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Summer Welles Report

ROME  
2-26  
1940

ROME, February 26, 1940.

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Welles Report 1940

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ROME, FEBRUARY 26, 1940

At 10 a.m. on Monday, February 26, the day after my arrival in Rome, Ambassador Phillips accompanied me to my first interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. Count Ciano received me in his office in the Chigi Palace, the temporary Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the permanent Ministry being now under construction in the 1942 Exposition grounds.

Count Ciano made an impression upon me quite different from that which I had anticipated. From his photographs, and from the reports which had been given me by persons who had been in contact with him, I had pictured him as overwhelmingly filled with a sense of his own importance. In my conversations with him I found him quite the reverse. He looks older than his thirty-eight years, but appears to be in exceptionally good physical condition. His manner was cordial and quite unaffected, and he could not have been simpler nor more frank in the expression of his views. He speaks easily in colloquial English.

I commenced the interview by saying how much I appreciated the courtesies which had been shown me on my arrival by the Government, and how much I welcomed the opportunity of talking with the Chief of the Government and with himself in order that I might report the views so communicated to me to the President and to the Secretary of State. I said that I wished to make clear at the outset my very strong conviction that during these past years relations between Italy and the United States had been far from satisfactory. I was going to be quite frank in adding that I believed there had been misunderstandings and misapprehensions on both sides, errors of omission and commission by

both

both parties, regrettable attacks upon the United States in the Italian press, regrettable speeches in criticism of the Italian Government in the United States, and that I felt sure the Minister would agree with me that the time had now come when in the best interests of both countries such a situation, which had no real reason for existing, should cease. Count Ciano immediately said, "I fully agree: It is not a question of forgetting the past, because there really isn't any 'past'; but we must at once start in with a completely satisfactory 'future'."

I then went on to say that the President desired me to refer to what he himself had said to Ambassador Colonna a little while ago in expressing his own great satisfaction at the great change which had recently taken place on the part of public opinion in the United States with regard to Italy. The President wished me to emphasize the real pleasure of the American Government that the American people were viewing in so friendly a manner the efforts which the Italian Government had made to avert war, and with such favor the policy of neutrality being pursued by Italy since war had broken out. I said that this very friendly feeling in the United States towards Italy on the part of the public was fully shared by my own Government, and created, I hoped, a particularly propitious moment for an immediate return to that cordiality of relations between our two countries which for so many generations had been traditional. At this moment, the United States, in complete harmony with the other American Republics, constituted one great neutral influence; Italy constituted the other. In the interest of civilization itself it seemed to me desirable  
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that those two great neutral influences should pull together, and not apart, so that, if at any moment there seemed to be an opportunity for the establishment of world peace, of a permanent and stable nature, those two great neutral influences could effectively cooperate morally together for the construction of lasting and sound peace foundations.

The Minister very heartily concurred.

I said that since I was happy to see that we were in full agreement on this premise, I believed it might be desirable to emphasize in some practical and open way the friendly relationship between our two countries. The American people had been greatly impressed with the splendid contribution which Italy had made both to the New York and San Francisco Expositions. My Government had also greatly appreciated the decision of the Italian Government to continue this coming year its participation in the New York World's Fair. I said that I was glad to tell the Minister that the day I left Washington a bill had been introduced in the United States Senate providing for the appropriation of \$2,000,000 for participation by the United States in the Rome Exposition of 1942, and that the President was personally interested in seeing that this legislation be enacted. I felt that this would constitute a practical demonstration of the kind I had in mind.

Count Ciano expressed his very great satisfaction. He said this Exposition, while constituting a permanent embellishment of Rome--since all the new Exposition buildings would eventually become Government offices--would be in reality Mussolini's monument, and that participation

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by the United States would be profoundly appreciated by the Duce.

I continued by saying that another desirable and practical demonstration of cordiality between us would be an increase of beneficial trade relations. At this moment all neutral countries found their normal export trade severely curtailed. It would surely be helpful to Italy and the United States to find some satisfactory method of enlarging a mutually beneficial volume of trade between them. I emphasized that, of course, to make possible such an arrangement the two Governments must find a meeting of minds as to principles and policies, but that I hoped that friendly study and consideration of all of the factors involved might pave the way for the desired solution.

The Minister once more heartily concurred, and said that the experts of his Government would be at our disposal whenever we desired them. Since the Ambassador had told me that Count Ciano does not interest himself in commercial questions nor in any economic problems, I did not continue in any detail this topic of conversation.

I then said to the Minister that he was, of course, fully familiar with the purpose of my mission. I said that I was directed by the President to report to him upon the present possibility of the establishment in Europe of a stable and lasting peace--that was the only kind of peace in which my Government was interested; the President was not interested in any precarious or temporary peace which would, in essence, be no more than a patched-up truce.

I felt it desirable to make very clear that I was not  
empowered

empowered to offer any proposals, nor to enter into any commitments. I would, however, be most grateful for any views which the Minister might care to express to me, and the Minister could be confident that any views so expressed would be maintained by me as completely confidential and as solely for the information of the President and of Secretary Hull.

The Minister said that he fully understood the situation, and that he would talk with me with the utmost frankness. And that he proceeded to do.

He commenced by saying that he was glad that I did not intend to offer any proposals, or any set formula as to a possible peace treaty. He doubted whether the moment was propitious for any effort of that character.

I took occasion at this juncture to remark that I had been privileged to follow from a distance his own brilliant career and to estimate with much admiration his own efforts to prevent war at the end of August, and since that date, to limit the spread of war. I said that I was particularly interested in knowing whether the Italian Government was still considering the possibility of the kind of a meeting between representatives of the belligerents which it had suggested last August 31.

Count Ciano said that the initiative then taken had been his own idea, taken, of course, after consultation with Mussolini.

He got up and from a safe took out his famous red diary in which he records in his own handwriting his daily activities. He read me excerpts from it covering the period in question. It appeared that during the three days commencing August 31 he had been constantly on the

long

long distance telephone, speaking personally with Foreign Ministers Halifax and Bonnet and with Hitler himself, urging a meeting between them and Mussolini to be held at Stresa on September 5. He had recorded that Hitler had agreed to such a meeting on September first, but that he had had no replies from Bonnet and Halifax until September 2, and that while the latter had then agreed in principle, Halifax had insisted that as a condition precedent German troops must be withdrawn back beyond the German frontier with Poland. Ciano felt that if the reply from Halifax had come on September first, Hitler would have agreed to this condition, but that by September 2 German troops had advanced so far and German military enthusiasm had reached such a pitch, as to make this condition impossible of acceptance.

The Minister doubted whether any similar meeting at this time would be productive of any useful purpose.

Count Ciano then spoke at very considerable length of German-Italian relations. He spoke with no effort at concealment of his hearty dislike of Ribbentrop. He said, "If Hitler wants anything--and God knows he always wants enough--Ribbentrop always goes him one better." He likewise made it clear that he bitterly resented not only the lack of courtesy shown the Italian Government by Hitler in failing to consult it with regard to German policy, but also by what he claimed was Hitler's complete disregard for the terms of the understanding between Italy and Germany.

He stated that during the past summer when he had twice conferred with Hitler and Ribbentrop, the subject of the negotiations then progressing between the Soviet Union and France and England had, of course, come up for discussion. The Germans had told him that in order to

impede these negotiations they were attempting to conclude a commercial agreement with Russia, and that this would be merely in the nature of "a petit jeu". "Can you conceive," Count Ciano added with great bitterness, "of our being asked to regard a military alliance between Germany and Communist Russia as being merely 'a petit jeu'?" "Do you further realize," he asked, "that Hitler called me on the telephone only on August 21 last to announce the conclusion of this alliance to me, and that before I had even had time to get Mussolini on the telephone to break the news to him, this very radio in my own office here was carrying the report already broadcast to the whole world?" "That," he said, "was the way in which Italy was advised as to German foreign policy." "And with regard to Poland," he continued, "the clear-cut terms of our understanding with Germany provide that if Germany undertakes any military adventure, Italy must be first afforded the opportunity of consultation. We did everything we could to prevent the invasion of Poland, but we were never given any real chance to exert any influence upon Hitler to prevent it."

The Minister went on to say that the Italian Government had the deepest sympathy for the "real Poles". It believed that Poland must be reconstituted. To that end the Italian Government continued to recognize a Polish Embassy in Rome, and the Minister himself continued to spend a great part of his time in bringing what influence he could to bear upon Germany to mitigate the severity of its treatment of Polish nationals in occupied territory.

The Minister then talked about Russia and Russian policy. He said that Italy had always proclaimed that

Russian

Russian policy was frankly imperialist in that the Soviet was bending every effort, at times in one way, at other times in another, to bring about the hegemony of Soviet influence in every part of the world. At the same time Russia had been maintaining that it only desired world peace, and that any form of conquest was abhorrent to it. Now he said that mask had been removed, and Russia had been revealed not only as avid for communist revolution throughout the world, but likewise as determined to conquer as much territory in Europe as it could get away with. Against this he said Italy would stand "like a wall".

The sympathy of Italy was overwhelmingly with Finland. The reaction in Italy against Russian occupation of Poland had been extreme; but it had been violent against the assault on Finland. He stated that the Italian Government had furnished Finland with munitions and airplanes, and that when Germany had refused to permit the planes to be shipped by rail through Germany, they had been sent by sea.

I asked Count Ciano if any volunteers from Italy had been permitted to go to Finland. He said not, but that the reason for this was not any objection on the part of Italy to their fighting against Russia, but solely because Italy did not think Finland could hold out for long, and that if any considerable number of Italians fought in the Finnish army, and Finland was defeated, it would be very difficult for Italy to repatriate her own nationals without actually declaring war on Russia, which she was not prepared to do because of Finland. For geographical reasons Italy could not do what she had done in Spain. The Minister doubted whether the Allies would render any effective aid to Finland before it was too late.

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With regard to the Balkans, the Minister said I undoubtedly knew all that Italy had done to preserve peace in that region. He alone, he said, through his meeting with Count Csaky in Venice had persuaded Hungary to refrain from provoking a conflict with Rumania so long as the present war continued, and Hungary had now agreed not only to postpone her claims for the territorial readjustments she desired, but also to refrain from press attacks against Rumania.

Italy had definitely entered into an agreement with Rumania--and Count Ciano emphasized that this agreement was completely secret--that if Russia attacked Rumania, Italy would at once come to the assistance of Rumania, not through open declaration of war on Russia, but through the furnishing of every form of military assistance, including the furnishing of troops and airplanes.

The Minister here interjected that while volunteers had not been permitted to go from Italy to Finland, Italian aviators had gone in some numbers, and that today Count Ciano's private pilot was leaving to fly an Italian bomber on the Finnish front.

Italy would keep Russia out of the Balkans, and would do her utmost to keep the Balkans out of war. Italy had no interest in the Balkans save the preservation of peace, and the fomenting of Italian trade interests in that region.

At this point, Count Ciano reverted to Germany. He said, "No country would want to have Germany as a neighbor. We now have her as a neighbor, and we must do the best we can to get on with her.

"You will wonder why Italy did nothing at the time of the Dollfuss assassination, and nothing later when Hitler occupied Austria. I will tell you, for there is a great deal

deal of misunderstanding on that score. There are many people in Austria today who are unhappy, who are tormented, many who wish the Anschluss had not taken place. But, as an Italian, I tell you the great majority of Austrians would even today rather be a part of Germany than have to live the life they lived in independent Austria.

"Before the occupation of Austria Dr. Schuschnigg came to Rome, and, sitting in the same chair you are sitting in, (and at this I shifted in my seat), he admitted to me frankly that if Germany occupied Austria the majority of Austrians would support the occupation, and that if Italy sent troops into Austria to prevent the occupation, the Austrians as one man would join with the Germans to fight Italy.

"For that reason, when peace terms are considered it would be stupid to support the French thesis that an independent Austria must be reconstituted. If any country would logically desire that objective it would be Italy. But Italy knows that the Austrians are primarily German, and that an Austrian people will never be content to go back to the state of starvation and inanition which they endured for twenty years after 1918."

In October last Count Ciano said he had spent two days in Berlin conferring with Hitler. At that time--and he emphasized the words--he believed Germany would have been willing to agree upon a peace based upon the retention of Austria, or a plebiscite in Austria--knowing full well that a real plebiscite would result in an overwhelming vote in favor of continued amalgamation with Germany; an independent Slovakia, and an independent Bohemia-Moravia, both under the protectorate of Germany;

and

and the reconstitution of a completely independent Poland, Germany retaining Danzig, the Corridor and the territory in Western Poland occupied by German minorities, and Russia retaining eastern Poland, removing therefrom the truly Polish inhabitants to the new Polish state, which would be given access to the sea. German peace terms at that time likewise comprehended the return of her former colonial possessions or their equivalent.

Whether Germany still maintained this position, Count Ciano was not sure.

Throughout our conversation Count Ciano made no effort to conceal his dislike and contempt for Ribbentrop or his antagonism towards Hitler. He did not hide his anxiety with regard to Germany and his apprehension with regard to her military power. At the same time he indicated not the slightest predilection towards Great Britain or France.

His chief interests at the moment, I would judge, are to arrest by every means Russian expansion in the Balkans and Near East; to maintain a balance between the Allies and Germany so that Italian neutrality may be preserved and so that when peace negotiations are undertaken, Italian claims may receive preferential consideration; and finally to take every safeguard available to Italy against German domination of Southeastern Europe.

Our interview took place in a very beautiful hall of the Palace, hung with tapestries. The moving-picture apparatus had been already installed. As soon as the conversation terminated the moving-picture men were sent for, and the Minister posed with me for a rather unduly protracted

protracted period. That was the only time I saw the "chest out, chin up" Ciano of which I had heard. Until the cameras began clicking, he could not have been more human, more simple, nor more seemingly frank in everything he said.

ROME, February 26, 1940.

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1940

HOME

ROME, FEBRUARY 26, 1940

Accompanied by the Ambassador and by Count Ciano's chief of cabinet, I called at 5 p.m. on February 26th at the Palazzo Venezia where I was received by Mussolini.

I entered the Palace by the side entrance used by the Duce, and going up in a small elevator was escorted through a long corridor hung with paintings, and filled with vitrines holding examples of old Italian porcelain, to a hall where Count Ciano was waiting to receive me. From there we passed to the Hall of the Grand Fascist Council, which, while on a far smaller scale, and hung in blue instead of red, is reminiscent of the Hall of the Doges in the Doges' Palace at Venice. At the end of the Hall is a raised and very large armchair for the Duce, while on a lower level, around a horseshoe table, are other chairs for the members of the Grand Council. The walls are hung with superb portraits.

After a wait of three minutes, we were summoned to Mussolini's office in the "Sala Mapa Mondo". The hall, of which so much has been written, is very long, but did not impress me as so long as usually depicted by newspaper correspondents. There is no furniture except the desk of the Duce at the extreme end, with three chairs placed in front of it for the Ambassador, Count Ciano, and myself. On the desk was a reading-lamp, which was the sole illumination in the whole vast room.

The Duce met me very cordially at the door, saying he was particularly happy to welcome me, and walked with me the length of the hall to his desk. He greeted the

Ambassador

Ambassador very pleasantly, making no reference whatever to the fact that he had been unwilling to receive him for over a year.

I was profoundly shocked by the Duce's appearance. In the countless times I had seen him in moving pictures and in photographs, and in the many descriptions I had read of him, he had always seemed to me as an active, quick-moving, exceedingly animated personality. The man I saw before me seemed fifteen years older than his actual age of fifty-eight. He was ponderous and static, rather than vital. He moved with an elephantine motion. Every step appeared an effort. He is very heavy for his height, and his face in repose falls into rolls of flesh. His close-clipped hair is snow white. During our long and rapid interchange of views, he kept his eyes shut a considerable part of the time, opening them with his dynamic and oft-described wide-open stare only when he desired particularly to underline some remark. At his side was a large cup of tea which he sipped from time to time.

Mussolini impressed me as a man laboring under some tremendous strain; physical unquestionably, for he has procured a new and young Italian mistress only ten days ago; but in my definite judgment, mental as well. One could almost sense a leaden oppression.

Count **Ciano** commenced the conversation by saying that Mussolini desired him to act as interpreter, since in view of the importance of the conversation he would prefer to speak in his own language rather than in French or in English.

I said that I wanted first of all to express my  
gratitude

gratitude for the many courtesies shown me, and for the privilege of being received by Mussolini and his Minister. I then handed Mussolini the President's autograph letter. He found it difficult to read the President's writing, and asked Ciano to translate it for him. As the reading went on a smile of gratification came over Mussolini's face, and with the last sentence in which the President expressed the hope of seeing him soon, he smiled openly. "I have hoped for a long time," he said, "that this meeting of which I have heard so often would really take place, but I am beginning to fear that there are too many miles of ocean between us to make it possible." I quickly interjected, "But, of course, there are half-way points, which would halve that distance". He stopped smiling, and looked at me searchingly. Then he added slowly, looking at me all the time, "Yes, and there are ships to take us both there." He paused a moment, and then reaching over and taking the President's letter out of Ciano's hands, said, "I will answer this letter personally."

At the outset of our conversation I referred to American participation in the Exposition of 1942 and to the desirability of studying the possibility of agreeing on such policies and principles as would make possible more satisfactory commercial relations between the two countries. It was evident that Ciano had already reported to him our conversation of the morning, since he referred to notes he had made.

Mussolini expressed great appreciation of the President's interest in the Rome Exposition. He said that while he hoped peace would be reestablished before 1942,  
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the Exposition would be held in any event. It would represent his own endeavor to build up the new Italy and the new Rome.

He expressed his hearty concurrence in the view that relations between Italy and the United States should be close and friendly both in the interest of the two peoples as well as in the interest of the reestablishment of world peace. He said there was nothing he would welcome more than increased trade relations with the United States, since Italy's trade was increasingly prejudiced due to war conditions, and to British war policies. He said he trusted a commercial treaty could be negotiated to mutual advantage, and that now that every other nation of the world, including the Soviet, had recognized the Ethiopian conquest, that technical point would no longer be an impediment to the United States.

I said that I was specifically authorized by the President to speak very frankly to him in that regard. The President felt that recognition of the Empire by the United States would not be an obstacle, provided that question were a part of a whole general and permanent peace settlement and readjustment, especially if it were accompanied by some utilization by Italy of some portion of Ethiopia for the settlement of European minorities. But the President wished me also to remind Mussolini very frankly that we could not regard the matter as an isolated question, because of its inevitable relation to our whole problem in the Far East.

Mussolini smiled and said if he had to wait until

we had concluded our negotiations with the Japanese, he was afraid he would have to wait a long time, since there was no race that took a more interminable time in finishing any negotiation than the Japanese. In view of what I said, he added, pending further developments, it would be better to envisage the conclusion of a more ample *modus vivendi*, rather than a commercial agreement, and on that he hoped both sides would make every effort to agree.

I then spoke to Mussolini of the inquiry addressed to my Government to the other neutral powers, asking whether they did not consider it desirable to exchange views with regard to the possibility of finding a common point of view concerning a future sane international economic system, and concerning post-war reduction and limitation of armaments. I said Italy had in reply asked what the views of the United States might be in these two regards. I stated that I had brought with me a brief written statement of the views of the United States with regard to a sane international economic relationship, and that since I knew well the views expressed by Mussolini himself in his address to the Chamber of Deputies on May 26, 1934, I felt sure the views of my Government coincided very completely with his own.

Mussolini at once asked for the paper and read it word for word. As he read, he commented. His comment on the first paragraph was "molto bello, I agree with every word. Unfortunately, however, Italy has never been in a position where she could anticipate a situation where she would have access on equal terms to raw materials." When

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he came to the portion which related to discriminations, he said, "and could there be greater discriminations than those found in the Ottawa agreements? Or in the tariff policy pursued by the United States prior to the Roosevelt Administration?"

When he had concluded his reading he said, "I subscribe to every word in this. It coincides completely with what I said in 1934, and what I believe now. But you must remember that Italy was the last country to enter upon an autarchic system, and she did so solely as a last resort, and in self-defense. A poor country like Italy had no other remedy after Britain had entered on the Ottawa policy, and after the other European nations had adopted autarchy, and France had imposed her quota systems and other restrictions. This policy outlined in this document represents the ideal which nations must come to, but I want to remind you that if and when the time comes that nations again can trade freely with each other, no such ideal as this can be realized unless simultaneously the powers agree upon a practical and positive disarmament plan. So long as peoples are draining their national economies in the construction of armaments, there can be no hope of a sane international economic relationship."

I, of course, stated at once that the President and Secretary Hull fully shared these views. I said it was exactly for that reason we had suggested that if the neutral powers could now agree upon the principles he had set forth, the neutral influence would be of great service when peace came in bringing these ideals into practical realization.

Mussolini

Mussolini replied that in his opinion the only neutral powers which had any influence were the United States, Japan and Italy, and that Italy was not technically a neutral because of her relationship to Germany. (This was his only reference in our conversation to the Axis.) He said that when peace came the influence of the United States would be decisive, and that our views on economic relations, which he would support, would have to be accepted, if we insisted.

But he felt that no efforts at moral influence at this time would prove effective. What was required before any constructive steps could be taken was the finding of a just political peace in Europe.

I then said that as he already knew I was charged by the President with the duty of reporting to him on the present possibilities of the establishment of the bases for a permanent and stable peace in Europe. I would greatly value Mussolini's views, and I was sure he knew from Count Ciano that any views he expressed to me would be reported solely to my President and Secretary of State.

Mussolini said he knew this, and that he would speak to me with utmost frankness. He would answer any questions I desired to ask.

He then set forth what he believed would be the terms Germany would accept. Austria to remain a part of the Reich after a plebiscite had proved Austrian determination in that regard; an independent Slovakia and Bohemia-Moravia under German protection. He then came

to

to the question of Poland. He drew himself up and with much vigor said, "The Polish people have a right to their untrammelled independence and sovereignty, and I will support them in that endeavor. But that does not mean that Poland should again become a crazy-quilt of diverse nationalities. The poison of Europe during these past twenty years has been the question of minorities. That cardinal error must not be committed again. The real Germans of Danzig, of the Corridor, of Posen should remain in the Reich, but the real Poles should have their free Poland, with access to the sea." I interjected, "How about the real Poles who are now under Russian subjection?" Mussolini answered that they should emigrate from Russian controlled Poland to the new Polish state just the way in which Germans were emigrating from the Upper Adige back to Germany. "What other solution is there," he said, "unless we are all prepared to fight Russia?" In saying this he gave me no impression of being bellicose.

He then stated that I should attribute great importance to Hitler's speech of February 23rd. That speech had been precise: "Vital interests in Central Europe" meant what he had just indicated, and colonial restoration was the additional factor. Germany, he believed, had every right to such a position in Central Europe, and there could be no lasting peace unless such a solution were found.

He quickly added, "And when peace negotiations are undertaken, Italy's just claims must be satisfied. I  
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have not raised them now because the mad-house which is Europe will not stand further excitements. But there can be no peace which is real until Italy has free egress from, and access to, the Mediterranean. You have just come to Italy on the REX. You were held up at Gibraltar by the British and mails and passengers were taken off. In the western Mediterranean you have seen for yourself that we are the prisoners of the British. Do you also realize that an Italian cannot send a ship from Trieste, an Italian port, to Massowa, another Italian port, without having the British take off half the cargo? How would you like it if the British did that to your ships plying between New York and New Orleans?"

Mussolini spoke with the greatest bitterness of the British, but he gave no evidence whatever of antagonism towards the French.

He then ~~came~~ back to the question of peace terms. He said that in his judgment the Allies gravely underestimated the military strength and the efficiency of the organization of Germany.

I then asked him the flat question: "Do you consider it possible at this moment for any successful negotiations to be undertaken between Germany and the Allies for a real and lasting peace?"

His answer was an emphatic "Yes". He said that of one thing he was profoundly certain, and that was that none of the peoples now at war desired to fight. The situation now in that regard was utterly different from that which existed in 1914. He went on, "But I am equally sure that if a 'real' war breaks out, with its attendant

slaughter

slaughter and devastation, there will be no possibility for a long time to come of any peace negotiation."

He paused, and I asked him if he would give me any suggestions as to my conversations in Berlin. He said he would be glad to be helpful, but he believed I would be told in Berlin more or less what he had just said to me.

In conclusion, I said that Count Ciano had been good enough to ask if I would talk with him again before I sailed home. I said I would welcome the privilege of talking also with the Duce before I departed for the United States. He replied, in a very friendly way, that he would be glad to talk with me again at any time, and that he believed he would probably receive reports from Berlin, Paris and London after my visits to those capitals, which would be of value to the President and myself, before I returned to Washington. It was agreed that if my plans made it possible for me to return to Rome on March 16 or 17 I would see him again at that time.

Mussolini then got up and joined me on the other side of his desk. He spoke to me in English for a while and then turned into French. I asked him if he still rode every morning, and he said that he did, but that he had now taken up a new sport, tennis; that he had always thought of tennis as a young ladies' game but that he had now discovered that it was almost as hard exercise as fencing. He was delighted to say that he had that very morning beaten his professional 6-2.

He walked with me to the door, gave me a particularly cordial handshake, and said he would look forward to seeing me again.

BERLIN, Friday, March 1, 1940.

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BERLIN

BERLIN, Friday, March 1, 1940.

At noon on the day of my arrival in Berlin I was escorted to the Foreign Office Building, adjacent to Bismarck's old Chancery in the Wilhelmstrasse, by the Chief of Protocol, Herr von Doernberg, to an interview with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Herr von Ribbentrop. Mr. Kirk, the American Charge- d'Affaires, who had never previously been received by Ribbentrop, accompanied me at my request to the interview.

Every official of the Foreign Office was dressed in military uniform, and at the top of the stairs, after passing the two sphinxes at the portal which date from Bismarck's time, there were stationed storm-troopers in stained uniforms.

After waiting in an anteroom for three minutes, I was shown into Herr von Ribbentrop's office.

The Minister received me at the door, glacially, and without the semblance of a smile or a word of greeting. I expressed my pleasure at being afforded the opportunity of talking with him, and spoke in English, since I knew that he spoke English fluently, having passed--as a wine salesman--several years in England, and four years in the United States and Canada. The Minister looked at me icily and barked at the famous Dr. Schmidt, the official interpreter, who stood behind him, "Interpret".

We then sat down. The Minister turned to me and asked in German whether I had had a comfortable journey. I turned to Dr. Schmidt, and saying in English that I had lost my facility in speaking German, expressed my appreciation of the courtesy of the German Government in sending a private car to the border and an official to meet me there.

I then said that I believed it desirable at the outset to make quite clear the nature of my mission. I was requested by the President to visit Italy, Germany, France  
and

and England to report to him on the existing situation. It was the President's desire to ascertain whether there existed any possibility of the establishment of a sound and permanent peace in Europe. I wished to emphasize that my Government was not interested in any precarious or temporary peace. Whatever views the officials of the German Government were good enough to express to me would be regarded as solely for the information of the President himself, and of the Secretary of State, and for no other individual, and in conclusion I desired to make it very clear that I had, in the name of my Government, no proposals to offer, and no commitments whatever to put forward on the part of the United States.

I should be appreciative of any views the Minister desired to express to me.

Ribbentrop then commenced to speak and never stopped, except to request the interpreter from time to time to translate the preceding portion of his discourse, for more than two hours.

The Minister, who is a good looking man of some fifty years with notably haggard features and grey hair, sat with his arms extended on the sides of his chair and his eyes continuously closed. He evidently envisioned himself as the Delphic Oracle.

He started in with the subject of American-German relations. He said that relations between the two countries had been steadily deteriorating for several years, and that so far as the German Government was concerned, there was no reason for such a situation. It desired to maintain close and friendly relations between the two countries. A year and a half ago the United States had withdrawn its Ambassador, Mr. Wilson, for whom he, the Minister, and the Fuehrer had

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the highest regard, and in consequence the German Reich had withdrawn its Ambassador. Such a situation was in detriment to the best interests of the two peoples. The German Government believed expanded trade relations between our two countries were highly desirable. Such were now impossible under present conditions. The German Government had no feature in its foreign policy which conflicted with the interests of the United States; no ambitions which in any sense impinged upon the Western Hemisphere; and insofar as internal matters were concerned, all representatives of the German Government had received the most stringent orders never to interfere, directly or indirectly, in the domestic policies of the United States, nor in those of any other American Republic. Since all of these things were so, the Minister concluded, he could see no valid ground whatever for the completely unsatisfactory state of relations between the United States and Germany. He could only assume that lying propoganda had had a preponderant influence.

At this point I determined it was wiser for me to refrain from making the reply I desired to make until the end of the Minister's discourse. He was so obviously aggressive, so evidently laboring under a violent mental and emotional strain, that it seemed to me probable that if I replied at this juncture with what I intended to say, violent polemic was presumably ensue, with the possibility that things would be said that would not only make my interview with him entirely unfruitful, but which might also jeopardize the interview I was scheduled to have with Hitler on the following morning.

The Minister then continued. He passed to a narration of Germany's participation in European history, as he saw it,  
from

from January 30, 1933, the day Hitler became Chancellor, until the present time.

The German occupation of the Rhineland had been the first step in the reconstruction by Germany. That was a step which today was accepted by the entire world as a rightful step, as a step which returned to Germany an intrinsic part of Germany, and as a step which marked the end of the régime of Versailles. The Minister said that he was glad to remember that I myself in public addresses had criticized the inequities of Versailles.

Then had come the consolidation of Austria into the German Reich. This had marked the union of two severed portions of the old German Empire, of the old Roman Empire, and had brought back into one German family German peoples who had always desired such union since 1919. It had been attained without the shedding of blood and in accordance with the will of the overwhelming majority of the Austrian people.

Then had come the Sudeten question. Here again the German Government had desired no more than the return to Germany of German peoples, who had been ground down under Czech domination for twenty years. He detailed the efforts which Hitler had made to achieve a friendly solution of this problem with the Czechoslovak Government, and the continuous obstacles which other Governments had placed in the way of such an understanding. He narrated--it seemed to me from memory--all of the pages in the German white books which had led up to the agreements of Munich.

He emphasized the agreement entered into by Chamberlain and Hitler. And what had happened only a few weeks later: Chamberlain and his Duff Coopers, Edens and Churchills had announced in the British Parliament that Britain was embarking

on the biggest armament program of its entire history so that "no agreement like Munich would ever again be necessarily accepted by the British Government". (I did not remind the Minister that neither Duff Cooper, Eden nor Churchill was at that time in the British Cabinet.)

From this moment on in the Minister's monologue, the word "England, England, England" punctuated his speech like the toll of a funeral bell. I could not help but think of the "Gdt Strafe England" of the years 1917-1918.

The keystone of Hitler's foreign policy had been the creation of close and cooperative relations with England. From the year 1933 on Hitler, time and time again, had consulted England on the steps he had intended to take, and time and again England had not only repulsed his overtures with scorn--and the German word "Hohn" came out like the hiss of a snake--but had with craft and with guile done her utmost to prevent the German people from once more assuming their rightful place in the family of nations. Hitler had no ambitions which conflicted with the maintenance of the integrity of the British Empire; on the contrary, he believed the integrity of the British Empire was a desirable and a stabilizing factor in the world. For that reason he had entered into the naval agreement of 1935 with Great Britain, voluntarily pledging Germany to a minimum naval ratio, as a pledge to England that Germany had no designs upon the Empire. Until the last moment Hitler had sought peace and understanding with England, always to find hatred, scorn and trickery as her reward.

Germany had offered to guarantee the frontiers of the new Czechoslovakia agreed upon at Munich. But how could this commitment be carried out? The new Czech authorities

had

had proved weak tools of the enemies of Germany. They had been unable or unwilling to prevent foreign agents from stirring up agitation and from concocting plots, with the connivance of the Czechoslovak military, against Germany. How could Germany guarantee the frontiers of a nation which was being deliberately turned into a menace to the heart of Germany? That, and that alone, had been the reason for the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia, and the support by Germany of the independence of Slovakia, and the consent by Germany for the earlier movements affecting Czechoslovak territory by Poland and Hungary.

And then the Minister turned to Poland.

The Fuehrer had always maintained that the separation of the German city of Danzig from the Reich, and the complete divorce of East Prussia from Greater Germany were provisions of the Versailles Treaty which could not endure. But at the same time he had been convinced that these questions could be solved satisfactorily by means of a direct understanding between Poland and Germany. In that spirit the non-aggression pact between Germany and Poland had been entered into. Early in the year 1938 negotiations had been commenced between the German Foreign Office and Colonel Beck looking towards the restoration of Danzig to the Reich, and the granting to Germany of an extraterritorial motor road and railroad across the Corridor between Greater Germany and East Prussia. These conversations had prospered. They had reached a complete agreement in principle when Colonel Beck had visited Berlin and Berchtesgaden early in 1939. In a few months, granted there had been no foreign interference, the entire arrangement would have been concluded to the entire satisfaction of Poland, and Germany would have abided permanently by this settlement.

And

And what had happened? The German Government now had the complete archives of Warsaw. It had incontrovertible proof that England had incited the Polish Government to refuse to conclude this agreement; it had incontrovertible proof that England had incited the Poles to determine upon war against Germany, and it had incontrovertible proof that statesmen of countries not in the slightest degree connected with the issues involved had urged the Polish Government to make no concession of any nature to Germany.

Here the Minister paused and looked pointedly at me. My belief is that he desired me to understand that the German authorities have records of representations made to Poland by Bullitt through Biddle and the Polish Ambassador in Paris, in addition to Bullitt's telephone conversation with Biddle, already published by the German Foreign Office.

Finally, the German Government had proof that the British guarantee of military support had been thrust upon Poland, against the wishes and advice of Colonel Beck, and solely as a means of persuading Poland against reaching any fair understanding with Germany.

When this stage had been reached the Poles had undertaken every kind of cruel repression against the German minority in Poland. The German Government had attempted time and again to point out to Poland the dangerous results of such a policy. Torture and mutilation of Germans were so unbelievable that the Minister would give me photographs and documentary evidence if I so desired.

And finally Germany, to protect Germans in Poland, and as a means of self-defense against Polish mobilization had been forced to take military action. She had even at this last moment attempted to keep peace with England and France.

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The Fuehrer had made every effort to make clear to England and France that Germany wished in no way to endanger British or French security. It had been England and France who had insisted upon declaring war on Germany. Germany would not have declared war on England and France.

Germany wished for nothing more in Europe than what the United States possessed through the Monroe Doctrine in the Western Hemisphere. As a great power she was entitled to the safeguarding of her vital interests. He had been in the United States, and he knew how every American citizen felt, and he thought quite legitimately, that the preservation of the Monroe Doctrine was fundamental in insuring the safety of America's world position. Germany was entitled to the same situation in Central Europe. Germany desired nothing more than the unity under the German Reich of the German people in Europe; the return of the colonies which had been stolen from her at Versailles, so that she might thence obtain the raw materials she could not herself produce, and make possible the profitable emigration to them of German nationals; the ensured recognition by the other Great Powers of her sphere of influence in Central Europe-- just as she was willing to respect the spheres of influence of the other great European powers; the independence and autonomy of the smaller powers of Europe which had a clearly established historical right to independence. With regard to such powers, the Minister said, Germany had not the faintest design upon them, although she must expect that in trade matters the independent powers within her sphere of influence would have close economic ties with the Reich. And in that connection I must not forget that one thousand years ago German Emperors had been crowned in Prague. Germany, however, had

had no desire or intention of preventing the Czech people from having their complete cultural and municipal autonomy-- something which the Germans in Czechoslovakia had never possessed under Czech rule.

Germany must have her "Monroe Doctrine" in Central Europe. She would never again discuss any question affecting her interests in Eastern Europe except with Soviet Russia, and with Russia she had already reached a complete and satisfactory delimitation of interests in that area. But the days of encirclement--of British and French political meddling in Central and Eastern Europe--were passed and forever.

(It was particularly significant that Italy was never mentioned by the Minister throughout the conversation.)

British policy made any such recognition of German rights impossible--Britain was determined to annihilate Germany and the German people. In October, Hitler had publicly announced the bases upon which he was willing to make peace. They had again been rejected with contempt. Only last night Eden had publicly declared that the war aim of England was to destroy "Hitlerism". The Minister wanted me to know that every German national was a part of Hitler. The destruction of "Hitlerism" meant only the destruction of the German people, for Germany would never again be governed by any form of government other than Hitlerism.

Germany was strong and completely confident of ultimate victory. She had immense military superiority, and from her eastern and southern neighbors she could obtain the raw materials she required. She was prepared for a long war, but the Minister was confident it would be a short war.

Germany

Germany wanted peace, but only on condition, the Minister said, "that the will on the part of England to destroy Germany is killed, once and for all. I see no way in which that can be accomplished except through German victory."

By the time this stage had been reached, I said I would not attempt to speak at any length, but that I could not refrain from making certain comments upon what the Minister had said.

First of all, the Minister had referred to American-German relations and had drawn the inference that propaganda was responsible for their bad condition. I said I had no doubt that propaganda was active in almost every part of the world, and that I felt very deeply, with my own President, that the more peoples drank from the well of truth, and had freedom of true information, the more peaceful and happy the world would be.

But if the Minister thought that the unsatisfactory state of American-German relations was due to propaganda, he was sadly deceived. The American people, I said, were idealistic, emotional people, profoundly moved by humanitarian considerations. They resented in their inmost soul the ill-treatment of human beings in any part of the world. The cruel treatment of minorities in Germany was one of the two compelling causes of American feeling towards Germany. The other was the overwhelming feeling in the United States that international controversies can and must be settled by pacific methods, and that the use of force, such as had been exercised in recent years, destroyed international relations and those bases of international life which alone could give real security to the United States and to other nations.

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Those, I said, and not propaganda, were the real reasons for the feeling in the United States towards Germany. So far as trade relations were concerned, the Minister must know that so long as Germany pursued her present autarchic policy and indulged in every form of discrimination against us, there was no opportunity offered the United States for improved trade with Germany.

With regard to the Minister's reference to the desirability of having Ambassadors in Berlin and Washington, I would be careful to report to the President the Minister's observations, but I wanted to make it clear that my Government had every confidence in Mr. Kirk, the American Chargé d'Affaires. (Here the Minister interjected that he had only "good reports" of Mr. Kirk, but that he had been referring to the rank of the representation, and not to the individual.)

I further desired to refer to the Minister's reference to the Monroe Doctrine, for it seemed very clear that the Minister was laboring under a misapprehension as to the nature of that policy. Many years ago, I was quite willing to admit, the Monroe Doctrine had been occasionally misinterpreted by earlier administrations in the United States as entitling the United States to exercise some form of hegemony in the Western Hemisphere or to intervene in one way or another in the affairs of our neighbors. But the Doctrine had never in reality been other than a unilateral declaration by the United States that it would not permit any non-American power to exercise any kind of sway, military or political, within the Western Hemisphere. It had never implied the exclusion by the United States of non-American powers from having the same trade relations with the other American Republics such

as we ourselves possessed, and on equal terms. It had never rightfully implied the assumption of any political control by us over our neighbors. At this moment, I was glad to say, a new relationship existed in the Western Hemisphere. The Monroe Doctrine existed, and would continue to exist, but only in its true interpretation, and it was now reinforced by the unification of all the American Republics in the common policy of considering any menace from abroad to the peace of any one Republic as a menace to the peace of them all. The United States was an equal partner in a partnership of twenty-one partners.

If, consequently, the Minister desired to use the term "Monroe Doctrine" as synonymous with the term "sphere of influence", whether political or economic, he should find some more accurate synonym.

Finally, I said I would, of course, regard it as inappropriate to comment upon the remainder of the Minister's exposition. That would be outside of the scope of my mission.

I believe, however, that if a war of devastation now took place all that civilization held most dear, all the remaining material and social structure of Europe, would be in great part destroyed. The loss of lives would be appalling. No country on earth would remain unaffected, and the United States as the most powerful neutral would suffer every form of repercussion upon her own social, commercial and financial structure. It was for that reason that my Government hoped most earnestly, while there was still time, that there might still exist the way towards some durable and just peace. The President of the United States had officially stated last year, as the Minister knew, that if the way to a just political peace could be found by the nations directly concerned, of which the United States was not one, my

Government

Government would participate whole-heartedly in a parallel common attempt to bring about a real limitation and reduction of armaments, and a return by the nations to a sane economic system of international trade relations. On these latter two points, as the Minister doubtless knew, my Government was even now discussing the possibility of finding common views with the neutral powers. All of these opportunities towards a return to a world of security, sanity and prosperity would be grievously, if not fatally, prejudiced, if a war of devastation now broke out.

The Minister made a brief rejoinder. He attempted, without success, to modify his interpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. He expressed the hope of the German Government, after the war was over, of being able to return, in cooperation with other powers, to a liberal international trade system. With regard to the prevention of a war of devastation, he said over and over again, "We have not attacked England. She has attacked us. I see no way by which we can attain the peace we want and which we seek, save through German victory."

I then terminated the interview, which had lasted from midday until quarter before three.

Ribbentrop has a completely closed mind. It struck me as also a very stupid mind. The man is saturated with hate for England, and to the exclusion of any other dominating mental influence. He is clearly without background in international affairs, and he was guilty of a hundred inaccuracies in his presentation of German policy during recent years.

I have rarely seen a man I disliked more.

BERLIN, Friday, March 1, 1940.

BERLIN, Friday, March 1, 1940

At six o'clock I called upon Staatssekretär von Weizsäcker in his office at the Foreign Office. His position corresponds to Under Secretary in our system.

Herr von Weizsäcker is a typical example of the German official of the old school of the nineteenth century. He is reminiscent of the first Bernstorff and of the first Bülow, and not of their more famous sons. He is, I believe, sincere, and spoke throughout our hour's talk with deep feeling.

He had had a particularly happy home life—very typically German in the devotion to him of his three sons. His greatest pleasure, he told me, was when he and his wife and the three boys could have an evening of chamber music together in their house. Today the family is shattered. His youngest son of twenty was killed in the Polish war. The other two sons are serving on the Western Front.

He is retained at the Foreign Office, I was told, solely because of his expert knowledge of German foreign relations, and is never permitted to advise on policy.

I outlined to the Under Secretary the nature of my mission.

At the conclusion of my statement, to which I added some excerpts of my earlier conversation with Herr von Ribbentrop, Herr von Weizsäcker hesitated a moment and said, "I am going to be quite frank with you. I have been strictly instructed not to discuss with you in any way any subject which relates directly or indirectly to the possibility of peace."

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He then drew his chair towards the center of the room, and motioned to me to do likewise. (I assumed that the omnipresent German Secret Police dictaphones must be installed in the walls rather than in the central lighting fixtures.)

We had for a while a desultory conversation, in the course of which he took occasion to say how highly he regarded Kirk, who, in his opinion, had done wonders in a singularly difficult situation, and I corresponded--to his obvious pleasure--by saying that I thought Thomsen in Washington had shown great tact and discretion in an equally difficult situation.

I then reverted to my conversation with Ribbentrop. I said that if the feeling of the German Government was as decisive as that of Herr von Ribbentrop that ~~was~~ was the only course, I would be needlessly taking up the time of the German authorities by prolonging my stay. I said, however, that while, as Herr von Weizsäcker would be the first to appreciate, my conversations in Rome would be regarded as entirely confidential by me, I, nevertheless, felt entirely able to tell him that my impressions after talking with the Duce were that in the latter's judgment a basis for a just and lasting peace could still be found before it was too late.

Herr von Weizsäcker thought a good three minutes before saying anything. He then leaned towards me and said, "It is of the utmost importance that you say that personally to the Fuehrer."

I waited a moment myself, and then asked: "Let me have your personal advice, for I am now asking an entirely personal and individual question. Do you believe that any suggestions

suggestions for peace conversations proffered by the Duce would have any favorable reception here?"

This time Herr von Weizsäcker waited a good five minutes before answering. His reply was: "What I have already said about the Fuehrer answers a part of your question. But (and he motioned to the Foreign Office in which we were) here the relations between Germany and Italy have narrowed (and I use his exact English word) greatly."

The interpretation I give to this statement is that if the Duce approaches Hitler directly and secretly, it will have decisive influence. If Ribbentrop knows of the approach, he will do his utmost to block it.

During the remainder of our hour's talk, Weizsäcker talked of his regard for Neville Henderson and of his belief that in August war could have been averted by a more intelligent policy by the Poles. As I took leave, the tears came into his eyes as he said he knew I would realize how earnestly he hoped that the mission with which the President had entrusted me might show there still was a way by which an absolute holocaust could be avoided.

BERLIN, March 2, 1940.

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BERLIN, Saturday, March 2, 1940.

At eleven o'clock several Foreign Office officials, headed by Herr von Doernberg, came for me at my hotel to take me to my interview with Hitler at the new Chancery, which had been completed last year within a period of eight months. Workmen had worked night and day in order to have it ready for the Chancellor's New Year's Day reception for the Diplomatic Corps so that they might have a taste of what the new Berlin was going to look like.

Kirk accompanied me at my request. He had never before been permitted to see the Fuehrer except at a distance.

The façade of the new building on the Wilhelmstrasse reminds me of a factory building. My car drove into a rectangular court with very high blank walls. At one end was a flight of broad steps leading into the Chancery. Monumental black nudes flanked the portico to which the steps led. The whole impression of the court was reminiscent of nothing other than a prison courtyard. A company of soldiers was drawn up on each side to give me the Nazi salute as I entered.

At the head of the steps I was greeted by the Reichsminister Meissner, the head of Hitler's Chancery. He spoke to me most cordially in English, as did all the other officials present.

We then formed a procession of some twenty couples headed by Meissner and myself, and with very slow and measured tread first traversed a tremendously long red marble hall, of which the walls and floor are both of marble; then up a flight of excessively slippery red marble steps into a gallery which, also of red marble,

has

has windows on one side and tapestries on the other. The gallery is lined on the tapestry side by an interminable series of sofas, each with a table and four chairs in front of them. From the gallery open off a series of drawing rooms. Finally, we deployed into one of these, and I was requested to sit down until the Chancellor was ready to receive me.

In a very few minutes Meissner came to announce that Hitler was ready to see me, and I went with Kirk into the adjoining room, a very long drawing-room furnished with comfortable upholstered sofas and chairs, and overlooking the garden of Bismarck's old residence, in which Hitler now lives.

Hitler received me near the door. He greeted me very pleasantly, but with great formality. Ribbentrop and Meissner were the only two German officials present at the interview.

Hitler is taller than I had judged from his photographs. He has, in real life, none of the somewhat effeminate appearance of which he has been accused. He looked in excellent physical condition and in good training. His color was good, and while his eyes were tired, they were clear. He was dignified both in speech and movement, and there was not the slightest impression of the comic effect from moustache and hair which one sees in his caricatures. His voice in conversation is low and well modulated. It had only once, during our hour and a half's conversation, the raucous stridency which is heard in his speeches--and it was only at that moment that his features lost their composure and that his eyes lost their decidedly "gemütlich" look. He spoke with clarity and precision, and always in a beautiful German, of which I

could

could follow every word, although Dr. Schmidt, of course, interpreted--and at times inaccurately.

After we were seated, and Hitler placed me next to him, he looked at me to indicate I was to commence the conversation.

I set forth the detailed purposes of my mission as I had already explained them to Ribbentrop. I made particular reference to the confidential nature of my interviews, and to the fact that I had no proposals to offer. In as eloquent terms as I could command, I then emphasized the President's hope that there might still be a way open for a stable, just and lasting peace, not a truce or a precarious breathing spell. I pointed out that if a war of annihilation now broke out, whether it was short or whether it was long, it would definitely preclude for the present the negotiation of a reasonable and just peace because of the human suffering it would create and of the human passions it would arouse, as well as because of the exhaustion of the economic and financial resources which still existed in Europe. From such a war as that, I said, who would be the victors? It seemed clear that all would be the losers. And in that sense not only would the belligerents be the losers, but also the neutrals, of which the United States was the greatest and the most powerful. We as a people now realized fully that such a war must inevitably have the gravest repercussions upon almost every aspect of our national structure.

The President of the United States had, in communications addressed to Chancellor Hitler himself, made it clear that if a just political peace could be found--and in the negotiation of such a peace we could

not

not be directly involved--the United States would play its full part in cooperating towards two fundamental needs of a sane and ordered world--limitation and reduction of armaments and the establishment of a sound international trade relationship. If such bases could still be found, was it not worth every effort to seek the way of peace before the war of devastation commenced, and before the doors to peace were closed? I spoke, I said, only of a just peace, a peace which promised stability and security for the future. Personally, I said, I could not conceive of a lasting and real peace unless it envisaged as an essential component part a united, prosperous and contented German people, a German people satisfied with their own domain and their own security; but at the same time I could conceive of no lasting or real peace unless as an equally important factor Germany no longer was regarded by her neighbors as a threat to their independence or to their security, and unless Germany made it evident that she was, in fact, not striving for constantly increasing objectives--and objectives which implied aggression and a threat to the rights of free peoples.

The Chancellor knew, I said, that I had had the privilege of speaking with the Duce in Rome. That conversation, the Chancellor would appreciate, I must retain in complete confidence, but I felt at liberty to say that I had happily gained the impression from that conversation that the Duce believed the foundations of a just and lasting peace might still be laid. I hoped the Chancellor would find it possible to confirm that impression. I would be most grateful for any views he felt able to express.

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The Chancellor then very quietly and moderately outlined his foreign policy during the past seven years. The outline pursued exactly the lines followed in my conversation of the day before by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. (It is noteworthy that in every conversation I had with every member of the German Government, except Dr. Schacht, exactly the same historical survey prefaced the conversation. It is entirely clear that either the Chancellor or the Foreign Secretary had dictated the course which the conversations to be had with me by the members of the German Government were to follow.)

Hitler, however, emphasized even more strongly than had Herr von Ribbentrop his desire to reach an amicable and lasting understanding with England. He stressed particularly the naval agreement of 1935 as an indication that Germany, under his Government, had no intention of challenging British naval supremacy nor the security of the British Empire. When he came to the account of the negotiations with Poland which had resulted in the invasion of Poland by Germany in September, he turned to me and said, "I have never in my life made a more earnest nor a more sincere appeal than I did to the British Ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, when I sent for him just prior to the break with Poland. He was sitting in the same place where you are now sitting, and I besought him to tell his Government that Germany had no intention of attacking England nor of impairing directly or indirectly British interests, but that Germany could not permit a continued domination by the Western European powers of the smaller States of Eastern Europe, nor the continuation of a state of affairs which resulted in a continuous attack and a continuous threat upon German vital interests." The Chancellor then concluded by saying, "That appeal, like every

every other approach made to England in seven years, was rejected with derision."

Hitler then said that I had referred to the problem of limitation and reduction of armaments. Time and again, he said, he had offered England and the other powers of the world the opportunity for a real and practicable reduction of armaments. He had guaranteed that Germany would maintain her standing army at 200,000 men; then at 300,000 men; he had expressed German willingness to outlaw certain types of munitions and implements of war. Never once, however, had these offers on his part received the slightest attention or, much less, consideration, as a basis of agreement. The Chancellor then said, "The present armament burden is crushing the life out of all peoples; it cannot continue much longer. The national economy of every nation will crash before much further time elapses."

He stated that he believed these were two practicable methods of securing a real disarmament. The first was for the great powers of Europe to agree upon their minimum ratios of military and of naval strength, outlawing all but a minimum of offensive armaments, and upon that basis further to agree that in the event of any threat to their security, or to the peace of Europe, these powers would pool their military and naval resources as a police power. He had formally made this proposal to Great Britain and to France. He had never received the slightest response.

The other alternative was for the powers to agree upon a progressive and gradual reduction in their respective military strength; with the gradual elimination at the same time of certain categories of offensive armament.

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This he believed would take a very long time, and was the less satisfactory of the two methods.

I had also mentioned the problem of a liberal, most-favored-nation international trade relationship as an objective towards which the nations of the world should strive. He felt quite in accord with me, he said, that that was a desirable goal and Germany, under more normal conditions, would gladly cooperate towards that end. He did not, however, believe that unrestricted international trade was the cure for all of the world's economic problems. He said, for example, that while Germany would doubtless profit by taking a considerable portion of America's agricultural surpluses, an industrial country like Germany could not take any considerable portion of industrial products from the United States, nor could the United States take any considerable portion of Germany's industrial exports. It was, consequently, necessary for Germany to intensify her trade relations with countries in Central and Southeastern Europe who desired to take Germany's industrial exports, which they themselves did not produce, in return for raw materials desired by Germany.

At this point I interjected to say that the Chancellor appeared to overlook the fact that while the United States, it was true, was a large industrial producer as well as an exporter of agricultural surpluses, nevertheless, trade between the United States and Germany over a period of many generations had been highly profitable to both sides. The Chancellor, I said, must not forget that Germany produced many forms of industrial products which were produced either more cheaply or in more efficient form than similar products produced in the United States, and that such exports from

Germany

Germany had always been profitably sold by Germany to the United States. The question, I said, was not one of a purely bilateral nature but involved necessarily the problem of profitable triangular trade which had always entered into the picture of Germany's trade relations with the United States. Furthermore for Germany to be able to sell profitably the bulk of her luxury manufactured products she had to find countries where the standard of living was relatively high. Surely I believed the standard of living in the countries of Southeastern Europe was not sufficiently high to make it possible for Germany to find there any profitable market for a very large percentage of her industrial production.

Hitler did not seem to comprehend this problem, and dropped the topic after remarking that a country with a population of 140 individuals to the square kilometer must increase its production if those individuals are to find the where-with-all to survive. I said that it seemed to me that there was no country in the world that would profit more immediately and more greatly than Germany from a restoration of liberal international trade relations, and that through such a restoration the 140 individuals to the square German kilometer of whom he had spoken would obtain an increased standard of living and derive therefrom an immediately greater purchasing power, particularly if their work was dedicated to constructive production, rather than to the sterile manufacture of munitions.

Hitler then said that Germany's aims and objectives were simple and that he would outline them to me; he would classify them as (a) historical, (b) political and (c) economic.

From

From the historical aspect Germany had existed as an empire five hundred years before Columbus had discovered the western world. The German people had every right to demand that their historical position of a thousand years should be restored to them; Germany had no ambition and no aim other than the return by the German people to the territorial position which was historically theirs.

Germany's political aims were coordinate. Germany could not tolerate the existence of a State such as Czechoslovakia which constituted an enclave created by Versailles solely for strategic reasons, and which formed an ever-present menace to the security of the German people; nor could Germany tolerate the separation from Greater Germany of German provinces by corridors, under alien control, and again created solely for strategic reasons. No great power could exist under such conditions. Germany, however, did not desire to dominate non-German peoples, and if such peoples adjacent to German boundaries did not constitute a military or political threat to the German people, Germany had no desire permanently to destroy, nor to prejudice, the independent lives of such peoples.

From the economic standpoint, Germany must claim the right to profit to the fullest extent through trade with the nations close to her in Central and Southeastern Europe. She would no longer permit that the western powers of Europe infringe or impair Germany's preferential situation in this regard.

In brief, the German people intended to maintain the unity which he had now achieved for them; they intended to prevent any State on Germany's eastern frontier from constituting

stituting again a military or strategic threat against German security and, finally, Germany intended to obtain recognition for her economic priority in Eastern and South-eastern Europe.

Germany, further, would insist that the colonies stolen from her at Versailles be returned to her. Germany had not obtained these colonies through military conquest; she had obtained them through purchase or through pacific negotiation; she had never utilized her colonies for military purposes. She now required them in order to obtain for the German people raw materials which could not be produced in Germany, and as a field for German emigration. Such a demand, Hitler felt, was not only reasonable, but just.

At no time during the course of our conversation did Hitler mention the subject of German-American relations, nor did he refer directly or indirectly to German relations with Soviet Russia and with Italy.

The Chancellor then passed to the subject of the war aims of the Allies. He asked me if I had heard or read the speech made in England the night before by Sir John Simon. I told him that I had not. He said that if I had read the speech, I would gain therefrom the same clear understanding that he had gained, namely, that the speech constituted a clear-cut definition of English aims, that is, the total destruction of Germany.

He said, "I am fully aware that the allied powers believe that a distinction can be made between National Socialism and the German people. There was never a greater mistake. The German people today are united as one man, and I have the support of every German. I can see no hope for the establishment of any lasting peace until the will of England and France to destroy Germany is itself destroyed.

I fear that there is no way by which the will to destroy Germany can be itself destroyed, except through a German victory. I believe that German might is such as to ensure the triumph of Germany but, if not, we will all go down together (and here he added the extraordinary phrase) whether that be for better or for worse." He paused a moment and then said textually, rapidly and with impatience, "I did not want this war. It has been forced upon me against my will. It is a waste of my time. My life should have been spent in constructing, and not in destroying."

I said that the Chancellor would, of course, understand that it was the belief of my Government that if some way could be found towards a stable and lasting peace which promised security to all peoples, no nation could have to "go down", let alone all of them. For that reason I earnestly trusted that such a way and such a peace might still be found.

Hitler looked at me, and remained quiet for a moment or two. He then said, "I appreciate your sincerity and that of your Government, and I am grateful for your mission. I can assure you that Germany's aim, whether it must come through war or otherwise, is a just peace." I replied by saying that I would remember the phrase the Chancellor had used. The interview then terminated.

BERLIN, March 3, 1940.

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BERLIN, March 3, 1940.

I talked at some length with the Italian and Belgian Ambassadors in Berlin, who are by far the most experienced members of the local Diplomatic Corps. They are both of them confident that the internal and army opposition to Hitler, which had assumed some proportions in November 1939, has now completely died away.

They told me that both the German army and the German people have by now been thoroughly convinced by propaganda of the German Government that the aims of the Allies are to destroy Germany and the German people, and that recent propaganda of the Allies, and recent speeches by British and French statesmen, had strongly increased this feeling in Germany. Both of the Ambassadors are confident that the Allied Governments grossly underestimate Germany's military strength and the ability of the German people to withstand a protracted war. Both of the Ambassadors are in agreement that a war of devastation will make any discussion of peace utterly impossible, and that the time within which peace terms can be discussed before Germany strikes is very brief indeed.

The Belgian Ambassador assured me that Germany's stores of oil are far greater than is realized by the British and French Governments, and that a large-scale offensive can be undertaken by Germany without bringing the German army to a point where it will suffer any lack of its full requirements.

BERLIN, Sunday, March 3, 1940

BERLIN, Sunday, March 3, 1940.

Immediately after the termination of my interview with Rudolf Hess, I was accompanied by Dr. Schmidt, the official interpreter, to the home of Field Marshal Goering, known as Karinhall, which lies about an hour and a half's motoring distance from Berlin.

The Field Marshal's home has been built in the middle of a national game reserve. After reaching the entrance of the reserve, one drives some ten miles through a thin forest of pine and scattered birch to the Marshal's house, which has been built around a log cabin which he used in earlier years on hunting trips. The building which he has constructed is already immense, and he is now adding a new portion which will make the entire building, when completed, about the size of the new National Art Gallery in Washington. We arrived at the house in a driving snow at twelve o'clock. The Field Marshal, who had just returned to Berlin from a week's visit to the Western Front, received me immediately. At my request, and by the expressed desire of the Marshal himself, there was no one present except Dr. Schmidt and the American Chargé d'Affaires.

Goering looks exactly like his photographs. His thighs and arms are tremendous, and his girth is tremendous. His face gave the impression of being heavily rouged but, since at the end of our three-hour conversation the color had worn off, the effect was probably due to some form of facial massage which he had received prior to seeing me.

He wore a white tunic, on which were plastered various emblems and insignis in brilliants, and over the Iron Cross, which hung from his neck, dangled a monocle on a black cord. His hands are shaped like the digging-paws of a badger. On

his

his right hand he wore an enormous ring set with six huge diamonds; on his left hand he wore an emerald at least an inch square.

His manner was simple, unaffected and exceedingly cordial, and he spoke with far greater frankness and clarity than any other German official whom I met. We dispensed with the services of the interpreter, except for the translation by Dr. Schmidt into German of what I had to say.

The Field Marshal, after I had once more set forth the nature and purposes of my mission, reiterated the history of German foreign policy during the past seven years along exactly the same lines as those followed by Hitler and Ribbentrop.

At one point, however, Goering deviated from the account given by the two others. In discussing the causes of the war against Poland, Goering stated with the utmost precision that at the time Ribbentrop had visited Paris on December 6, 1938, to sign the non-aggression pact between France and Germany, Bonnet, then Foreign Minister, had assured him in the name of the French Government that as a result of the conclusion of the agreements of Munich, France would renounce all interests in Eastern Europe, and specifically that France would refrain from any further influencing of Polish policy. While I had seen, of course, the recently published official declarations of the French and German Governments in regard to this question, I had not before received so precise a statement of the alleged commitments made by Monsieur Bonnet at that time.

I consequently asked the Marshal to repeat this statement, and the Marshal turned to Dr. Schmidt who, it appeared, had been present in Paris at the interview between Monsieur Bonnet and Herr von Ribbentrop when the alleged commitments were made, and Dr. Schmidt related textually what had been

said

said upon that occasion. The exact statement, according to him, which Monsieur Bonnet had made, was that France renounced all political interests in Eastern Europe, and specifically agreed not to influence Poland against the conclusion of an agreement with Germany whereby Danzig would return to Germany, and Germany would receive an extra-territorial corridor across the corridor from East Prussia to Greater Germany.

In his statement of German objectives, the Field Marshal was very clear. Germany had renounced forever any ambitions upon Alsace-Lorraine. Germany not only had no desire to impair the integrity of the British Empire; it believed in her own interest that the British Empire should be maintained intact. Germany must retain as an integral part of the German Reich, Austria, the Sudetenland, and all of those portions of Poland inhabited by German peoples. During the war Germany would continue her military occupation of Bohemia-Moravia and of Poland. If peace came, Germany would grant independence to the Czechs, but upon the understanding that they would remain completely demilitarized, so that never again would the Czechs or the Slovaks constitute a threat to Germany's military security in Central Europe. The Polish people who were really Poles would be installed in a free and independent Poland with access to the sea. Germany must regain her colonies. In addition to this, Germany must possess a recognized position of economic preference in Eastern Europe.

From this point the Field Marshal went on and discussed British policy, and the inability of Hitler to reach any form of understanding with England. The Field Marshal said that he knew Hitler so well that he realized that, as a result of

so many years of failure in this regard, Hitler had now hardened, and that he doubted whether Hitler could bring himself to believe that there was any way of destroying the British will to destroy Germany, except through military victory. He recounted to me his own conversation with Lord Halifax when the latter visited Germany two years ago. He told me he had warned him time and again not to encourage Poland and Czechoslovakia to refuse to reach a reasonable and pacific understanding with Germany. He told him that if England persisted in this course, war was inevitable, and that there was no justifiable need of war.

Both the problem of the German minorities in Czechoslovakia, and the Czechoslovak military threat to the military security of Germany, as well as the problem of Danzig and the Corridor in relation to Poland, could have been settled readily if England and France had not refused to permit such a settlement.

The Field Marshal himself had never believed that there was any possible justification for war, and he had done everything within his power to avert it, but England and France had persisted in bringing it about.

Now, the situation from the military standpoint, was this: Germany's air force was supreme and would remain supreme. Her military strength was far greater in proportion to the strength of the Allies than it had been in 1914. Today Germany had "all the trumps in her hands". In 1914 Germany had been attacked on all fronts. Today, Russia and Italy were friendly, and the Balkans were neutral. The British blockade had already proved ineffective, and every day that passed made it easier for Germany to procure the raw materials which she required from the East and from the South. He could assure me that

the stocks and supplies on hand in Germany were more than sufficient to meet every requirement, and I might be interested to know that the Germans were now even manufacturing butter and other fats in very great quantities from coal. While the Marshal believed that the war would be short, and that a German victory would soon be attained, nevertheless, if the war were prolonged five or ten years, Germany would strengthen and consolidate her position with every month that passed.

I stated that it seemed to me that no matter who would win such a war, the devastation and loss of life, and the destruction of economic resources, would inevitably be so vast as to result in the early destruction of much of what modern civilization had built up. I said that in that regard the American people were directly concerned. I said that we in the United States now realized that the repercussions from such a war would affect us profoundly in many ways, and particularly because of our realization that in a world where war reigned supreme, where the rule of force replaced the rule of reason, security for all peoples, no matter how remote they might be from the scene of hostilities, was inevitably undermined. If a war of devastation broke out, the vital interests of all neutral peoples, no matter how much they were determined to keep out of the war, would correspondingly be affected.

The Field Marshal here interrupted to say that he did not see how the American people could feel that their vital interests were affected through war in Europe. He said, "It is needless for me to say to you that Germany has no ambitions of any kind other than those I have indicated to you, and least of all any ambitions which could affect the Western Hemisphere."

I replied that the Field Marshal must remember that while the American people today were overwhelmingly determined not to be drawn into the war, and that it was the consistent policy of the Government of the United States to keep the American people from being drawn into war, nevertheless, he would also remember that in 1916 President Wilson had been re-elected on a platform which amounted to "he has kept us out of war"; the Republican candidate, Mr. Hughes, set forth in his platform that he, if elected, would keep the American people out of war; and yet not six months after the election in November 1916, the American people overwhelmingly supported our entrance into the war. I said it must never be forgotten that the American people are quick to act when they believe that their vital interests are at stake.

I discussed at some length with the Field Marshal the conversations which my Government had recently undertaken with the neutral powers in order to ascertain whether it was possible to find an agreement in principle upon the problems of the limitation and reduction of armaments and of a sound international trade policy. I said to the Field Marshal that I had brought with me a brief memorandum setting forth the views of my Government on the latter subject. The memorandum was read to him. The Field Marshal immediately stated that he was entirely in accord with every word contained in the memorandum, and that the German Government, at the time of any peace negotiations, would wholeheartedly cooperate in restoring to the countries of the world such a policy as that indicated. He stated that there was no country on earth that would stand to gain more than Germany by the adoption of such an international trade policy. He said that

that at the first appropriate opportunity he himself, in a public speech, would indicate Germany's intention to cooperate towards that end.

Insofar as the question of the limitation and reduction of armaments is concerned, Goering made to me very much the same statement as that made to me by Hitler the day before. He said that the armament race was ruining the economy of the entire world, and that no people could stand the strain much longer. He said that time and time again the German Government had offered in all sincerity to participate in any reasonable plan for disarmament, and time and time again her offers had been rejected. If peace came, Germany would enter into any practical plan which would make a real reduction of armaments possible.

Goering reverted to the British war objectives. He said that he was completely convinced that the British and French Governments were determined to destroy the German Régime, to subjugate the German people, and to split Germany into small units under military control. He said, "The English say that that is the way to get a lasting peace, because early in the 19th century, when Germany was a collection of small independent states, with an infinity of customs barriers, the Germans were only a race of musicians and poets. But they have never made a greater mistake. If they succeeded today in carrying out that plan, they would find, not a race of musicians and poets, but a horde of Bolsheviks and Communists."

At the end of our interview the Field Marshal said to me very simply, but with a great deal of feeling, "My Government is grateful to your Government for your mission. I fear that when you visit Paris and London you will realize that

that there is no hope for peace. You will there learn what I now know, and that is that the British and French Governments are determined to destroy Germany, and that no peace, except on that basis, will be considered by them. If there is any way of averting the war which I believe is inevitable, your Government will have accomplished the greatest thing which human beings could desire. From the bottom of my heart I wish you success."

Before I left Karinhall to return to Berlin, the Field Marshal escorted me through all the miles of rooms in the first floor of his house.

I have never seen so incredibly ugly a building. The walls are lined with paintings, some of them superb examples by old Italian and German masters, placed side by side with daubs by modern German painters. Many of the halls are filled with glass cases, in which are placed gold gifts that have been presented to the Field Marshal during recent years. Goering told me that he personally had arranged the placing of every object in the house.

BERLIN, Sunday, March 3, 1940.

BERLIN, Sunday, March 3, 1940.

At ten o'clock, accompanied by officials of the German Foreign Office and by Dr. Schmidt, the official interpreter, I called upon Rudolf Hess, the Deputy to Hitler as head of the Nazi Party organization.

Hess received me in his offices in the party headquarters built in the modern German style, the walls being completely bare of molding or decoration of any kind.

Herr Hess bears the unmistakable appearance of being devoid of all but a very low order of intelligence. His forehead is low and narrow, and his deep-set eyes are very close together. He is noted for his dog-like devotion to Hitler. During our conversation he reverted again and again to the years when he was imprisoned with Hitler and of their service together in the Great War.

At the outset of our conversation, I outlined to him the nature of my mission and said that I would be glad to receive any views that he cared to express to me.

Herr Hess took out of his pocket a typewritten memorandum, in which were noted the points he had been obviously told to make in his talk with me. His exposition followed precisely the lines set forth by Ribbentrop in his talk with me, and there was no deviation from that outline other than a paragraph or two which related to Nazi Party organization. This was brought up in connection with Hess's statement to me that the German people were convinced that the war aims of the Allies were solely the destruction of Germany and of the German people, and that the German people stood as one man behind Hitler. Hess said that as active Head of the Nazi Party he was in a

better

better position than anyone else to know what the real feeling of the German people was, since every district leader and every local leader under his jurisdiction was in turn in touch with the unit leaders, who were in hourly contact with the German masses, and that he could assure me that never before in the history of the Nazi Party had the German people themselves been more completely identified with their Fuehrer than at the present moment.

There is nothing to be gained from any detailed account of this conversation, which lasted about one hour. Hess was quite as vehement as Ribbentrop, and in his presentation of German objectives infinitely less temperate than Hitler himself. He closed the door completely to the possibility of any negotiated peace and stated flatly that in his judgment, as head of the Nazi Party, there was only one possibility for Germany to achieve a lasting peace, and that was through a German military victory.

It was so obvious that Hess was merely repeating what he had been told to say to me, and that he had neither himself reasoned about the problems at all nor thought anything out for himself, that I made no attempt to set forth any views of my own. At the conclusion of our interview I merely stated that I regretted to learn his opinion, that there now existed no hope of a lasting peace save through the force of arms.

BERLIN, March 3, 1940.

BERLIN, March 3, 1940.

I had an interview with Dr. Schacht at the private house of Mr. Kirk upon my return to Berlin from my interview with Field Marshal Goering.

Dr. Schacht told me that he was grateful for my having requested the Foreign Office to arrange this interview with him, since, if I had not taken the step in that way, it would have been impossible for him to see me. He had taken the precaution, he said, to call the day before upon Hitler, whom he had not seen for many months, to ask whether he had Hitler's permission to talk with me. He said that Hitler had given him permission, but with the understanding that Dr. Schacht was to return to see Hitler the day following my departure, in order to relate to him the topics discussed in our conversation.

Dr. Schacht said: "I cannot write a letter, I cannot have a conversation, I cannot telephone, I cannot move, without its being known."

Then, leaning over and talking in a whisper, he said, "If what I am going to tell you now is known, I will be dead within a week." He gave me to understand that a movement was under way, headed by leading generals, to supplant the Hitler régime. He said that the one obstacle which stood in the path of the accomplishment of this objective was the lack of assurance on the part of these generals that, if such a movement took place, the Allies would give positive guarantees to Germany that Germany would be permitted to regain her rightful place in the world, and that Germany would not be treated as she had  
been

been in 1918. If such a guarantee as this could be obtained, he said, the movement would be pushed to a successful conclusion.

Dr. Schacht said that he was unable to mention any names and that he felt sure I would understand the reasons therefor. He said that he had been wanting to leave Germany, in order thus more readily to further this conspiracy, and that he was going to try to persuade Hitler, in his next conversation with him, to send him as Financial Adviser to the Embassy in Washington, or to permit him at least to go to Rome for the purpose of giving a series of lectures at the Royal Academy of Italy. He asked me if I could help him to secure an invitation from the Royal Academy in Rome for such a series of lectures.

I said that I feared it would be very difficult for me to intervene in such a delicate matter as this, but that it seemed to me that if he could persuade Hitler to let him go as Financial Adviser to the Embassy in Washington, he would not have to consider the trip to Rome of which he spoke.

Dr. Schacht said that another possibility was for him to be invited by some leading American university to give a series of lectures in the United States.

He wanted to know whether it would be possible for him to maintain some form of contact with me after my departure from Berlin. I told him that I would be glad to receive any message that he might care to send to me, and that if he would communicate such messages as he might have in mind orally to Mr. Heath, Secretary of the American Embassy, the latter would see that they were conveyed

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to me safely. Dr. Schacht said that every cable sent by the American Embassy in Berlin was immediately read by the German Foreign Office. I said that I was fully aware of that fact, and that we had various ways in which confidential messages could be transmitted to me from Berlin without their having to go by cable.

I asked Dr. Schacht whether he believed such a movement as that to which he had referred could successfully take place if an offensive were undertaken either by Germany or by the Allies. His reply was that if an offensive were undertaken, it would make it much more difficult, but that he believed the individuals sponsoring the movement were in such a position as to prevent the offensive from being undertaken by Germany, and that they would, in any event, be able to delay it for a considerable period.

Dr. Schacht said it would take a few months perhaps, even if no offensive took place, before the conspirators would be ready to take action.

Dr. Schacht referred to Hitler as the "greatest liar of all time", and as a genius, but an amoral, a criminal, genius. He said with much satisfaction that he himself was the only man who had ever dared tell him the truth.

Dr. Schacht further said that the atrocities being committed in Poland were so far worse than what was imagined, as to beggar description. People in Germany were only now beginning to know about them, and the reaction was intense.

At the end of our talk Dr. Schacht turned to me and  
asked

asked very earnestly, "What do you think of me? Do you think I'm a 'terrible' person for working against my Government, when I'm a Minister in it?" I limited myself to replying that his reputation as a great financial and economic expert was world-wide, and that I could of course not undertake to question any course which he might determine to lay down for himself.

PARIS, March 7, 1940.

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PARIS, March 7, 1940.

As soon as I left the Elysée Palace I proceeded immediately to the Ministry of National Defense, where I was received at once by Prime Minister Daladier. My conversation with M. Daladier lasted just short of two hours and was exceedingly frank and entirely informal.

The Prime Minister first reminded me of a conversation I had had with him in the critical days of September 1938, and of all of the events which had taken place since that time.

M. Daladier desired me to express to the President the undying gratitude of himself personally, and of the French people, for the unfailingly sympathetic and understanding attitude taken by the President of the United States, and of their tremendous appreciation of the leadership displayed by the President which had resulted in the revision of the neutrality legislation of the United States. More than that, M. Daladier wanted me to say to the President that the repeated efforts of the President to prevent the outbreak of war, and to bring about that kind of a just settlement of European controversies which would make possible a just and permanent peace, involving security for all the nations of Europe, had, in the opinion of the French Government, been of the utmost value in bringing to the minds of men and women in Europe the moral issues involved.

I made it very clear to M. Daladier that my Government had at this juncture no proposals to proffer, much less any commitments to offer, but that the President

had

had sent me to Europe in order to ascertain whether there was still any hope that a basis for the negotiation of a peace of the right kind could be found.

I said that in the few days I had been in Europe I had reached the conclusion that if an offensive were undertaken this Spring, and if a so-called "real war" broke out, there would not be the slightest possibility for some time to come of any peace through negotiation. I said I believed that the kind of war which would be waged would be such as not only to result in the destruction of the material resources of the nations involved, but also to result in the unloosing of human passions to such a degree as to bring with it a breakdown of most of the spiritual, social, and economic factors in the fabric of our modern civilization. It was clear to the Prime Minister, I said, that the Government of the United States realized that such a state of affairs as that which I had mentioned would inevitably have most intimate repercussions upon the social, political, financial and economic life of all of the neutral Powers, and particularly of the United States.

I said that I would be particularly grateful for the views which M. Daladier might express to me as to the possibilities for the negotiation now of a just and lasting peace, and that the views which he would give me would be entirely confidential and solely for communication to the President and Secretary Hull.

I said that he would recognize that for this very reason I was not in a position to comment upon, or to disclose, any of the views which had been communicated

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to me in Rome or in Berlin, but that I felt sure that I was violating no confidence when I said to him that I gained the very definite impression from my conversations with the Duce that the latter believed that there was still time for the establishment of such a peace, and that the Duce himself was disposed to do what he could to further that objective.

We then spoke for some moments upon the subject of Italian policy and the history of Franco-Italian relations since the Sanctions controversy of 1935. M. Daladier expressed the very positive belief that both British and French policy at that time had been unrealistic and in the highest degree unwise.

He said that in 1935 French policy towards Italy had been neither one thing nor the other. It had neither prevented the Italian Government from obtaining the raw materials it required in order to carry on successfully its war in Abyssinia, nor had it made possible the continuation of really friendly relations with Italy. Publicly France had said to Mussolini that Sanctions would be imposed for high moral reasons; privately France had said to Mussolini: "All of this is just for public consumption, and we will really let you get the oil and other supplies that you need." The result naturally had been to throw Italy into the arms of Germany, and M. Daladier expressed the very positive conviction that the mistake made by Great Britain and France in 1935 had been the direct cause of Mussolini's supporting the occupation by Hitler of the Rhineland, and acquiescing in the seizure of Austria. If from 1935 to 1938 the French and British had

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had reached a realistic understanding with Mussolini, the calamities of the moment would in all likelihood have been prevented.

M. Daladier stated that he was entirely willing to concede to Mussolini the port of Djibouti, the French railroad in Abyssinia, and fair representation in the Suez Canal. He said that he had no objection whatever towards granting Italy the rights for her nationals in Tunisia which she had demanded, but that it was his own observation, after his recent visit to Tunis, that the 100,000 Italians living there were strongly anti-Fascist and not in the least desirous of obtaining the special rights demanded by the Italian Government.

On none of these points, he said, would there be the slightest difficulty with France; the real difficulty he thought was an adjustment between Italy and Great Britain. Mussolini was constantly complaining that Italy was "the prisoner of the Mediterranean", and that no Great Power could continue to agree to having British police at Gibraltar blocking one end of the Mediterranean, and the British and the French blocking her at Suez at the other end, and that furthermore the British fortifications at Malta and the French fortifications at Tunis constituted an ever-present threat to Italian security. M. Daladier trusted that the British would take a reasonable point of view with regard to these problems, although he could not concede that the Italian contention was in reality justified. He said that certainly the British fortification of Gibraltar and Malta was of no real danger to Italian security under modern conditions of warfare, and that he

had

had the belief in the back of his own mind that Mussolini's ultimate objectives were territorial acquisitions by Italy in Northern Africa, primarily in Tunis at the expense of France, and that the limited objectives now stated by Italy were only a part of the whole picture.

He said that a year and a half ago he had been fully prepared to reach an immediate settlement with Italy, but that just at that juncture the Italian people had been deliberately stirred up to make public demands for Corsica, Nice, et cetera, in addition to the demands which France was prepared to concede, and that under those conditions no French Government could have survived politically if it had attempted to reach an agreement with Italy. During recent months he said the attitude of the Italian Government had been reasonable and moderate. The French economic arrangement with Italy was in general working out well, and none of the economic difficulties which had arisen between the British and Italians had so far arisen in the case of France and Italy.

I took occasion at this point to say that in all of my conversations in Rome I had never heard one word said by the Italian authorities which was in the slightest degree in the nature of any recrimination against France, and that my own observation had led me to the conclusion that whatever antagonism to France might have existed last year, there was no overt sign of such antagonism at the present moment.

I stated that it seemed to me that the Italian Government was now in a position where from the standpoint of the possibility of peace it occupied a singularly  
strategic

strategic place. I had gained the impression that the Italian Government believed that if a "real war" broke out its own position would become increasingly precarious with every week that passed. Its economic situation would become prejudiced because of the greatly increased difficulties under such conditions of obtaining the raw materials, such as coal, which were indispensable to its national economy. The military pressure which would undoubtedly be brought to bear upon Italy from one side or the other, or from both, would result in serious disquiet on the part of the Italian people, and it was therefore my judgment that Italy desired to do what she could to further peace, although of course always taking it for granted that in the negotiation of any agreement which might result in peace Italy would be out to get for herself everything that could be obtained.

M. Daladier then went on to a discussion of French peace objectives. He said that obviously neither France nor England could agree, from the political standpoint, to any peace which did not provide for the restoration of an independent Poland and for the independence of the Czech people. He said that in his own judgment there was every reason why the really German peoples of Central Europe should live under German rule, provided they so desired. The City of Danzig was clearly a German city, and it was equally obvious that the Germans of the Sudetenland or of Western Poland should be afforded the opportunity of uniting with the Reich if they so desired. That, he said, had been his point of view at the time of the Munich Agreement.

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But he emphasized that he did not believe at the time of Munich, and he did not believe now, that this one factor--the unity of the German peoples of Central Europe--was what the German people really desired, much less what their present leaders desired. He repeated to me how Hitler had said personally to him at Munich that the Czechs were an inferior people, and that Germany would never consent to defile the purity of the German race by incorporating Bohemia and Moravia in Greater Germany, and now of course Hitler had proved that the assurances given in that sense had been lies, knowingly uttered. He believed that the German Government had been following very intelligently a policy of ultimate domination of Europe and of the Near East. He was by no means sure that the ultimate ambitions did not go further. In any event, he said, the point had been reached where France could no longer submit to the kind of experience to which the present German regime was forcing Europe to submit, and France consequently must fight until she had gained actual security for herself.

He knew thoroughly well that the assurances continually uttered by Hitler, that he had forever renounced any aspirations upon Alsace-Lorraine, were as untruthful as the assurances he had earlier given with regard to Czechoslovakia, since he had absolute evidence that German propaganda agents long before the outbreak of war had been attempting to create the same kind of emotional stir among the German-speaking peoples in Alsace as that which had been created by German agents in 1938 in the Sudetenland. He said that he even had documents showing  
that

that these German agents were instructed to follow exactly the same lines as those followed by Henlein in the Sudetenland.

At this stage I interrupted to ask, with reference to the Prime Minister's statement that he believed that the German peoples of Central Europe had a right to unite, what his view might be with regard to the attitude of the Austrian people, so far as continued amalgamation with the German Reich was concerned. I told him that I had been frequently told that the majority of the Austrian people preferred continued amalgamation with the Reich to the kind of national semi-starvation which they had undergone during the twenty years following 1919.

M. Daladier replied that his own judgment was that if a fair plebiscite was held in Austria an overwhelming majority would indicate their desire to separate from the Reich, and possibly to amalgamate with some other country, such as Hungary, but that, from the standpoint of French policy, with regard to any possible peace basis, France would agree to a continued domination by Germany of Austria, if a really impartial plebiscite showed that the Austrian people so desired.

The Prime Minister made it very clear to me that he did not believe that political or territorial adjustment would create any insuperable difficulty in reaching peace. He made it equally clear that whatever he might say in public, he would not refuse to deal with the present German regime, but always upon one fundamental and essential basis, namely that France should thereby obtain

actual

actual practical, physical security, which would make it impossible for her again to find herself involved in war with Germany. I asked him what his views might be with regard to the machinery that might be created--machinery of an international character--that could afford such actual physical security.

M. Daladier said that the real problem was that the military forces of the opposing Powers were in some ways equivalent. Clearly disarmament was the only solution; and yet how could any actual step towards disarmament be undertaken by France or by England unless they were confident that Germany and Italy were in reality disarming at the same time? How could France have any confidence in any disarmament which Germany might allege she was undertaking, in view of the experience France had had during the post-War years, and especially during the latter portion of that period? (He referred to the period before Germany publicly announced that she was rearming.) The French military mission in Germany under General Nollet had been perfectly well aware that every time stocks of German armaments were destroyed, equivalent or greater stocks were being constructed secretly in other parts of Germany. He said it would seem as if only the neutral Powers could insure disarmament in Europe by means of the assumption by them of the responsibility for seeing that disarmament was actually undertaken, and this in the last analysis meant the possibility of the use of force by the neutral Powers. None of the European neutral Powers had any military strength whatever, and there was clearly only one neutral Power which had the military strength

to

to assume such responsibility, and that was the United States.

I said that as he knew this was a field for conjecture outside of the strict limitations of my mission, but that I felt I would be remiss if I did not give him immediately my own personal feeling on this point, and that I believed I was entirely accurate in expressing the views of my own Government, and of the American people, when I said that the United States would not assume any responsibility of this character which implied as a potential obligation the utilization of American military strength in preserving the peace of Europe. I said that that determination on the part of the American people had been made clear time and again in the course of the history of American policy in the last twenty years.

On the other hand, I said, I thought that it was conceivable that if some practical plan for the gradual, progressive, reduction of armaments in Europe was agreed upon by the European Powers, and they desired to create commissions composed in part of neutral representatives in order to insure the faithful compliance with the reduction of armament agreements which might be reached, the Government of the United States in its desire to further a real and lasting peace in Europe, and in the world, might agree to the utilization of American citizens in such a capacity, but always with the clear understanding that the service of American citizens in such capacity did not involve in any sense an obligation on the part of the United States to see that the parties to such an agreement lived up to their obligations.

M. Daladier

M. Daladier said that he thought aviation was the crux of the problem. He said that he thought it was entirely possible, as he himself had indicated in Geneva on earlier occasions, for an aviation force composed of units from the various European Powers to be set up, under some form of international authority, as a police power in Europe to insure the maintenance of peace, and the compliance by the various Powers with the commitments into which they might enter. He said he was confident that such a police force, if properly administered, would be sufficient to prevent any nation in Europe from undertaking aggressive action. He said that he could not believe that, with modern aviation being what it was, the threat which the utilization of such a police force would involve would not be sufficient to have prevented those European Powers which had pursued a policy of aggression in recent years from carrying out such acts of aggression, had such a police force existed.

He said that he further believed that a very clear distinction could be made, as President Roosevelt had indicated, between offensive and defensive categories in armaments. He said that he believed that security could be obtained by the destruction of all offensive types of armaments and the retention by the individual nations of only those categories of armaments which were clearly defensive in nature.

We discussed the nature of the authority which might be set up under international agreement and, while it did not seem to me that he had reached any precise or detailed views with regard thereto, he made it very clear to me

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that his mind was open on the subject and that if practical machinery of this kind could be worked out he would favor it as the basis for French security in the future. Our conversation on this subject was premised upon the continuing mobilization of the Powers now in conflict until the first practical steps had been taken to carry out such a disarmament scheme, with progressive demobilization over a considerable period of time.

The Prime Minister then went back to his experiences at Munich and to a discussion of the personality of Hitler. He said that during the Munich meetings Hitler had been intolerant, and intolerable, for long periods during the discussions, and then would suddenly change completely and become moderate and conciliatory in his manner. He spoke with real appreciation of the efforts of Mussolini at that time, and of the fact that it had been Mussolini time and again during the Munich conferences who had brought Hitler back to a more reasonable point of view. He spoke with contempt of Ribbentrop, and with great antipathy, but of a different kind, for Goering, although he expressed the belief that the substitution of Hitler by Goering would not in any real sense change the present character of the regime in Germany.

The Prime Minister had asked me to dine with him at the Quai d'Orsay at 8:30, with three or four members of the Government, and I therefore left him at this point in our conversation since the hour for dinner had nearly arrived.

Before dinner I made a brief call of courtesy on

M. Champetier

M. Champetier de Ribes, the Under Secretary of Foreign Relations, who said nothing of interest beyond expressing his gratification that the President had designated a special representative to the Vatican, and beyond emphasizing his own belief that this recognition by the President of the United States of the moral force of the Church was of real practical value in the present world situation.

I also spent a quarter of an hour in conversation with M. Alexis Léger, the Secretary General of the French Foreign Office. M. Léger, whose mind is typical of that kind of French mentality which is logical, and mathematically precise, and very clear, but which makes no allowances for the imponderables of human nature such as human emotion, devoted himself to a discussion of French relations with Italy. To M. Léger the fault throughout had been on the side of the Italians, and French policy had been correct from beginning to end. It was very clear that on this question he differed entirely from M. Daladier, and I gained the impression that the latter had complained of the results of the policy toward Italy which the French Foreign Office had been carrying on. M. Léger also informed me that the French Government had ready at Brest, waiting to sail, a number of French vessels sufficient to transport 50,000 French troops to Finland by way of Norway and Sweden, but that up to the present moment the French Government had been unable to persuade the Government of Finland to request officially the sending of this military assistance by France. M. Léger told me that the Government of Sweden had informed the French Government, and also the Government of Finland, that

that if these troops were sent over Swedish territory the Swedes would destroy the railroad lines so as to make it impossible for the troops to reach Finland, and that it had been this attitude on the part of Sweden, in addition to the fear on the part of Finland of German intervention on the side of Russia, which had caused the unwillingness of Finland to ask for such assistance.

The Prime Minister had me to dinner with MM. Chautemps, Bonnet, Léger, Champetier de Ribes, and Coulondre. The conversation both at dinner and after dinner was of no particular significance except for the graphic details given by the Prime Minister of his expedition to Munich in September 1938 and except for the discussion of Franco-Italian relations. The Prime Minister made it very clear, and with the open assent of MM. Chautemps and Bonnet, that if a general peace settlement could be reached France would agree to sell the Abyssinian railroad to Italy, concede the Port of Djibouti to Italy, give Italy fair proportionate representation on the Board of the Suez Canal, and to give Italy the rights requested with regard to Italians resident in Tunis. My conversation with the Prime Minister in the afternoon had evidently brought relations with Italy to the forefront of his mind, since he instructed Léger in my presence and in the most categorical manner to see to it that every possible consideration was given from now on to the sensibilities of both Mussolini and Ciano, quite apart from the taking of a conciliatory attitude with regard to any negotiations that might be in progress, or which might be later undertaken, between the two Governments.

PARIS, March 7, 1940.

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3-7  
1940

PARIS, March 7, 1940.

I was received by President Lebrun at the Elysée Palace at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of March 7. The American Chargé d'Affaires accompanied me, as he did to all my interviews with the members of the French Government at my particular request.

President Lebrun greeted me with the utmost cordiality, and I outlined to him the nature of my mission and emphasized the confidential character of any views he might care to give me.

The President read to me the text of the message which he had addressed in November to the Queen of the Netherlands and the King of the Belgians indicating the nature of the peace which the French Government regarded as being indispensable. He emphasized the words "a durable and just peace" and the insistence of France that no peace could be made unless France obtained thereby complete guarantees of security for the future.

I said to the President that the President of the United States had especially charged me to make it clear that the Government of the United States was not interested in the possibility of any temporary or precarious peace, but solely in the possibility which might today exist of finding the basis for a peace based on justice and security. I said that in this regard the views of my Government corresponded very exactly to the views already enunciated by the French Government, although I desired to make it clear that at this stage my Government had no suggestions or proposals to offer.

President

President Lebrun then launched into an historic dissertation covering the sixty-nine years of his life. He spoke of his having been born in a French province adjacent to the German border, and of his earliest recollections being memories of German officers and troops occupying that portion of France. The gist of the argument was the argument which has been so frequently set forth, and which is today being so frequently set forth--and with so much reason--by French statesmen, namely that the oldest generation of Frenchmen living today has seen three wars involving France, brought about as the result of German policy, and that it is the vital need of France to assure herself that at least one generation of Frenchmen can be born to live a normal span of life, and die, without having seen their country involved in war as the result of German aggression.

There was nothing in the slightest degree significant in any of the details mentioned by the President, and his memory is evidently failing rapidly, because it seemed to be impossible for him to remember with any accuracy names or dates, or even facts.

At the end of our interview he asked me to convey his most friendly personal greetings to the President; he spoke of the deep appreciation of his wife for the courtesies shown her when she visited the United States some years ago, and of his great regret that he himself would be unable to visit the United States this coming summer as he had planned. He said that he had done his utmost to prevent his own re-election to the Presidency, but that, in view of the critical situation in Europe,

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he had been forced to accede to the insistent demand of the French political leaders for his re-election. He then took me upon a tour of the Elysée Palace--being absolutely unable to remember the name of the subjects of any of the portraits which he pointed out to me--and we then spent some ten minutes before the photographers.

PARIS  
3-8  
1940

PARIS, March 8, 1940.

PARIS, March 8, 1940.

I first visited Senator Jeanneney, the President of the Senate. The Senator received me in his official residence overlooking the Luxembourg Gardens. He has now reached the age of seventy-seven, and he prefaced our conversation by calling my attention to the fact that the bust of Clemenceau was on the chest of drawers above his head. He said to me that Clemenceau had been the dominating influence in his life.

The Senator told me that he, like President Lebrun, came from a French province adjacent to Germany, and that his earliest recollections had to do with the German military occupation of the village where he was born. He reminded me that since that time as a result of German policy France had been plunged into two new wars, and he assured me that the sentiment of the French Senate was unanimous in favoring a continuation of the present war until Germany was defeated, and until Germany had been taught such a lesson as to make it impossible for the German people ever again to bring about a European conflagration.

It seemed to me, as I listened to the Senator, that I was hearing the voice of Clemenceau himself: "There is only one way in which to deal with a mad dog. Either kill him, or chain him with steel chains which cannot be broken."

I next visited M. Herriot, President of the Chamber of Deputies. M. Herriot spoke with the deepest admiration for the President, and with much appreciation of his visit

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to Washington in 1933.

He then delivered to me an address which lasted well over an hour, and which was beautifully phrased and highly emotional in character. The gist of the address was that his entire life, during the past twenty years, had been devoted to the attempt to lay the foundations for a real and lasting friendship and understanding between the German and French peoples; that time and again his efforts had failed; that time and again German statesmen like Stresemann and Marx had lied to him, and had deceived him, and that he had reached the positive conviction that the German people were themselves the cause of the present situation, and not their leaders alone. He told me that when he had visited London in 1924 in order to meet the members of the German Government who were then visiting England upon the invitation of Ramsay MacDonald, then Prime Minister, Stresemann in a secret meeting with Herriot had done his utmost to persuade the latter to enter into an alliance with Germany to the exclusion of England. Herriot said that he had rejected the proposal in no uncertain terms.

Insofar as the present situation was concerned, M. Herriot saw no solution other than a military victory by France. He told me that the result of a "real war" would be devastating, that French economy would be in ruins for many decades to come, and that he believed that as a result of the war the social and economic structure of Europe would be completely changed. He was utterly pessimistic, completely without hope, and without an iota of any constructive suggestion or proposal with regard to the possibility of any lasting peace at this time.

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In the afternoon I had separate interviews of approximately two hours each with MM. Chautemps and Bonnet. In my conversation with the former, M. Chautemps indicated an entirely receptive attitude towards the possibility of the negotiation of a peace with the present Government of Germany, provided that the political terms of such a peace agreement included the reconstitution of Poland, the independence of Bohemia and Moravia, and the independence of Austria. He insisted that the Austrian people desired their liberty and independence, and that no plebiscite was either necessary or expedient. With regard to the possibility of obtaining security for France through an international agreement for the destruction of offensive armaments, and for the maintenance of an international police power, he said that his mind was entirely open and that if some practicable plan could be devised which would give real security to France he, personally, would strongly recommend the entrance upon negotiations of that character rather than a continuation of the war.

We talked at some length upon the economic features of a lasting peace, and he assured me that his own belief was that in the interests of France herself France should adopt the liberal policy supported by the United States.

In my conversation with M. Bonnet, the latter gave me a detailed account of the history of negotiations between Germany and France since September 1938. There was nothing of any importance in his relation beyond an account of correspondence and conversations already published in the French Yellow Book. He insisted upon it that when Ribbentrop came to Paris early in December of 1938,

1938, and the question of French policy in Eastern Europe had come up for ventilation, he had never directly or indirectly given Germany any assurances that France would wash her hands with regard to the fate of Poland [as Goering in Berlin had assured me had been the case]. M. Bonnet said that the only statement he had made to Ribbentrop in that connection had been that the French Government signed the Pact of Non-aggression with Germany with the sole reservation that the Non-aggression Pact should not be construed as impairing France's obligations under her two then-existing treaties of alliance, namely those with Soviet Russia and with Poland. M. Bonnet told me that Ribbentrop had stated in reply to the above declaration of the French Minister that the French reservation in regard to Poland could in no sense be regarded as prejudicial to Germany by the German Government, inasmuch as Germany herself then had a pact of non-aggression with Poland, and inasmuch as the German Government believed that relations between Germany and Poland would be increasingly friendly during the next four or five years. M. Bonnet said that Ribbentrop with regard to this question had lied brazenly and directly, and that in the official documents covering that period which had already been made public he had attempted to set forth the facts as they really were.

M. Bonnet spoke at some length of the situation with regard to the French Labor Unions, and assured me that Labor in France was cooperating solidly with the Government, and that in that sense the situation was far more satisfactory in France than had been the situation in 1914-18.

PARIS, March 9, 1940.

PARIS  
3-9  
1940

PARIS, March 9, 1940.

I had an hour's interview with M. Paul Reynaud, the French Secretary of the Treasury, and afterwards had lunch with him alone in his office in the Louvre, which occupies the former bedroom of the Prince Imperial, and which overlooks the Tuilleries Gardens and the Champs Elysées.

In my judgment M. Paul Reynaud has a greater grasp of Foreign Relations, and has a keener mind, than any other member of the present French Government.

I first touched upon economic questions, and emphasized my hope that the French monopoly would continue its purchases of American tobacco, and that the French Government would continue to buy as many agricultural supplies as might be possible in the United States.

M. Reynaud told me bluntly that the situation of the French Government was fast reaching the point where it would have to utilize all of the foreign exchange it obtained in the purchase of armament constructed in the United States, and that consequently purchases of non-essentials like tobacco, et cetera, could not be undertaken on any considerable scale by the French authorities. He said that he fully realized the international significance of this decision, and the distress which would be occasioned our American producers, but that in a time of grave crisis such as this he saw no other way out of the difficulty.

I said to the Minister that as he undoubtedly knew my Government had been in contact with other neutral Governments during recent weeks, with the hope that these  
diplomatic

diplomatic interchanges might result on the part of the neutrals in a crystallization and coincidence of views with regard to the after-war problems of the limitation and reduction of armaments, and the creation of a liberal international economic system. I said to the Minister that I had brought with me in memorandum form the outline of the views of my Government with regard to the latter problem, and that I would very gladly have him read this memorandum. The Minister read it, and expressed emphatic acquiescence in all of its details. I then said to the Minister that if the principles so laid down were supported by the French Government, I believed it would be of the utmost importance that the policy of the French Government in such regard, insofar as the post-war period is concerned, be made known to the public. He immediately adopted the suggestion, said he would dictate a few sentences expressing the adherence of the French Government to the principles so outlined, and said that he would issue a communiqué to the Press in those terms before the end of the day. This he subsequently did.

During our conversation in his office, and at lunch, the Minister discussed in an exceedingly temperate, moderate and constructive fashion the present situation, the problems created by the actions of Germany in the past three or four years, and the post-war settlements which would arise after the war.

He said that he was rightly regarded as the "hardest" man in the French Government with regard to French relations with Germany. He added that in September 1938, as

I undoubtedly remembered from a conversation I had had with him at that time, he had believed that France should declare war upon Germany in order to save Czechoslovakia, and that he was convinced that if France had done so at that time, England would have been forced into the war on the side of France. Munich had been a cardinal error in French and British policy.

But that was past history. His well-known sentiments on this subject, and on the general subject of Franco-German relations, made it easier for him to follow an objective policy now.

He stated to me quite plainly that he believed the political and territorial issues now at stake could be solved without any considerable difficulty through negotiations between the Allies and Germany. He stated that the real problem was the problem of how France could obtain security and insure herself against a repetition of German aggression. He said that if a practical scheme could be devised, upon the basis of an international air force as a police power, and the abolition of all categories of offensive armament, he would support such a negotiation, believing it to be infinitely more in the interests of the French people than the continuation of the present war, with the probable economic and social havoc and ruin which would result, quite apart from the inevitable losses in life and property.

M. Paul Reynaud spoke with deep appreciation of the cooperation shown the French Treasury by the American Treasury Department. He especially asked that I convey his gratitude to Secretary Morgenthau.

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As I was leaving, M. Reynaud said that he knew that I had arranged to see M. Daladier again on Thursday, March 14, and that he hoped that I would ask M. Daladier to let him, M. Reynaud, be present at this interview. To this request I made no comment, inasmuch as I was familiar with the strained relations between M. Daladier and M. Reynaud, and because I believed that M. Daladier would probably resent any such suggestion on my part.

PARIS, March 9, 1940.

PARIS  
3-9  
1940

Paris, March 9, 1940.

I called upon General Sikorski and upon M. Zaleski, the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of the recently constituted Polish Government.

General Sikorski impressed me as a man of character, of integrity, and of patriotism, but as being without any particular intellectual ability. His conversation was devoted entirely to an account of the recent atrocities committed in Poland by the Germans, and to the emphatic expression of his belief that if Poland had mobilized last August forty-eight hours before she actually did, Germany would never have been able to be victorious.

M. Zaleski handed me a written memorandum containing his views as to the present European situation and as to the situation of the Polish people. There was nothing really significant in my conversation with him. I inquired about the report I had received to the effect that Colonel Beck had reached a detailed agreement with Hitler at Berchtesgaden in January 1939, covering the restoration of Danzig to Germany, and the granting of extraterritorial communications to Germany between Greater Germany and Eastern Prussia. M. Zaleski assured me that no such detailed agreement had ever been reached, but that it was true that when Beck's interview with Hitler at that time terminated, Beck had said to Hitler that he believed the solution of this problem would not create any real difficulty between the Polish and German Governments.

M. Zaleski seemed profoundly pessimistic with regard to the present situation in Europe, and appeared to share none of General Sikorski's optimism as to the eventual victory of the Allied armies.

LONDON, March 11, 1940.

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1940

LONDON

LONDON, March 11, 1940.

The Ambassador accompanied me at 3:30 p.m. to the Foreign Office, where I was received immediately by Lord Halifax.

Lord Halifax is exactly like his photographs: exceedingly tall, gangling, and with a rather inchoate face. But one cannot be with him for more than a few minutes before one is impressed with his innate sincerity, with the strength of his determination to pursue "the right", as he sees it; with his essential "goodness". One can question the ability of his intellect to cope with the more devious processes of other minds, or the breadth of his insight into the problems of the present world situation; but not, I think, his quality of "character".

The conversation began with very few preliminaries. I outlined to the Foreign Secretary the scope of my instructions, and made it particularly clear that I was not carrying with me any proposal, and that all that I was looking for on behalf of the President was the possibility at this juncture of the establishment of any real and lasting peace.

Lord Halifax reviewed the history of the past year and a half since Munich. He related in great detail the efforts of Mr. Chamberlain and of himself to adopt towards Germany a policy of conciliatory justice, with recognition by Great Britain of the legitimate right of Germany to economic benefits in Central and Eastern Europe, and with full willingness to concede that Germans under other jurisdictions in Central Europe should, if they so desired, be afforded the opportunity of living under the German Reich. He reminded me that every step taken by Great Britain in that direction has resulted not only in new and more far-reaching demands

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by Hitler, but also, what was far more intolerable, in the utter disregard by Hitler of the solemn agreements into which he had entered. He said that no international society in which powerful nations went back on their pledged word was a society which could long survive, unless one were willing to admit that physical force should be the determining factor in modern civilization - that, the British Government, he said, and likewise the United States Government, he felt sure, could not concede.

He gave me a very careful account of the statements made by the British Government to Hitler in August, 1939, to convince me that Chamberlain had made it completely clear to Hitler that the British were willing to favor a negotiation between Poland and Germany of the Danzig and German minority issues, but that if Germany invaded Poland Great Britain would fight. Whatever Ribbentrop may have told Hitler, Lord Halifax said, Hitler Must have known beyond the shadow of a doubt that German invasion of Poland meant a general European War.

Lord Halifax mentioned his own journeys to Germany in recent years, and his conferences with Hitler and with Goering in the hope that personal contacts and explanations might help to solve the problem.

In summary, his conviction was, he said, that no lasting peace could be made in Europe so long as the Nazi régime dominated Germany, and controlled German policy. Peace could not be made except on the basis of confidence, and what confidence could be placed in the pledged word of a Government that was pursuing a policy of open and brutal aggression, and that had repeatedly and openly violated its solemn contractual obligations?

I said that it seemed to me that the issue he raised was necessarily a fundamental issue, but that it occurred to me that there were other vital and basic issues to be explored in the present situation as well. I said that it seemed to me that the question Lord Halifax had raised had to do squarely with the question of security, but that under existing conditions I wondered whether it would be possible for any Government, or any people, to believe that the millennium had come and place complete confidence in the good faith of even a completely new government of Germany, or for that matter, of many other governments, so long as present armaments continued, and so long as every great nation had it within its power overnight to destroy civilian populations, to slaughter women and children, and to ruin industrial production. I wondered, I said, whether disarmament was not the real key to the problem, because it seemed to me that a real disarmament must tend towards the reestablishment of confidence, and towards the rebuilding of economic security which in turn always made less likely the urge towards military conquest.

At this stage the conversation ended because the King and Queen had invited the Ambassador and myself to tea at Buckingham Palace at half past four.

Lord Halifax said that the Prime Minister was expecting me at six. He said that if I preferred to see Mr. Chamberlain alone he would of course quite understand, and would not be present at the interview. I replied that, on the contrary, I particularly hoped that Lord Halifax would be present at my conference with Mr. Chamberlain.