

Summer Welles Papers
Box 150 Folder 5
Major Correspondents
Roosevelt, Franklin, D Dec 1938

White House RECEIPT

DATE 12/7 TIME 11:05

RECEIVED FROM Miss Claborn

ADDRESSED TO Charles G. Bowers - France

TO BE SENT

S. S. [Signature]
CR

12-2-38
Mr. [unclear]
12-2-38

December 2, 1938.

My dear Mr. President:

While your memorandum of November 28, enclosing for my information a letter dated November 17 which you had received from Ambassador Bowers, merely asked that I read the letter and speak to you about it upon your return to Washington, I have drafted a suggested reply for you to send to Ambassador Bowers, which I am submitting herewith for your consideration.

Norman Davis has been consulted on the general situation including the connection of the Red Cross with possible future enlargement of our relief efforts, and the draft I am sending to you represents his views as well as my own. If the suggested letter is not satisfactory to you, please let me know.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

The President,

U:SW:MN

The White House.

A true copy of the signed copy
12/10/38

RECORDED

Dear Claude:

I have given considerable thought to the questions you raised in your letter of November 17th. I am genuinely concerned at the plight of the civilian refugees in Spain and am anxious that the United States make just as large a contribution as is possible.

As a matter of fact, a good deal has been done by the Red Cross and Government Departments working together, and if the necessary funds can be found they will do more and more as the months pass. Norman Davis tells me that the Red Cross has appropriated from its own funds to be used in connection with various phases of the Spanish struggle a total of \$175,000, which is even more per capita than it has given to China. The Government has given to the Red Cross, through the Federal Surplus Commodities Corporation, at a purely nominal figure, wheat to be converted into flour and delivered aboard ship. The Maritime Commission has been giving free of charge to the Red Cross its unused cargo space for transporting the wheat. With all these factors taken into account it still costs the Red Cross about one dollar a barrel before the wheat is in the hands of the Friends ready for distribution. In addition, the Red Cross is taking charge of a gift of coffee from Brazil and seeing that it is transported on the same basis.

An analysis of the foregoing shows that for each dollar put up by the Red Cross it is able to give nearly five dollars' worth of aid to the starving refugees in Spain. However, its own funds are limited, and the Red Cross has reached the conclusion that a special drive on its part is for various reasons impossible. It is nonetheless prepared to assist a committee organized by the Friends to help raise funds for Spanish refugee relief. It seems too bad that all agencies collecting money for Spain did not choose to pool in on this basis, as any direct contributions made through them are on the principle

that

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that a dollar does a dollar's work, while via the Red Cross a dollar does nearly five dollars' work. If sufficient money can be raised the Government is still ready to give the Red Cross 500,000 bushels of wheat a month for the next six months. Transportation will be more difficult in the future as there will be less unused space on American ships, but this can be overcome by Spain sending chartered ships under foreign flags to our ports to get the wheat.

There is so much human misery and disaster in the world that it is difficult to foretell exactly what if anything Congress might be willing to do for Spain. Obviously there is fully as much suffering and misery in China, Czechoslovakia and Germany which also calls for our active help. All I can say is that what can be done, will be done.

You raised one final question in your letter, namely, the possibility of an American food dictator. On the whole I am inclined to think that for various reasons it would be a mistake for such an official to be "designated by the President of the United States." If the campaign being organized by the Friends succeeds in raising enough money for the Red Cross to keep on sending wheat in large quantities, it would almost automatically make the Friends, as the distributing agency of the Red Cross, the pre-dominant influence in Spanish relief. If the Friends send the right man to Spain, and I am told that they are going to make the selection with the utmost care, it will make him in effect, if not in name, the food dictator you had in mind.

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable
Claude G. Bowers,
American Ambassador,
St. Jean de Luz, France.

En:FM:ASD
12/1

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Hotel Miramar
St. Jean de Luz, France,
November 17, 1938.

Dear Mr. President:

Am a bit amused by your "defeat" which leaves us with a meagre majority of more than eighty-five in the House and a greater part of the Senate! Two things, - three- impressed me. The Democratic victory in California which ends the infamy of the criminal persecution of Tom Mooney; the elimination of the Bonny Lad with the Bar Room Manner, O'Connor; and the defeat of my friend Frank Murphy, partly because of the pro-fascist congressional committee busy with the red herring of communism to distract attention from the Fascist World Revolution which has been on since 1935.

But my purpose in writing is to convey a message to you from the Spanish Government. On the telegraphic request of Del Vayo, the Minister of State, I met

The President,

The White House.

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Sr. Azcarate, the Spanish Ambassador to England, in Paris on Sunday. He is a high grade man of long experience, having served for some years with the League at Geneva. The message in substance was this:

1. The Government is entirely satisfied with the military situation. It now concededly has the best infantry. It is producing pursuit planes but not bombing planes. The best Franco can hope for is to get back to where he was in July last by forcing the loyalist army back on the Ebro with his new divisions of the Italian army, and his new flock of Italian and German bombers recently sent in in accordance with "the spirit of Munich" which, in the classic language of the impossible Chamberlain, "has brought peace in our time" - particularly to the Jews in Germany.

2. But the Government is gravely concerned about the 3,000,000 men, women and children refugees from Franco territory and from the small towns of the Mediterranean coast that have been wiped out by Italian bombers. The problem of their preservation from starvation is serious enough. The Government had anticipated all this for the winter and had, it thought, made adequate provision, but its calculations did not contemplate the daily bombing

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of British food ships with the complete acquiescence of the Chamberlain Government.

3. These facts are not propaganda facts. They are recognized. The League of Nations sent a commission to investigate and its report leaves no possible doubt that the need is imperative and the call to humanity strong. It is probable that the League may send another commission to act with means and food.

4. This brings us to the point where you are involved. It is the hope of the Spanish Government that the United States may do its part, just as it did for the Belgians, the Germans, the Russians and the French.

Should the League name a Relief Commission, the Spanish Government would like to propose that the chairman should be an American appointed by you.

Should we not wish to associate ourselves with any League commission, and should we act independently, the Spanish Government will ask that an all-American commission be named to take charge of relief in which we are involved; and with the stipulation that there shall be absolutely no interference of any sort from the Government in Spain.

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This is the message I was asked to convey to you.

I do not know what Congress may be inclined to do regarding a reasonable appropriation. I earnestly hope, however, that we shall want to do our part. Since the Spanish Government takes the position that it is the legitimate government of all Spain, and since it is interested in the food needs on both sides, and would expect to have whatever is given used anywhere in proportion to the need, I cannot see that our neutrality would be involved.

I know, positively know, where the sympathy of anyone who believes in liberty and democracy must be. Never such a clear-cut issue between fascism and democracy, between legality and anarchy as in Spain. Of course, I do not expect the fascist Powers that are specializing every day in the murdering and mangling of women and children in peaceful villages by bombing from the air, to understand any humane instinct. But I am not so fearful as Mr. Chamberlain about "irritating Mr. Hitler". Good God that a British Premier should have said that!

I sympathize with the Austrians, though they surrendered their arms without a gesture of resistance; and with the Czechs, though they surrendered without firing a shot; but sympathizing with them I must to an infinitely greater degree sympathize with the Democracy of Spain which for almost

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two years and a half, single handed and alone, has fought the battle against fascism, with Hitler and Mussolini pouring in troops, planes, tanks, artillery, with the Moors "taking no prisoners", and, alas, with the Democracies of Europe concentrating on preventing the constitutional, legal Government from buying arms and ammunition for the defence of the democratic cause while rather shamelessly turning a blind eye to the constant importations to Franco of Italian and German war material and men lest they "irritate Mr. Hitler", and disturb the "peace in our time" so intelligently assured at Munich.

We have rigidly enforced the neutrality act against the Spanish Government. That does not mean, however, that we owe nothing to humanity. We were neutral in the World War when we acted in Belgium. I hope we shall do our part in Spain.

Since this was not a casual conversation with Ascarate, I would appreciate confidentially your reaction to the whole thing. Whatever that reaction may be need not be passed on to anyone, but it will give me guide posts in my future contacts with the Government.

I talked in Paris with some of the keenest observers professionally of the European scene and was astonished to find that most of them think that there was no probability

of

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of war, and that the Chamberlain Government whipped the people into a state of hysteria with constant radio talks on gas masks, bomb proof shelter, and the need of sending children from their parents for the purpose of reconciling them to the abject surrender of Munich. It seems too fantastic; and yet I submit that never in history before has any Government facing war thought it wise to drive the people into a frenzy of terror. The utter demoralization of the English at a critical moment calling for calm courage and dignity was unquestionably the work of the Chamberlain group.

I hope Chamberlain does not accompany the King and Queen to America. It would be a pity to thus smear their visit. For Chamberlain is despised by millions in the United States. Champ Clark once told me that when Balfour went to Washington and addressed the House, he, Clark, was almost thrown off his balance just at the moment he was about to present the former Secretary for Ireland, because John J. Fitzgerald whispered loud enough to be heard: "Champ, don't forget and introduce him as Bloody Balfour".

I shall get a copy of the League of Nations' Report on the refugees and send it on.

Sincerely yours,

CLAUDE G. BOWERS

American Ambassador

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

December 13, 1938.

V. H.

*Limby about
Ruech*

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE

TO READ AND RETURN. THIS
IS ONLY FOR YOUR EYES.

Will you speak to me
about this?

F. D. R.

F.. D. R.

November 29th, 1938

I am very sorry to hear that, after Wilson's talk to The President, there were some rumors that he was returning to Berlin.

No doubt Mr. Wilson is very anxious for his career to return to Berlin where he is popular with one of the most dangerous gangs in history. There are far more important things at stake than Mr. Wilson's career. Democracy is at stake and I am afraid Mr. Wilson is not able enough to see this or is too anxious about his future.

If we are going to fight this Nazi disease, which is spreading quickly through their mad ambition, we must fight it with all the means we have. It is not only a question of spending billions for defense that is important, but it is just as important and much, much cheaper to fight with the Nazi with right ideas. If we are to fight them with right ideas we must have men in our State Department who represent our ideas. Hitler, mad as he is in ambition, is clever in using men and their weaknesses and ideas for his devilish purposes and Mr. Wilson has been a good tool.

Wilson told me himself that once the Nazis had Austria and Czechoslovakia they would settle down and everything would be all right. I think he was foolish enough to think so and from my discussion with him before Munich he talked the silly and dangerous nonsense of Lady Astor which was to give in to the Nazis.

While the world was approaching one of the greatest crises in history, Hugh Wilson spent almost three months using the time of our best Consul looking for a house for Mrs. Wilson instead of putting her up at a hotel and getting down to work. He and she no doubt want to return to the house. Often you found him at the golf links instead of working on his problems at such a time. His chief advisor, I am told, was Major Turman Smith who is such an open Nazi that it is a crime that he is still in Berlin. The State Department and the War Department know this as well as many other people, but nothing is done.

What is the use of spending millions when we don't first arrange these simple matters?

If Hugh Wilson returns to Germany we would be playing right into the hands of the people who are out to defeat us at every turn. The Nazi's are fostering revolution in Mexico, Central America and South America to defeat us and men like Wilson sleep or are too damn selfish to see what is going on.

I had the visit of an important German here who is now back again in Germany. He is close to the present Government there and a very decent fellow. But the way members of our Berlin Staff of the Embassy played up to him so he would go back to Goring and tell Goring what fine fellows they were, is horrible.

They in the Embassy even said to this man that they felt the whole expansion policy of Germany was all right and America had no objections. I feel these ideas came from Wilson and an entire change in ideas since Dodd left is noticeable to all. Dodd was a hundred times better than Wilson.

Incidentally, high men in the English Foreign Office laugh at Wilson. He is dangerous in his foolish lack of knowledge and his playing up to the Nazis.

Nothing could have given the Nazis a shock more than Wilson's return to the States and nothing can help that situation more than to keep Wilson at home.

There is a lot to be done in the State Department in cleaning up these carriers of dangerous ideas and weaknesses that can save millions in defense. We know what ideas mean in American, it is still more important in Foreign Affairs.

James Dunn is another one. I understand his wife is such an open Nazi friend that she doesn't even try to hide her feelings, and, formerly, he did not try to either.

Can't something be done to clean out just a few State Department men or must this go on? I don't see why the President permits it.

THE WHITE HOUSE

CONFIDENTIAL

The Honorable

The Under Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

BY HAND

December 20, 1938.

My dear Mr. President:

I believe you will be interested in the memorandum of my conversation of this morning with the German Chargé d'Affaires, of which I enclose a copy.

This is the first evidence that the German Government has shown of its willingness to take any step in the interest of our nationals by making exceptions to the existing exchange regulations so that American citizens can withdraw from Germany in full properties which they have inherited.

I am of course confident that this step would not now have been taken by the German Government except for the fact that I indicated to the German Ambassador that public opinion in this country was demanding retaliatory measures.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Samuel H. Hays

The President,

U:SW:MW

The White House.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE:

December 20, 1938.

SUBJECT: Claims of American citizens to the
estates of persons deceased in Germany.

PARTICIPANTS: Herr Hans Thomsen, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim
of Germany;
the Under Secretary.

COPIES TO: S, Eu, PA/D

*** 1-1400

The German Chargé d'Affaires called to see me this morning by instruction of his Government.

Dr. Thomsen reminded me of a conversation which I had had with Ambassador Dieckhoff shortly before the latter's departure in which I had taken up with the Ambassador in considerable detail the question of the manner in which American citizens residing in Germany were not receiving treatment equal to that received by German citizens residing in the United States. Among the matters taken up by me in that conversation was the way in which American citizens because of German exchange restrictions were unable to receive in full legacies from the estates of persons deceased in Germany.

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Dr. Thomsen handed me an aide memoire, which reads as follows:

"In reply to your communication to Ambassador Dieckhoff concerning the treatment of inheritance claims of American citizens to the estates of persons deceased in Germany, I am in a position to state that all inheritance credits of this kind, reciprocity provided, will be transferred to the beneficiaries in full extent."

I stated to the German Chargé d'Affaires that I assumed and gathered from the text of the communication he had given me that the assurances so provided related to all American citizens without distinction. The Chargé d'Affaires replied that my understanding was correct.

The Chargé d'Affaires concluded the interview by stating that he believed Ambassador Dieckhoff's conversations in Germany would be useful. He stated that he believed his Government was beginning to understand that the Government of the United States would not agree to any discrimination between American citizens in Germany. He stated that he thought it was useful for this Government to continue "to affirm that position".

I thanked the Chargé d'Affaires for the communication he had made to me and for the interest which Ambassador Dieckhoff and he had taken in this question. I said I hoped the assurances given would prove to be the forerunners of other more general assurances to the effect that the rights of all American citizens in Germany without distinction would be scrupulously observed.

December 23, 1938

My dear Mr. President:

While I realize it is rather long, I feel that the despatch from Berlin which I am enclosing herewith is of such intrinsic interest that you will wish to read it.

When you are done with it may I ask that it be returned to me for the Department's files.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Sumner Welles

Enclosure:
Despatch No. 480,
Berlin, December 5, 1938.

The President,
The White House.

U:SW:DMK

D480 12-5-38 Berlin, Comment on German Political
Situation 862.00/3806

Despatch on Political Situation in Germany