The Ambassador of Yugoslavia called to see me this afternoon and left with me the two documents attached herewith. The Ambassador was very anxious that this Government again make some statement covering its intention to see that German and other Axis agents responsible for atrocities of the kind indicated in these documents would receive punishment from the United States when the appropriate time arose. I told the Ambassador that this Government had already made categorical and widely publicized statements in this regard and that, as the Ambassador undoubtedly remembered, the President himself had, not long ago, made a very emphatic statement on this point. The Ambassador felt, however, that, in view of the hideous nature of the atrocities being carried on, some further statement should be made. I told him that, of course, any request of this kind from the Yugoslav Government would receive the most sympathetic consideration from us.
November 13, 1942.

Mr. Secretary:

Referring to my letter of October 23, 1942, I have the honor to inform that the Royal Yugoslav Government has received, from General Mihailovich, the following additional information concerning atrocities against the Serbs in Yugoslavia:

(1) In addition to the 600,000 Serbs already massacred, the Croatian Ustashis are now preparing a plan for the complete extermination of the remaining Serb population in the independent State of Croatia.

(2) Beside the already reported executions of Serbs in Becka, the Hungarians are now mobilizing all Serbs for the purpose of sending them to the Russian front. However, they flee and take refuge in the forests and fields. Because of that the Hungarians are persecuting and torturing their families in the most bestial way, forcing them to reveal the hiding places of the men fit for military service.

(3) From the concentration camp in Zemun the Germans are sending all those able for any kind of work to

The Honorable
Mr. Cordell Hull
Secretary of State
Washington, D.C.
Ada Kale to fell the trees in the woods. There they are
dying en masse for they receive only 50 grams of food per day.

In Serbia, in the vicinity of (the name of the
place was impossible to decode and will be given later) the
Germans have concentrated a force of about 7,000 men with 9
tanks of 50 tons. Among them are 2,000 Germans from Banat.
These troops stir up incidents in order to be able to claim
a pretext for mass execution of the population.

(4) In Serbia, in the province of Kopaonik,
two to three divisions composed of Germans, Croats in German
uniforms and Bulgarians cleaned out the provinces of Kopaonik,
as well as the localities of Zeljina and Bocq on October 3,
1942. At that time, they burned down and looted all the
villages and killed a great number of innocent people. The
victims were thrown alive into a fire, and girls of 15 years
of age were raped. On Kopaonik, in the village of Kriva Reka
alone 690 men, women and children were killed. In the church
of that village 120 persons were burned to death. Corpses
which the Germans do not bury lie everywhere and are carried
away by dogs and vultures.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary, the assurances
of my highest consideration.
General Mihailovich unceasingly continues to fight against the Germans and occupational forces. In western Bosnia bloody fighting is being carried on against the Croatian Ustashis, Germans and Italians. These forces are under the command of a young General Staff officer. In all of Bosnia and Herzegovina General Mihailovich carries out surprise attacks on towns, destroying the garrisons of the occupational forces. Sabotage on the railroads is being carried out on a very large scale. Because of that the Germans have made mass arrests in Serbia and from the town of Milosevac alone have taken 600 hostages and brought them to Belgrade. In Jajinci they dug up one grave for a thousand people. The forces of General Mihailovich and not the Partisans, tied down in Yugoslavia about 30 enemy divisions.

General Ler commander-in-chief in the Balkans declared recently that they will starve the Serbian people and wipe them out with Stukas (dive bombers) because 90 percent of the population is supporting General Draza Mihailovich. The surprise attacks in Bosnia, attributed to the Partisans, are in reality carried out by Mihailovich's forces. When retaking Foca, those forces were under the personal command of his chief of operations, staff Major Ostojich; two thousand Croatian Ustahis and occupational forces were annihilated. General Mihailovich requested that news of these surprise attacks should not be made public. All statements to the contrary are without any foundation and misleading.
The Ambassador of Yugoslavia called to see me this morning at his request.

The Ambassador left with me a letter, attached herewith, regarding reports sent to his Government by General Mihailovich covering the execution by the Germans of hostages and other innocent people taken in Yugoslavia. The letter requests that the United States Government publicly denounce these crimes and state that the criminals responsible for them will be punished. The Ambassador emphasized that his Government was convinced that if this Government issued such a statement, many innocent lives in Yugoslavia might be spared. I told the Ambassador that I would give immediate consideration to this request. The Ambassador requested particularly that if any statement were issued by this Government, no indication be given that the reports received by the United States had come from General Mihailovich.
October 27, 1942.

Mr. Secretary:

The Royal Yugoslav Government has been informed by General Draza Mihailovich that according to the latest reports, Pavelich's Ustashis have executed on the 26th and 27th of August in the province of Srem the following number of Serbs: in Zemun 80; Ruma 103; Vukovar 27; Sremske Karlovci 16; Vinkovci 12. In Jarwina on the 14th of August 14 Serbs were killed and on the 24th another 67.

General Mihailovich informs also that subsequently 1,000 Serbs from the same province of Srem, among whom were women and children between the ages of 12 and 17, have been brought to Vukovar, the seat of the province of Srem. There, after a mock trial presided by a judge named Brezovich, all of them were executed. A special Minister of the Croat Government, former Colonel Victor Tumich, has declared that those executions will serve as an example for the pacification of Srem and will be carried on regardless of their number. Tumich is responsible for these executions.

The Honorable
Mr. Cordell Hull
The Secretary of State
Department of State
Washington, D. C.
On the 9th of this month General Mihailovich has informed the Government in London by telegram that the Germans have taken 600 hostages, all from the village of Milosevac (Serbia) which has a total male population of only 1,915.

On the 13th of this month General Mihailovich informed the Government by telegram that the Commander-in-Chief of the Ustashis has issued an order for executing another 10,000 Serbs in Srem.

I have been directed, Mr. Secretary, by my Government, to beg the American Government to denounce publicly those crimes and atrocities and to give a statement that all those criminals responsible for them will be punished with utmost severity. My Government is firmly convinced that such a statement by the American Government may spare many innocent lives of Serbs in the so-called Independent State of Croatia.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary, the assurances of my highest consideration.
October 27, 1942

Eu - Mr. Atherton:

I think such a statement as that requested by the Yugoslav Government should be issued. Please have a draft prepared.

Please be sure that the request is complied with that the source of the information, as coming from General Mihailovich, should not be divulged.
May 28, 1942

My dear Mr. Minister:

With reference to the aide-mémoire which you were good enough to leave with me on May 26 relating to food supplies desired to be sent to Yugoslav prisoners of war in German prison camps through the American Red Cross, the War Department has today approved the shipment of these food supplies.

I am, also, informed by the Lend-Lease Administration that there are no further obstacles and that there is no reason why these supplies should not be shipped on the ship which is due to leave the United States on or about June 6 next.

With my kindest regards, believe me

Yours very sincerely,

Summer Welles

The Honorable
Constantin Potitch,
Minister of Yugoslavia.
The Yugoslav Minister presents his compliments to the Honorable the Secretary of State and has the honor to state that on April 16, 1942, the Yugoslav Government submitted to the Lend-Lease Administration a requisition for 300,000 pounds of dried soup or dry soup concentrate and 200 containers of ascorbic acid tablets, 500 tablets per container. These food articles are to be sent to the Yugoslav prisoners of war in German prisoners' camps to supplement their diet. It is intended for 150,000 of our prisoners of war.

The Lend-Lease Administration, the Department of State, the Department of Agriculture and other United States governmental bodies have acted favorably in the matter, approving the delivery of the same to our prisoners of war. I am advised, however, that this requisition has been for some days past in the War Department for its approval and that no action in the matter has taken place in the War Department as yet.

Inasmuch as this matter is of extremely great importance because it is intended that these food articles will help to keep alive 150,000 men, I have the honor to request the Honorable the Secretary of State to lend his good offices and help us secure a favorable decision by
the War Department as well.

I am likewise informed that the American Red Cross, through which agency these food articles are to be sent, expects a boat with which this food could be shipped on or about June 6th of this year, and that the Department of Agriculture, which is to secure these food articles acting as an agent in the matter for the Land-Lease Administration, requires at least one week to organize this food for delivery. Consequently, the time element is of importance because if we should not have this food ready for the next boat, it would have to wait for a future steamer, the date of the arrival of which is uncertain. I will add that this food will be packed in accordance with the specifications of the International Red Cross, which organization has furnished its assurance that these food articles will be distributed under its control among our prisoners of war.

The Yugoslav Minister will be very grateful to the Honorable the Secretary of State for his help in this very important matter.


The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.
April 1, 1942

Mr. Atherton:

For your information I send you the attached note left with me by the Minister of Yugoslavia this morning. I have given Norman Davis a copy of this note and have requested a memorandum from him which I can use as a basis for a reply to the Minister.

U:SW:PRH
April 1, 1942

Personal

Dear Norman:

I am enclosing herewith a copy of the note which the Minister of Yugoslavia left with me this morning and which I mentioned when I was with you today.

I shall be grateful if you can let me have a memorandum, in the nature of a reply to this request, which I can let the Minister have.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely,

Enclosure:
Note from the Minister of Yugoslavia.

The Honorable
Norman Davis,
Chairman, American Red Cross,
Washington, D.C.
March 31, 1942.

Mr. Secretary:

May I be allowed once more to draw your attention to the problem of aid to our prisoners of war so important to us and which may be brought to a successful solution only by your personal intervention.

According to the figures issued by the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva there are approximately 214,500 prisoners of war of the Yugoslav Army out of which 174,000 are in Germany and 40,500 in Italy.

These prisoners of war are one of the greatest concerns of the Yugoslav Government and due to the fact that Germany and Italy pretend that Yugoslavia juridically has ceased to exist, thus refusing to recognize the Yugoslav Government and the Yugoslav Red Cross, the only way open to us to extend relief to our war prisoners is through the good offices of the American Red Cross.

Thanks to the very effective collaboration we have found with the American Red Cross we have been able to forward to our prisoners of war a certain number of food and

The Honorable
Mr. Sumner Welles,
Acting Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.
clothing packages. These packages sent by or through the channels of the American Red Cross are practically the only relief received by our prisoners. The number of packages sent to the prisoners, considering their total number, is minimal. Thus, for the last ten months we have been able to send only 82,000 of these packages. But although minimal, this help had a considerable moral effect on our prisoners and it has contributed to sustain their faith in the future and to bolster their morale as well as that of their families in the homeland who have learned of this help in diverse ways.

However, for the last three and one-half months even this minimal relief has been stopped due to the fact that the shipping from this country to Lisbon and farther into Mediterranean ports has been discontinued. I know that the authorities of the American Red Cross have tried to devise new means for transportation, that the International Red Cross has agreed to the new proposal and even the Germans and the Italians have given their consent to the American Red Cross to allow the shipments of the goods of the Red Cross to reach, unhampered, the European ports. The difficulties now -- if I am well informed -- seem to be only between the British shipping authorities and the Swiss Government regarding the Swiss tonnage to be allotted for this purpose. Although I recognize the complexity of this problem, I must express the view that it is most unfortunate that those administrative difficulties have had the effect to prevent any relief to the prisoners of war for three and one-half months.
I appeal to you, Mr. Secretary, to give your consideration to this urgent problem and to help, in ways you will find most appropriate, to bring it to a favorable solution. I think it is superfluous to insist how important it is, both for political and moral reasons, to send some help to the prisoners of war, and the only aid which might be sent to them is from this country. They have given their full share to the common struggle; they are prepared to do it in the future as their comrades, who have been more fortunate, are doing today in the ranks of the army of General Draža Mihajlović. They have faith in the assurance of help which has been given so generously by this country, and certainly they cannot understand how a mere calculation of tonnage can have the effect to stop altogether any shipments of relief for the prisoners of war.

May I add, Mr. Secretary, that we are also contributing hundreds of thousands of tons of merchant shipping which are at the disposal of the United Nations and that it gives us also the right to insist that a few hundred tons per month be used for the relief of our prisoners of war.

Please accept, Mr. Secretary, the assurances of my highest consideration.

CF/aK
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: February 6, 1942

SUBJECT: Relief for starving children in Belgrade

PARTICIPANTS: Yugoslav Minister, Mr. Constantin Potitoh; Under Secretary, Mr. Welles

COPIES TO: S, FA/c, Zh

The Minister of Yugoslavia called to see me today.

The Minister asked very urgently that the American Red Cross agree to permit the transfer of the funds necessary in order to make it possible for thirty-five thousand dollars worth of condensed milk to be sent from Switzerland for the relief of starving children in Belgrade. The Minister said that the Swiss Government had already granted authorization for the export of this quantity of milk. The Minister reminded me that Serbia was now crowded with some seven or eight thousand refugees and that the mortality among the children there was daily increasing. He emphasized the fact that these food supplies would be coming
from a European country and not from outside the European area. I told the Minister that I would be very glad to discuss this matter with the Red Cross.