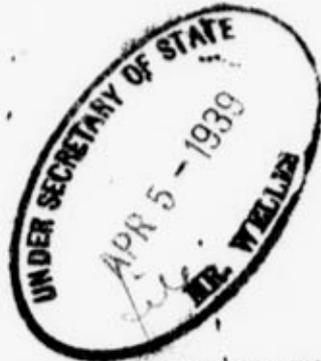


Sumner Welles Papers
Box 150 Folder 7
Major Correspondents
Roosevelt, Franklin D. March-April
1939



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Warm Springs, Ga.,
April 4, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE

Please read enclosed from
Bill Phillips and return to me.

It occurs to me that it
might be a good thing to send
a copy of my "curtain lecture"
to Colonna in confidence to
Phillips, Bullitt and Kennedy.
Also I think we might send a
copy of your memorandum of it
to Halifax and Chamberlain for
their confidential information.
It all ties in with the current
picture.

F. D. R.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "FDR", written in a cursive style.

COPY

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Rome, March 17, 1939

Dear Mr. President,

First of all, I must thank you for your thought of me in connection with the Papal Coronation ceremonies. While I greatly appreciated your message, I was considerably relieved and delighted at your choice of Joe Kennedy, who, being a Catholic and coming from a distance, was a far more appropriate special representative than I could have been. Vatican circles were evidently complimented and gratified, and the American Catholic world in Rome gave him an enthusiastic welcome. Presumably he will give you an account of his visit and of the Coronation, which Caroline and I also attended in a private capacity. In a religious sense, there was almost nothing to it. Rather it was a series of magnificent pageants in fascinating costume. It was an experience, but one not to be repeated.

Since my last letter, I have no reason to change my views with regard to Mussolini's political intentions. When the time comes for his negotiations with France, the tension between the two countries, which is still acute, will increase in an effort to get all he can in Tunisia, Djibouti, and the Suez Canal. No one here believes that he is prepared to strike in a military sense in order to achieve his goal, for it is a well known fact that Italy is not prepared for war. Moreover, the Italian people

PHILLIPS, WM.

-2-

are strongly against being drawn into any war, and while they might obey a peremptory order to fight, everyone believes that this would be the beginning of the end of the regime and that public opinion would not support a war of any duration. Moreover, today, with Germany's reported absorption of Czechoslovakia, it would seem that the German Government is sufficiently occupied in an easterly direction to exclude any possibility that it will lend its support to Italy's ambitions in the Mediterranean. With what amazing speed developments take place in this part of the world!

I called this morning upon Ciano to ask for a statement with regard to the attitude of Italy on the Czechoslovak situation. I impressed upon him that we in America were profoundly shocked by the brutal methods which Hitler had used in taking possession of Bohemia and Moravia by an overwhelming armed force, when as a matter of fact the entire country was already within his grasp. Ciano seemed interested in my reference to the attitude of the American public, and I gave it to him as strongly as I could, although of course explaining that I had no instructions to give any message to him in this respect. When it came to pinning him down for a statement with regard to Italy's position, however, he became distinctly confused, gave me none, and finally said "there are no adjectives which can be used". He was so evidently upset

-3-

and so little prepared to give me something for transmission to Washington that I did not have the heart to press him further, but I left his office naturally in the belief that the use of armed force by Hitler came as a disagreeable surprise to the Italian Government.

I was very much annoyed with Mussolini in his refusal to receive Myron Taylor, but now that he has acted reasonably with regard to foreign Jews in Italy, I forgive him. Even before my request he had presumably decided to postpone the date on which all foreign Jews must leave the country, that is March 12th, and did not wish to give the appearance of doing so under pressure, which might have been the case if he had previously received Myron Taylor. Now, happily, pressure on the Embassy for action on behalf of these unfortunates has ceased and they are given another four to six months in which to depart. When I called upon Ciano recently to ask him whether this reported postponement was official, he not only confirmed it but gave me to understand that there was to be a soft pedalling of the anti-Semitic program. So far, so good.

Yesterday I received the five volumes of your "Published Papers and Addresses", for which I had subscribed, and they most certainly make a handsome and useful addition to my library.

With all good wishes, I am, as always,

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

April 5, 1939

My dear Mr. President:

I am returning to you herewith Bill Phillips' letter to you of March 17 which you were good enough to let me read.

In accordance with the suggestion contained in your memorandum of April 4, I have sent copies of the memorandum of your conversation with the Italian Ambassador to Phillips, Bullitt, and Kennedy, and I have asked the latter to let Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax have the contents of it for their personal and confidential information.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Enclosure.

The President,
The White House.

U:SW:IJ