER: DAILY TELEGRAPH

NUMBER:

CITY: LONDON

DATE: SEP 1 1939

## U.S. TRIBUTE TO PREMIER

### " DESIRE FOR PEACE "

A tribute to Mr. Chamberlain and the spirit of the British nation was paid yesterday by Mr. Hamilton Fish, a member of the United States House of Representatives.

Mr. Fish, who has been attending the conference of the International Parliamentary Union in Oslo, and has also spent some time in France and Germany, said to a representative of THE DAILY TELEGRAPH:

"I heard Mr. Chamberlain's speech in the House of Commons on Tuesday, and was much impressed by its tone, sincerity and firmness, and his evident desire for a peaceful settlement of international disputes.

"I regard the British Navy as invincible, and feel sure that it will adequately protect and preserve the British Empire."

"I believe that the door of peace is open, and that reason, arbitration and peaceful methods will prevail. I look for Mussolini to be the great Peace Mediator, through whom the peace of Europe and Western civilisation will be saved.

"The spirit of the British people is remarkable, and the Home Defence, as exemplified by the protective measures taken in London, is far in advance of that in Paris and Berlin."