

Sumner Welles Papers  
Box 150 Folder 1  
Major Correspondence  
Roosevelt, Franklin Apr. 1938

4/38?

DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
THE UNDER SECRETARY

1. Confidential consultation between the Government of the United States and the Governments of Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Norway and the Governments of all of the other American Republics with a view to ascertaining whether those Governments would be willing to cooperate with the Government of the United States in appointing a special committee composed of representatives from each of the Governments named to meet as soon as possible in some European city which might possibly be Geneva or Genoa. The functions and duties of such committee would be the facilitation and the financing of the emigration from Germany and Austria of political refugees from those two countries.

2. It would be understood in our communications to the Governments above named that while the representatives to be appointed to the proposed committee would be designated by the Governments concerned, the financing of the proposed emergency emigration would be undertaken by private organizations within the respective countries and that the number of immigrants which each country would receive would be the number

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fixed by existing legislation in each of the recipient countries.

3. Should the replies received by this Government and the other Governments mentioned be favorable or even in the event that only one or two replies were favorable, the President would discuss with representatives of appropriate private organizations in the United States the plan which he has in mind and would ascertain whether such organizations would be willing to contribute the funds necessary in order to make the plan a success and whether these organizations would further be willing to have Mr. Hamilton Fish Armstrong or any other appointee whom the President might select act for them as the American member of this committee in coordinating their several activities in Europe in the manner proposed.

4. When this stage is reached the President might consider the issuance of a public appeal to the people of the United States reminding them that the United States has traditionally been a home for refugees from other countries who have suffered persecution because of their political or religious beliefs and that while it is not proposed to modify in any way existing restrictions upon immigration into the United States, a committee has been formed with the approval of the President to assist the emigration from Germany and Austria of refugees of this

-3-

character and that the work involved requires the contribution of funds of organizations and individuals in the United States who desire to further the purposes for which the committee is created.

5. I am advised by the Legal Adviser of the Department of State that under existing statutes there is a specific provision which permits the amalgamation of the German and Austrian immigration quotas inasmuch as this provision states that in the event that a country granted an immigration quota to the United States becomes a part of some other country, the former's recognized quota becomes a part of the quota of the latter country. The German quota is approximately 25,000 and the Austrian quota approximately 1,300. This amalgamation would consequently make it possible for the United States to receive during the next fiscal year a total of some 26,300 individuals from Germany and Austria.

6. It has been suggested that the work envisaged might be undertaken by the Unemployment and Migration Section of the International Labor Office. While it would seem desirable that this Government should make it clear that the special committee which it proposes should be set up should in no sense interfere with or supersede the Unemployment and Migration Section of the International Labor Office or similar organizations

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undertaking to handle refugee cases, it is believed that the emergency warrants the creation of this special committee. It would be well to express the hope of this Government in some appropriate manner that the organizations in Europe already existing, such as this Section of the International Labor Office, will cooperate and collaborate whenever they find it appropriate and convenient to do so in the work to be undertaken by this special committee.

THE AMERICAN COMMITTEE ON REFUGEES

James G. McDonald,  
Acting Chairman.

Reverend Samuel Cavert,  
Secretary Pro Tem.

Hamilton Fish Armstrong

Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain

James M. Speers

The Most Reverend  
Joseph F. Rummel,  
Archbishop of New Orleans.

Basil Harris

Louis Kenedy  
President, National Council of  
Catholic Men.

Rabbi Stephen Wise

Bernard Baruch

Paul Baerwald

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

*Messrs  
State ->*

ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
A-M

UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
APR 7 - 1938  
MR. WELLES

April 4, 1938.

*Wm. J. ...*

SECRETARY OF STATE  
APR 7 1938  
NOTED

The  Secretary

The Under Secretary

In reply to the Department's telegram addressed to certain Governments requesting information as to whether they would be interested in cooperating in the setting up of an International Committee to consider ways and means of aiding political refugees from Austria and Germany under the existing immigration laws and practice of the participating states, there have now been received replies from the following countries indicating willingness to cooperate:

Belgium  
Brazil  
Dominican Republic  
El Salvador  
France  
Haiti  
Mexico  
Peru  
Venezuela  
Bolivia

Uruguay  
Colombia  
Nicaragua  
Paraguay  
Sweden  
Argentina  
Guatemala  
Netherlands  
Panama  
Chile  
Costa Rica

*Bureau*

The only negative reply which has been received is from Italy. There are, therefore, sufficient replies on hand to make it possible for this Government to proceed further.

The next appropriate step would seem to be the holding of a meeting to explore to what degree interested organizations in this country and interested persons will lend

their

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their cooperation. It is my understanding that it is the intention of the President to hold such a meeting at the White House in the very near future. It has been suggested, and I believe it is a wise suggestion, that it would be advisable to invite individuals rather than organizations to such a meeting.

At this meeting the following could, I believe, be usefully discussed:

1. That it is the view of this Government that the problem of aiding political refugees is one which cannot be solved by any one country but that it is a problem the solution of which requires the cooperation of all interested Governments.
2. In view of the generally disturbed economic conditions in so many countries which usually have and which would like to continue to welcome immigrants in large numbers, the problem is a difficult one and which from the practical point of view must be considered within the framework of existing immigration laws and practice of the States which will be participating in the Committee.
3. That the United States is not contemplating any change in its immigration laws or any major change in its immigration practice as under the present quotas established by law it has as liberal an immigration policy as any country today. Specifically, the present German quota is 25,957 and the Austrian 1,413. In view of the de facto incorporation of Austria into the territory of the German Reich, it would appear, under our immigration laws, that the German and Austrian quotas can be merged into one.
4. It is the hope of our Government that, through the activities of the International Committee which it is planned to set up, studies may be made to determine what immediate and what long range action may be taken on behalf of political refugees. It

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is recognized that the problem is one the long range aspect of which has only been accentuated by recent developments which have greatly increased emigration pressure.

5. Various organizations in the United States and in other countries have been giving careful and continuous study to the problem of aiding the emigration and settling of political refugees. The results of these studies and the experience gained by these organizations would have to serve as the basis of the study of the new International Committee.
6. The next step would appropriately be the naming by this Government of its representative or representatives on the new Committee and to notify other Governments of this step, suggesting at the same time the advisability of their naming their representative as soon as practicable.
7. A place of meeting may be suggested and a preliminary date for the first meeting of the new Committee, which date should be in as near a future as practicable.
8. It had originally been considered that the meeting of the Committee be held in Switzerland. We now have a telegram indicating that, although the Swiss Government has apparently decided to participate, it may request that the first meeting not be held in Switzerland and would probably suggest Belgium. The place for the meeting of the Committee may have to be decided after consultation with at least some of the Governments concerned. It has been suggested, with some reason, that, if the meeting is held in Switzerland, it should be in some city other than Geneva.
9. Immediately after the designation of the representative or representatives of this Government, he or they should enter into consultation with the various private organizations in this country which have been interested in immigration problems.
10. So far as this Government is concerned, there is no provision for Government aid to immigration and prospective immigrants. In view of the exchange

control

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control laws and other measures which have been put into effect and of the conditions which exist in some of the countries which are the sources of emigration, it must be recognized that many of the emigrants will need financial assistance. The cooperation of private organizations and individuals will have to be depended upon in this respect in this country and perhaps in most countries which will participate in the new International Committee.

11. Before proceeding to the first meeting of the new International Committee, the American representative or representatives should consult with the Department of State (after due collaboration with the Department of Labor) in order that appropriate instructions for their guidance during the meetings of the Committee may be given them.
12. The American representative or representatives on the International Committee would in no way make any commitments for this Government during the meetings of the Committee but would in every case secure the instructions of this Government through the Department of State. In no event would commitments be taken outside of the framework of our present immigration laws and practice.

The American representative or representatives on the International Committee would wish to have some idea of the Agenda of the proposed meeting before leaving this country. The following are some of the questions which the Committee would appropriately explore:

1. Every country would make a clear statement of its immigration laws and practice and a general statement of the number of immigrants it is prepared to receive.
2. A considerable number of the immigrants will not be able to provide the documents such as passports, birth certificates, et cetera, now required under the immigration law and practice of many states. The Committee could, therefore, usefully consider the setting up of an office to issue documents

to

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to prospective immigrants, which documents would be recognized as valid for travel and other purposes by the states participating on the Committee. This is one of the immediate problems.

3. The participating states would consider existing laws on the subject of the economic and legal status of immigrants. In a good many receiving states newly arriving immigrants suffer from restricted treatment under the law which makes it difficult for them to make a new existence.
4. The International Committee would study the various projects which may be submitted to it for settlement of refugees in participating states or in parts of their territory which may be adapted to their reception. This is the crux of the problem and it is in this field that the International Committee can probably do its most constructive work. It is the long range problem.

Time does not permit further exploration of or suggestion as to the Agenda of the activities of the new Committee but further suggestions along this line will be offered later.

G. S. Messersmith.

Approved by  
The President  
Apr. 8, 1937

April 6, 1937.  
*W. Welles*

My dear Mr. President:

Before your recent departure for Warm Springs you approved the general procedure for the constitution of an international committee to facilitate the emigration from Austria and Germany of political refugees contained in a memorandum which the Secretary of the Treasury and I submitted to you.

In order to carry out in further detail the procedure which you so approved, I am enclosing for your consideration a further memorandum covering this subject.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Sumner Welles

Enclosure:  
Memorandum.

The President,  
The White House.

U SW:IJ

A true copy of  
the signed original.  
*[Signature]*

I. The Government of the United States in response to a message sent by it has now received replies from the following countries which have indicated their willingness to cooperate with the United States in constituting an International Committee to aid the emigration of political refugees from Austria and Germany:

Argentina	Belgium
Bolivia	Denmark
Brazil	France
Costa Rica	Netherlands
Chile	Sweden
Colombia	Great Britain
Dominican Republic	
El Salvador	
Guatemala	
Haiti	
Nicaragua	
Mexico	
Panama	
Peru	
Paraguay	
Uruguay	
Venezuela	

The only negative reply which has been received is from Italy.

II. It would seem that the next appropriate step would be for the President to summon to the White House a small group of persons known to be interested in the problem involved and who because of their positions or connections would be able to obtain the cooperation and active support in the work of the International Committee of private organizations within the United States. For

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this initial meeting the following individuals are suggested:

Raymond Fosdick,  
Rockefeller Foundation,  
49 West 49th Street,  
New York City.

Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain,  
Columbia University,  
New York City.

James G. McDonald,  
New York Times,  
New York City.

Miss Dorothy Thompson,  
New York Herald Tribune,  
New York City.

Reverend Samuel Cavert,  
Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,  
297 Fourth Avenue,  
New York City.

The Most Reverend Joseph F. Rummel,  
Archbishop of New Orleans,  
2809 South Carrollton Avenue,  
New Orleans, Louisiana,  
Chairman, Catholic-Episcopal  
Committee for German Refugees.

Mr. Louis Keady, President,  
National Council of Catholic Men,  
12 Barclay Street,  
New York City.

(The two names above mentioned have been suggested by the National Catholic Welfare Conference through Monsignor Ready.)

Henry Morgenthau,  
1133 Fifth Avenue,  
New York City.

Bernard Baruch,  
597 Madison Avenue,  
New York City.

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III. At this meeting the following subjects might be usefully discussed:

1. That it is the view of this Government that the problem of aiding political refugees is one which cannot be solved by any one country but that it is a problem the solution of which requires the cooperation of all interested Governments.
2. In view of the generally disturbed economic conditions in so many countries which usually have and which would like to continue to welcome immigrants in large numbers, the problem is a difficult one and which from the practical point of view must be considered within the framework of existing immigration laws and practice of the States which will be participating in the Committee.
3. That the United States is not contemplating any change in its immigration laws or any major change in its immigration practice as under the present quotas established by law it has as liberal an immigration policy as any country today. Specifically, the present German quota is 25,957 and the Austrian 1,413. In view of the de facto incorporation of Austria into the territory of the German Reich, it would appear, under our immigration laws, that the German and Austrian quotas can be merged into one.
4. It is the hope of our Government that, through the activities of the International Committee which it is planned to set up, studies may be made to determine what immediate and what long range action may be taken on behalf of political refugees. It is recognized that the problem is one the long range aspect of which has only been accentuated by recent developments which have greatly increased emigration pressure.
5. Various organizations in the United States and in other countries have been giving careful and continuous study to the problem of aiding the emigration and settling of political refugees. The results of these studies and the experience

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gained by these organizations would have to serve as the basis of the study of the new International Committee.

6. The next step would appropriately be the naming by this Government of its representative or representatives on the new Committee and to notify other Governments of this step, suggesting at the same time the advisability of their naming their representatives as soon as practicable.
7. A place of meeting may be suggested and a preliminary date for the first meeting of the new Committee, which date should be in as near a future as practicable.
8. It had originally been considered that the meeting of the Committee be held in Switzerland. We now have a telegram indicating that although the Swiss Government has apparently decided to participate, it may request that the first meeting not be held in Switzerland and would probably suggest Belgium. The place for the meeting of the Committee may have to be decided after consultation with at least some of the Governments concerned. It has been suggested, with some reason, that, if the meeting is held in Switzerland, it should be in some city other than Geneva.
9. Immediately after the designation of the representative or representatives of this Government, he or they should enter into consultation with the various private organizations in this country which have been interested in immigration problems.
10. So far as this Government is concerned, there is no provision for Government aid to immigration and prospective immigrants. In view of the exchange control laws and other measures which have been put into effect and of the conditions which exist in some of the countries which are the sources of emigration, it must be recognized that many of the emigrants will need financial assistance. The cooperation of private organizations and individuals will have to be depended upon in this respect in this country and perhaps in most countries which will participate in the new International Committee.

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11. Before proceeding to the first meeting of the new International Committee, the American representative or representatives should consult with the Department of State (after due collaboration with the Department of Labor) in order that appropriate instructions for their guidance during the meetings of the Committee may be given them.
12. The American representative or representatives on the International Committee would in no way make any commitments for this Government during the meetings of the Committee but would in every case secure the instructions of this Government through the Department of State. In no event would commitments be taken outside of the framework of our present immigration laws and practice.

IV. When the International Committee itself is constituted it is believed that the following four points should immediately be taken into consideration by the International Committee:

1. Every country would make a clear statement of its immigration laws and practice and a general statement of the number of immigrants it is prepared to receive.
2. A considerable number of the immigrants will not be able to provide the documents such as passports, birth certificates, et cetera, now required under the immigration law and practice of many states. The Committee could, therefore, usefully consider the setting up of an office to issue documents to prospective immigrants, which documents would be recognized as valid for travel and other purposes by the states participating on the Committee. This is one of the immediate problems.
3. The participating states would consider existing laws on the subject of the economic and legal status of immigrants. In a good many receiving states newly arriving immigrants suffer from restricted treatment under the law which makes it difficult for them to make a new existence.

4. The International Committee would study the various projects which may be submitted to it for settlement of refugees in participating states or in parts of their territory which may be adapted to their reception. This is the crux of the problem and it is in this field that the International Committee can probably do its most constructive work. It is the long range problem.

April 18, 1938.

My dear Mr. President:

In accordance with the authorization you gave me in our talk on Friday, I am transmitting for your signature four letters addressed to Messrs. Baerwald, Speers, Harris, and Armstrong, requesting them to serve as members of the American committee for political refugees.

May I ask that the replies to these letters, when they are received, be transmitted to me in order that I may inform Dr. Cavert, as temporary secretary of the American committee, of the names of those who accept your designation.

I enclose for your information a copy of a letter which I have received from Dr. Fosdick, in which he explains the reasons why he has found it impossible to serve as a member of the committee.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Sumner Welles

The President,  
The White House.

April 16, 1938.

My dear Mr. Baerwald:

The Government of the United States has invited a number of other governments to cooperate with it in the constitution of an International Committee charged with the responsibility of facilitating the emigration of political refugees from Germany and Austria. It has been my hope that this committee might be enabled to relieve in large measure the suffering and the distress of many thousands of persons emigrating from Germany and Austria and desirous of obtaining refuge in some other part of the world but who, if they were not assisted, would find themselves in most instances without funds and without documents of identity. I am glad to say that twenty-eight governments have already responded to the invitation extended by this Government and have indicated their cordial desire to cooperate in this endeavor.

As stated in this Government's invitation, we do not propose any change in our existing immigration law. Furthermore, the cost of the work of relief must be borne through contributions obtained from non-governmental sources.

In order that the people of the United States may be enabled most effectively to further the work to be undertaken by this International Committee, I am appointing an American committee to act as an intermediary between the International Committee and the many organizations within the United States which are dealing with this problem of political refugees. I feel that this American committee can be of invaluable assistance in coordinating the work that is being done within the United States in behalf of the refugees and in advising the official representative of the United States on the International Committee with regard to the work to be done by that international body. I have requested the following persons to accept appointment to this committee:

Paul Baerwald, Esquire,  
120 Broadway,  
New York, New York.

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James M. Speers,  
New York City.

Basil Harris,  
New York City.

Hamilton Fish Armstrong,  
New York City.

Professor Joseph P. Chamberlain,  
Columbia University,  
New York City.

James G. McDonald,  
New York Times,  
New York City.

Reverend Samuel Cavert,  
Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America,  
New York City.

The Most Reverend Joseph F. Rummel,  
Archbishop of New Orleans,

Louis Kenedy,  
President, National Council of Catholic Men,  
New York City.

Henry Morgenthau,  
New York City.

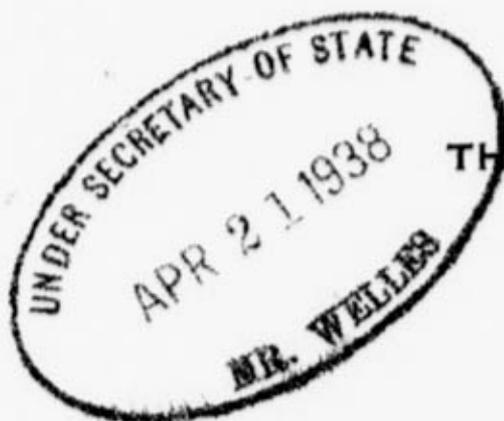
Rabbi Stephen Wise,  
New York City.

Bernard Baruch,  
New York City.

I trust that you will find it possible to serve as a member  
of this committee.

Sincerely yours,

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THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

April 21, 1938.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

TO READ AND RETURN

F. D. R.

April 21, 1938.

My dear Mr. President:

Thank you for letting me read this letter from Mr. Bowers. I have found it extremely interesting. In accordance with your request, I am returning it herewith.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Enclosure.

The President,  
The White House.

PERSONAL - Letter from Claude Bowers

COPY

Embassy of the  
United States of America

St. Jean de Luz, France, April 11, 1938.

Dear Mr. President:

The other day President Aguirre of the Basques sent Sr. Leizaola, his Minister of Justice, to me from Paris with the request that I transmit to you an appeal for such intercession as may be possible with General Franco, if he wins, to prevent the unnecessary persecution of the Basques and the threatened destruction of their culture which has survived the Roman, Visigothic and Moorish invasions. I am sending this appeal through the Secretary of State and am writing you personally lest in some manner the letter does not reach you. It is beautifully done and you will want it for your personal files.

My heart bleeds for this fine and lovely people - a much finer and nobler people by the way than the Austrians. Sr. Leizaola, who called, is typical. He is a leading lawyer, a devout Catholic, a great patriot, and his conduct on the eve of the capture of Bilbao challenges comparison with anything in history. He maintained law and order throughout the long period of the war. Once only a mob, maddened by the needless slaughter by a bombing from the air, committed outrages one night. When defeat was inevitable and everyone was leaving, and being urged to leave, this man remained, to prevent, at the risk of his life, any senseless act of terrorism. He ordered the bridges blown up as a military measure, but prevented the destruction of all other property. He ordered the release of the three thousand prisoners. It was because he feared that in the bitterness of the moment the people might fall upon these prisoners and destroy them that he remained at his post with the enemy, that would have shot him without ceremony had they caught him, at the very outskirts of the city. Correspondents, notably that of the London Times, begged him to leave while there was time. He refused to do so until the safety of these prisoners was assured. When they marched out into the highway and a crowd collected, Leizaola went in person, placed himself between the prisoners and the crowd, and told the latter that the prisoners had been ordered released by him and must

The President,  
The White House.

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not be molested, that the Basque name was bright and must not be tarnished. He saved them. Then just as the Italians swept into the city, Leizaola drove out of Bilbao.

He typifies the spirit of the people, deserted by the world, and worthy of better treatment.

He assumed that your plan for political refugees included the Spanish, though he was thinking of the Basques. I am not at all clear on that point. There are elements in Spain, as elsewhere, we do not want, but the Basques, law-abiding, resourceful, industrious, clean-living, the very cream of Spain, would make perfect citizens. It is a point which you may wish to consider.

I wonder if you still think that Chamberlain, whose conduct is the most dishonorable and treacherous, anti-democratic and deceptive in the history of England for a century, has consolidated his position. With whom? With Mussolini - yes; with Hitler--yes; with the Tory party majority in the Commons thinking solely in terms of "the City"--yes. But since you wrote there have been two by-elections in which the issue was Chamberlain's foreign policy and Big Tory majorities of two years ago were wiped out and handsome majorities rolled up for the Opposition.

The British Government would not dare face a general election on Chamberlain's foreign policy. When the day after Mussolini made his speech to the Italian Senate boasting in detail of the movements of the Italian army in Spain, and Chamberlain replied to the question as to whether he would call this public proclamation of an aggressive war against Spain to the attention of the droll "Non-Intervention" Committee, with the utterly idiotic statement that "we hear all sorts of things and we have no evidence", he plumbed the depths of hypocrisy and the garden variety of dishonesty. I am having none of Mr. Chamberlain.

I am concerned over Joe Guffy's break with his Committee in Pennsylvania. I am fond of Joe and I have had no great admiration for Earle, but I am worried over Joe's decision to oppose Earle's candidacy for the Senate. Joe may win - if the miners stand pat. But he has invited a supreme test.

I have letters from Indianians in whose judgment I have confidence - people once very intimate with Van Nuys - and they all agree that Fred has made an ass of himself. They say this with evident regret. One cites his attack on Jim Farley - something I did not know before. I am against anyone who is against Jim. One thinks that should Fred run independent he would assure the election of Watson,

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but the other says he will not poll a corporal's guard and will not effect the result. This man says he cannot understand why McNutt, with the votes to elect any Democrat, should have selected Jackson who is certainly light weight.

It is inevitable, I think, that we shall lose some in the House and I am convinced that the too heavy majority has been our tragedy. There is more party loyalty when the vote in the House is closer.

Last night I was rereading Junius' letter to the King, apropos of the Wilkes' controversy, and I found a sentence you ought to store away, touching on the court controversy. He was contending that the Lords could not constitutionally pass on the rights of the Commons and thus:- "Or will you refer it to the Judges? They have often told your ancestors that the law of parliament is above them. What party then remains, but to leave it to the people to determine for themselves?"

I certainly shall make the speeches in the fall.

It looks very bad for the Government here now that everyone has agreed that it is quite permissible for Italy and Germany to send artillery and planes to the Fascists, and quite intolerable for anyone to sell arms and ammunition to the constitutional Government to defend itself against invasion. But my impression is that the loyalists will fight on. What a people! The only people in the world in these days of Fascist triumph and bullying who have the spirit and the guts to stand up and fight and die for liberty and democracy. Just now they are literally fighting for democracy against the entire world, and I believe they will fight on to the end. In all the tide of times there has never been anything in the struggles for liberty that is in the same class with the fight these people are making.

Sincerely yours,

CLAUDE G. BOWERS

American Ambassador

April 22, 1938

My dear Mr. President:

I believe you will be interested in this memorandum of Hugh Wilson's conversation with Goebbels which took place on March 22.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Sumner Welles

Enclosure:

Memorandum of  
conversation.

The President,

The White House.

*Hugh Wilson's conv. with Goebbels*

A true copy of  
the signed original. *K*

SW:DMK