

PSF

FRANCE 1941



file
Confidential

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

France

Vichy, January 25, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

We arrived in Vichy at midnight 5-6 January after an exceedingly long cold journey by train and motor car from Madrid during which there was one thirty-six hour stretch without sleep and without any sensible heat except that which could be applied internally. The temperature throughout this part of France during our first ten days varied between -12 and -20 Centigrade, and the poorly clothed, undernourished people have suffered acutely.

On 8 January at noon in the Pavillon Sévigné I presented my credentials to the Chief of State in a ceremony of some formality that included a sailor guard of honor provided in special recognition of my naval rank. Our First Secretary, Mr. Matthews, and I had a fifteen minute conversation with the Marshal, who was accompanied by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. Flandin. The Marshal, who was very alert and interested, carried the entire conversation to the exclusion of M. Flandin, who did not say a word. The Marshal expressed high appreciation of your courtesy to him and of your friendship for France. He gave me a definite impression of vigor and strength of character, and of personal appreciation of the friendly attitude of America.

The next day, 9 January at 4 p.m., accompanied by Mr. Matthews, I presented to the Marshal in the presence of M. Flandin, the State Department's stipulations in the matter of shipment by our Red Cross of milk, medicine and clothing for destitute French children, and obtained from him a complete agreement to all the conditions imposed. This late afternoon conference, which lasted more than an

hour ...

The President,
The White House
Washington
D. C.

hour, was conducted almost exclusively by M. Flandin, the Marshal very different from our forenoon conference of the preceeding day, giving every appearance of a tired, discouraged old man.

Foreign Minister Flandin discussed at length a very serious condition in which the Marshal's Government finds itself because of present and prospective critical deficiencies in the food supply. He said, and the Marshal agreed, that the Germans in occupied France are conducting an active press campaign which holds the Vichy Government responsible for the existing food shortage, and which may bring about the fall of the Government and the extension of German control to the present unoccupied area. I am inclined to doubt that the Germans will take such action.

Marshal Pétain stated that his only hope for the coming months is that the good offices of the United States will succeed in easing blockade restrictions on the import of essential foodstuffs to France, and in assistance by the American Red Cross.

My stay in France to date has been too short to permit of acquiring accurate information as to the actual need for foodstuffs but it is plainly apparent now that many people here in the unoccupied area are in acute distress from cold and under-nourishment.

It would be patently advantageous to the cultivation of friendly relations with the French people and to the stiffening of the Marshal's resistance to German demands if the American Red Cross should deliver in unoccupied France essential foods, clothing and medicine, where they are most needed, with the one and only condition that the Red Cross will exercise such supervision over the distribution as will insure that none of the supplies will either directly or indirectly be of any assistance to the aggressors.

Such single condition is essential and would be cheerfully accepted. Any additional conditions would adversely affect public reaction to our effort and public confidence in our good intentions.

I have made satisfactory contacts with the Marshal and with his inner Cabinet of three - Admiral

Darlan, ...

Darlan, General Huntziger, and M. Flandin, and I am now developing contacts with the other members of the Government (Cabinet members) who just at this time seem to have little influence on matters of general policy.

They have all been exceedingly polite and agreeable to me.

I have already received the following very definite first impressions:

Marshal Pétain is remarkably capable for a man of his age but the burden of work which he has assumed is beyond his physical capacity.

He does not appear to have complete confidence in any of his Cabinet.

He has an intense dislike for M. Laval who is trying to displace him as actual head of the Government and relegate him to the position of a symbol.

He is very sensitive to German pressure, particularly when it is applied to the war prisoners, to the food supply, and to the authority of his Vichy Government.

He will make every effort to live up to the terms of the Armistice and to not go beyond those terms.

He will not under any conditions abandon continental France and move his Government to Africa.

He and his Cabinet are so impressed by the failure of France to even delay the German Army that they believe that an English victory is impossible.

I am, of course, making every effort to point out the probability of a British victory.

It is highly desirable that England should accomplish some kind of a success against German forces in the near future. The capture of Tobrouk and the Greek success in Albania have had some effect but from the French point of view the "invincible"

German ...

German Army was not involved in either of these campaigns.

The French people all appear to desire a British victory. Many officials of the Government also appear to hope for but not to expect a British victory.

They are therefore in a frame of mind to make almost any compromise with Berlin.

I am afraid that under German pressure the Marshal will take M. Laval back into his Government although he believes Laval to be dishonest and unpatriotic. "A bad Frenchman".

I have been trying to stiffen his backbone in this matter by saying that Laval's return to power will be only the beginning of a series of concessions to be demanded by the Germans with exactly the same pressure methods to be used to force compliance with future demands.

General Huntziger impresses me as the strongest character in the Cabinet. I am told that Germany does not like him.

Admiral Darlan is very friendly with me and we "talk shop" easily.

He despises the British Naval Command, loves his own Navy, and insists that his ships will be scuttled if orders are received from any authority to turn them over to anybody. He is considered by many to be the most likely successor to the Marshal, should the latter drop out. Darlan is not pro-German but like all the others he thinks the Germans will win.

M. Flandin is a compromiser and he leans pretty far over to the German side. He gives one the impression of being honest and patriotic, but not a strong character.

None of the officials with whom I have made contact have any regard whatever for the pre-war form of Government.

All of them, including the Marshal, seem to

incline ...

incline to something like the Fascist Government of Italy without its expansionist policy.

Many of them seem to be afraid of Communist (Red) activity in France at the first opportunity.

All of this, Mr. President, is first impressions, after a very short time in contact with the Vichy Government, and therefore likely to change.

I will endeavor to keep you informed by letter from time to time of the rapidly changing situation as it appears from this point of view.

Most respectfully,

William D. Leahy
William D. Leahy

P.S. Mr. Flandin at lunch today indicated that he would like at some time in the near future to speak about the possibility of the President inaugurating discussions looking toward peace negotiations - He received no encouragement from me, but he may open up the subject later and I will keep you fully informed

W.D.L.

file personal

Francis F. Baker

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

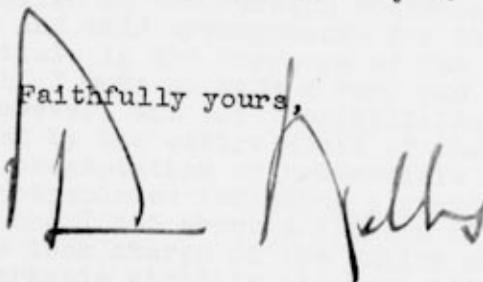
February 6, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I have just received today a letter from Admiral Leahy dated January 16 which is the first I have had from him. I am enclosing a copy of it since I believe it will be of interest to you.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:
From Admiral Leahy,
January 16, 1941.

The President,
The White House.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, January 16, 1941

Private

My dear Mr. Welles:

We arrived here in Vichy at midnight on the 5th of January after an exceedingly difficult journey across Spain where we remained in one overcrowded train for more than twenty-four hours without any sleep and without any heat except that which could be applied internally.

On the 6th I called on the Foreign Secretary, M. Flandin, at 4:30 and made arrangements for the presentation of credentials in the forenoon of the 8th. On that day, the 8th, I woke up with a very bad bronchial cold which, however, was not incapacitating and at 11:45, accompanied by the entire staff of the Embassy, the formal presentation of credentials was made with the usual ceremonies including a guard of honor. The Marshal and I had about a fifteen minute talk during which he took charge of the entire conversation, showing remarkable virility and mentality for his age. M. Flandin was present but he had no opportunity to say a word. The Marshal expressed high appreciation of the President's courtesy in addressing him a private letter and in reexpressing his affection for the French people.

On the 9th at 4 p.m., accompanied by Mr. Matthews, I had an hour's conference with the Marshal who was assisted by M. Flandin. Both agreed fully with the conditions imposed by the United States on the shipment of relief supplies to sick children in France.

We then talked at length about what the French Government would like to have the United States do in the interest of preserving the liberty and culture of

France.

The Honorable
Sumner Welles
Under Secretary of State
Washington, D. C.

France. You have seen a complete cable report of this conference, during which the Marshal gave every appearance of being a tired, discouraged, old man.

On the 10th I made ceremonial calls on the Papal Nuncio and the Ambassadors of Brazil and Spain, finding them all in their residences wearing overcoats and mufflers and trying to warm their fingers with small heaters of one kind or another; and thereupon Dr. de Fossey put me to bed with a temperature which now shows signs of disappearing.

The following is a very rough statement of first impressions.

The people of France are suffering acutely from cold and malnutrition. There is not a sufficient amount of food or clothing in either the occupied or unoccupied zones to provide for the inhabitants thereof.

The Marshal is worried by an active press campaign carried on by the Germans with the purpose of discouraging his Government because it does not provide food for the people.

The Marshal fears that the Germans may themselves provide food in occupied France when the conditions get sufficiently terrible, and by so doing bring about the fall of his Government.

The French Government knows that America would have no difficulty in obtaining passage through the British blockade for relief supplies. This has been publicized by the German controlled papers.

It is possible to provide relief clothing, food and lubricating oils in unoccupied France without permitting any useful amount to reach the aggressors.

If unoccupied France should be in possession of better food and clothing than the natives of the occupied zone, it would appear difficult for the opposition to attack the Marshal's Government on the failure of relief.

French North Africa needs now fuel for its agricultural tractors, and if the war moves into that area it will need vast quantities of supplies of every kind.

If

If we wish to retain the confidence of the French people through the approaching critical period of food and fuel shortage, it is necessary for us to do something more than talk.

The Marshal probably does not have unlimited confidence in any of his Cabinet. I will get more on this later when the doctor permits me to go out.

The above "impressions" will probably not change much, but after making contact with more members of the Cabinet and with neutral observers, I will send you a later edition of my early "estimate of the situation".

An entirely non-political Frenchman told me the other day that many people in France liken the Vichy Government to a basket of crabs in which the larger and stronger members of the collection have pushed themselves to the top and then endeavor to push the others over the side of the basket.

With personal regards, I remain,

Sincerely,

WILLIAM D. LEAHY



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

*File
Personal*

Vichy, February 24, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I have this morning had my first conference with Admiral Darlan since his elevation to the position of Vice President of the Council, heir apparent, and holder of three portfolios. He was very agreeable in his conversation with me during which he expressed his opinion that it is necessary to have friendly business relations with Germany because France and Germany are neighbors in Europe and because they must depend upon each other for their mutual prosperity.

He is very much concerned about recent British naval action in stopping ships carrying food to parts of the French Empire in which, according to him, it could not possibly be of use to Germany, and he stated categorically that if this British action continues it will be necessary for him to announce publicly that the starvation of the French people is due to the action of the Churchill Government. He also said that it may be necessary for him to convoy ships carrying food and to sink any British ships that attempt to interfere.

At the present time the composition of the Vichy Government is so unstable, as a result of M. Laval's dismissal and the probability of future continual changes in its membership, that it is impossible to make a useful estimate of what may be its future general attitude toward problems the solution of which is essential to the preservation of a free and independent France.

As you know from our cable reports, the Marshal refused to reappoint M. Laval as Vice President of the Council and heir apparent, and he has appointed Admiral Darlan to that office, giving him both the Foreign

Office ...

The President,
The White House,
Washington
D. C.

Office and the Department of the Interior in addition to his previous position as Minister of Marine. This combination of portfolios gives to Darlan pretty nearly complete control of the Government for so long a time as he can retain the confidence of the Marshal or for so long a time as the Marshal can successfully resist a persistent and increasing pressure from the occupied zone to replace him by M. Laval.

Admiral Darlan is believed to have the Marshal's confidence at the present time and is also generally believed to be less dangerous than Laval in spite of his very well known conciliatory attitude toward the invaders, in spite of his psychopathic hatred for the British Navy, and in spite of a reputed personal ambition for political advancement.

At the present time he is not acceptable to the German controlled Paris press which is conducting a vicious attack on the Vichy Government and also on the American Ambassador who is charged with being a Free Mason, a representative of Jewish bankers, an ex-British agent, and with having used ultimatum methods on the Marshal to obtain the appointment of his sailor friend Darlan.

These press attacks on the Ambassador probably have a good rather than a bad effect on the general situation from an American point of view.

M. Flandin, who was easy to work with as Foreign Minister and attractive, if not entirely reliable, has gone into retirement.

M. Peyroustin, ex-Minister of the Interior and Colonies, is en route to Argentina as Ambassador.

Both of these offices have been taken over by Admiral Darlan and, as you know, the Interior Department includes the secret police, "La Sûreté", which agency seems to have an important influence on a Minister's prospect of retaining his portfolio.

It is expected that M. Belin, Minister for Labor, and M. Caziot, Minister for Agriculture, will be removed within the next few days and that there will also be other Cabinet changes.

M. Caziot, a real dirt farmer, has impressed me as particularly honest, capable, and devoted to

his ...

his task.

The general trend now seems to be toward concentrating all of the essential power of the Government in the hands of Admiral Darlan, who will presumably exercise this power with the knowledge and approval of the Marshal. The Laval contingent does not like this prospect.

I have not yet found one Frenchman who is favorable to what we consider a representative form of Government. Even the Marquis de Chambrun who, as you know, is about nine-tenths American, and who called on me some days ago, expressed an opinion that France should retain only those fundamental principles of the old Government that were found good by experience.

His daughter is now in a German prison in Paris on some charge unknown to him.

While the political arrangement here may change overnight, the Marshal definitely does not wish to go any further with collaboration than is necessary under the exact requirements of the Armistice, and he has recently shown much courage and strength of character, but he is under very heavy pressure from the Germans and the pro-German element and he may be forced to yield, particularly if his Government is unable to provide essential foodstuffs in any other way.

Practically all the French and neutral officials with whom I make contact express a hope that England will win the war but doubt that anything better than a compromise peace can be attained by either side. They desire an early peace at almost any price.

I have persistently expressed my expert opinion as a naval officer that the British are certain to win.

There are of late many indications that Germany is making final arrangements in the Dunkerque-Le Havre area - (troop movements, removal of civilians, new air fields, etc.) - to attempt an invasion of England.

Some fifty German officers and soldiers have recently arrived by airplane at Casablanca for the

alleged ...

alleged purpose of replacing the previous Italian Armistice Commission, on the ground that Italy's interest is in the Mediterranean and Germany's outside the Straits of Gibraltar. The Vichy Government is helpless in this matter but Admiral Darlan told me today that he believes he can induce the Germans to replace the present military personnel in the Casablanca Commission with civilians.

Most respectfully,


William D. Leahy

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: MARCH 15, 1941

SUBJECT: FRENCH-BRITISH SHIPPING SITUATION;
FRENCH FOOD SHORTAGE

PARTICIPANTS: SECRETARY OF STATE HULL AND THE FRENCH
AMBASSADOR, GASTON HENRY-HAYE

COPIES TO:

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The Ambassador called at his request. He said that a trade and shipping agreement had been made between Great Britain and Sweden and agreed to by Germany. He inquired why some such arrangement could not be made between France and Great Britain. I replied that that was the unfortunate thing about the present relations between Great Britain and France. I said that they could work out many existing questions to their mutual advantage if they would only meet and proceed in a spirit of mutual concession and cooperation. He stated that the Turks were furnishing Germany food and yet Great Britain complained about food being furnished to the French. I replied that I did not know the true facts,

facts, but that that was a very different situation in any event.

I stated that it is all-important to the French and the British alike that each country should approach the other in a spirit of moderation and mutual concession to the end that they may be able to work out reasonable and fair adjustments of conflicting acts and interests in their respective shipping situations; that to this end they could well afford to select one outstanding man in each country who has the confidence of both countries and who could function together from day to day for the purpose of promoting understanding and facilitating the solution of many or most questions that may arise from time to time between the two countries. Each would, of course, represent his respective Government and would cooperate with his Government whenever occasion arose for other officials of the Government to participate in the discussion and settlement of questions which might come up.

The Ambassador said he would like to know if the British had agreed to the memorandum of Mr. Murphy and General Weygand in regard to the shipment of goods to French Africa. I replied that the matter was progressing and that I would request my associates to
keep

keep him advised as to developments.

The Ambassador spoke of the food situation in unoccupied France. He was rather mild in broaching this subject and did so in a sort of apologetic tone. I said that the position of this Government, as the Ambassador I thought knew, is that it continues to cherish the ancient friendship it has always entertained for the French people and their welfare; it is most desirous of serving them in every way at all feasible or practical, especially in this time of their great misfortune; that we have been doing this to the very best of our ability thus far; that we intend to continue to do so even should the circumstances become more averse and the difficulties more numerous.

We are likewise friendly toward the British, and in addition we are aiding them as best we can in their efforts to defeat the aggressive movements of Hitler and his associates. In doing this, we profoundly believe that we are serving the cause of liberty of all of the conquered countries of Europe, as well as ourselves; that, therefore, our friendship and our aid to Great Britain are in complete harmony with our every desire to cooperate with the French to the fullest practical extent. I said that on the other hand, it is not known

here

here as to just how far certain members of the French Government desire to go beyond the requirements of the armistice terms and the limitations of a country that has been captured for the time being; that this Government, of course, expects the French Government to exercise every relation with Germany within these two limitations just set forth; that the serious question that has arisen is whether certain members of the French Government with great influence are undertaking to go over and above and beyond the functions of a conquered country and the limitations of the armistice upon the theory that they may appease or propitiate Hitler. I said that they can, of course, do this arbitrarily if they see fit; that I desired to repeat what I had said to the Ambassador heretofore, that it is as impossible to appease Hitler as it would be for a squirrel to appease a boa constrictor, and hence this country is striving all the more to aid Great Britain and safeguard the liberties of Great Britain and the Western Hemisphere, and at the same time to win back the liberties of Europe. I said, of course, I feel very deeply that Great Britain will succeed notwithstanding some views of French statesmen to the contrary, and that despite their efforts to cooperate with Hitler, if they are doing so, Great

Britain,

Britain, aided by this country, will restore French liberties along with the preservation of our own and those of Great Britain.

I continued by saying that just before Admiral Darlan made the loud threat against Great Britain some days ago, which was published in every newspaper, and has not been corrected if it were not true, I had made real progress in my discussions with the British in regard to further relief for unoccupied France, but that I had been seriously handicapped since then. I said the crucial question with my Government just now was whether and how far some of the important members of the French Government have in mind to go in their efforts to appease Hitler by favors such as aid in the war in one way or another; that they can, if that is their idea, move in this direction in the future, but, of course, the French Government will understand that we will be correspondingly handicapped in our efforts to cooperate with France in many vitally important ways, including the matter of food relief, and that we could only do the best we might be able in these very restricting circumstances. We feel very profoundly that the British cause should be supported and that it will succeed; that we shall continue to contribute every possible

possible aid to that end. We are deeply of the opinion that the liberties of Great Britain and this Hemisphere will be preserved and the liberties of France and conquered countries in Europe will be restored contrary to the reported views and attitudes of numerous prominent Frenchmen, who seemed to prefer the kind of rule that Hitler is dispensing to conquered countries rather than to return to the cherished liberties, freedom and popular institutions which France until recently possessed. I said that, unfortunately, many people in this country interpret the Darlan statement to have in mind aid to Hitler primarily rather than aid in the form of relief to the people of France; that I myself am not giving it any particular interpretation, but that, unfortunately, widespread interpretation is being given it.

The Ambassador proceeded to deny that Darlan had made the threat published in the press. I remarked that it was unfortunate that a denial was not made public, if it had in fact been made, for the reason that the threat, which was very ugly in its damaging effects, was published in every paper and broadcast by radio. I continued by saying that it meant everything that the denial be made public. The Ambassador showed no interest
in

in this suggestion.

The Ambassador then recited quite a number of occurrences relating to the course of the French Government where it had not taken exception to objectionable acts by the British when it had ground to do so. These citations were unimportant and unimpressive. He closed by saying that his country was desirous of restoring normal relations with Great Britain. I expressed my gratification and inquired specifically if this was the attitude of his Government, as well as himself, to which he answered in the affirmative.

I remarked that this Government has been striving earnestly to carry forward anew its discussions with the British in regard to food relief for unoccupied France, and that I felt that we again are making progress. I added that it was important in my opinion for the French to indicate a spirit of cooperation in case Great Britain should permit the proposed two boatloads of wheat to go to unoccupied France, such as assurances of non-infiltration by the Germans into French Africa, the working out by all countries concerned of a rigid supervision of the distribution of the wheat, any reasonable courtesies that could possibly be extended to the British regarding shipments in French boats, and
the

and the moving of French naval vessels from continental France to French African ports. The foregoing could well be given consideration as evidence of a new purpose to cooperate more closely with the British in solving all problems and questions at all possible of solution in this friendly and mutually desirable manner.

Two or three other phases came up near the conclusion. One was my statement to him, which was called forth by a remark of his, to the effect that the enemy status of Germany and France toward each other was not changed by the armistice; that France is under no obligation to furnish Germany with supplies, or otherwise to facilitate her operations against Great Britain because it is inconsistent with enemy status; that Germany can only make requisitions for use of her occupying forces to an extent consistent with the needs of the population of occupied France; that this provision of the Hague Convention was intended to prevent a conquering country to make requisitions on the conquered country to the point of depriving the local population of the necessities of existence. The Ambassador proceeded very earnestly to deny that his Government intends to take any steps to assist Germany beyond the limits of the armistice and the functions of a conquered nation.

The Ambassador was less vehement and pugnacious
than

than usual, as though the Lease-Lend Bill had made some impression on him and possibly some of the members of his Government.

C.H.

ADDRESS OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON, D. C.



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personnel*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

*France folder
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*Private mail to
France*

March 22, 1941

My dear Miss LeHand:

In accordance with the President's request, the American Ambassador at Vichy has been requested to thank Henry Bordeaux and to express the President's appreciation for the publication, "Images du Maréchal Pétain".

Admiral Leahy's letter to the President and the publication are returned herewith.

Sincerely yours,

G. J. ...
Chief of Protocol

Enclosures:

Original letter addressed
to the President;
Publication.

Miss Marguerite A. LeHand,
Private Secretary to the President,
The White House.

Vichy, February 14, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

There is forwarded herewith enclosed a publication, "Images du Maréchal Pétain", delivered to me yesterday by the author, Henry Bordeaux, with a request that it be forwarded to you.

The political situation in Vichy is at this time particularly confused because of prospective changes in the Marshal's Cabinet.

The general impression here seems to be that Admiral Darlan is much less dangerous as Vice President of the Council and "heir apparent" than M. Laval would have been, in spite of Darlan's definite and apparently incurable dislike for the British.

The Marshal's refusal to accept Laval is certain evidence of a stiff attitude just at that time, but it is not unlikely that more pressure by the invaders exercised through war

prisoners ...

The President,
The White House,
Washington
D. C.

prisoners and the existing and prospective food shortage may induce him to make concessions.

It seems certain that your personal message which I delivered orally had an excellent effect in stiffening the Marshal's attitude toward M. Laval's demands.

There is absolutely no news yet in regard to the conferences yesterday between Franco and Mussolini and between Franco and Pétain.

We are trying to get some information from available sources and will report by cable immediately any useful results of our efforts.

Most respectfully,

William D. Leahy

Enclosure

PSF: Frank Lauder
1-41

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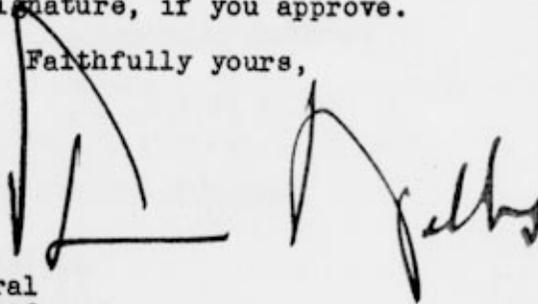
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

April 18, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I am returning herewith the letter to you from Admiral Leahy, dated March 19, 1941, concerning his conversation with Marshal Petain regarding your address at the White House correspondents' dinner, together with a suggested reply for your signature, if you approve.

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:
Letter from Admiral
William D. Leahy of
March 19, 1941.

The President

The White House.

Dear Bill:

I have received your letter of March 19, 1941, concerning your very satisfactory talk with Marshal Petain regarding my address at the White House correspondents' dinner. It was my hope that this would provide some encouragement to those elements in France which still feel that their hope of future salvation depends upon victory of the democratic forces for which we are continuously working.

The efforts of Admiral Darlan and others of the Government to increase collaboration with Germany has definitely compromised our program of assistance to France. The two flour shipments which go forward this week represent a certain contribution, but this cannot be continued unless we receive positive evidence not only from the Marshal but from his Government that our efforts to aid are creating a positive resistance to German demands for further collaboration in support of their military aims.

I greatly appreciate the full and complete way in which you have kept us informed of developments and the changing picture in France.

Very sincerely yours,

Admiral William D. Leahy,
American Ambassador,
Vichy.

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THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 9, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

For preparation of reply
for my signature - Dear Bill.

F. D. R.

Enclosure

Personal and strictly confidential let.
to FDR from Admiral Leahy, Vichy, 3/19/41
re his interview with Marshal Petain
re his reaction to FDR's address made
at the White House Correspondents' Dinner.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, March 19, 1941.

Personal and Strictly
~~Confidential.~~

My dear Mr. President:

Yesterday evening I had a very satisfactory interview with Marshal Pétain with the purpose of learning something of his reaction to your address made at the White House correspondents' dinner. He had seen only the abbreviated reports carried in the local controlled press, which has endeavored to show that the principal purpose of your address was to quiet labor troubles in America's industry and to thereby speed up production for our own defense needs.

I had prepared and I gave to the Marshal textual copies in English and French, for which he expressed appreciation.

I took advantage of the opportunity to tell him that your statement is a notice to the world, in language that everybody can understand, that the Axis Powers will be defeated.

If it does not provide stiffening for wavering Gallic vertebrae, there seems to be nothing for the Marshal to do but have a housecleaning and find substitutes for his present entourage. I think most of them will now see the light and get on the bandwagon.

The Marshal was in excellent form, alert, interested, and appreciative of what America has done and is doing to assist him.

He expressed an opinion that your announcement will force Germany to make an early attempt to invade England. He does not know whether or not such an effort could succeed, but believes that it is now the only hope Germany has of winning the war.

I

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
President of the United States of America,
Washington, D. C.

I told him that even a successful invasion of England, which I believe impossible, would not now win the war.

I discussed at length with the Marshal the efforts that America has made to find means of providing food for unoccupied France without being of any assistance to the aggressor nations, and pointed out to him the difficulties that had been introduced by press statements of de Brinon and Darlan that it might be necessary to use French naval vessels to break the British blockade. He said that he had offered no objection to Darlan's publicity campaign but that he had no intention of permitting French naval vessels to get into a combat with the British Navy.

He said that Admiral Darlan is now working pretty close to the Germans and that he will have to keep his eye on him.

Darlan is now busily engaged in an effort to make character with the Germans, and he told me that he has succeeded to the extent of moving M. Laval a little farther into the background. He is always agreeable and apparently reasonably frank with me, but I am never sure of his motives. I know he has a fanatical dislike and disregard for the British Navy, and I believe that his ambition for high office will land him squarely on the bandwagon as soon as he thinks he can make a certain choice.

As a matter of fact, that is what practically all of them will do, and your statement at the White House correspondents' dinner should point out to them the right wagon to select.

The only two persons here who have impressed me as completely devoted to France without thought of personal advantage are Marshal Pétain and General Weygand. While they possess an astonishing vitality, both are old, and both are irreplaceable.

The Marshal spoke to me yesterday at length about the de Gaulle movement, which he considers a threat to his Government by a "group of traitors". He says that they threaten an attack on North Africa or Syria, which might bring the loyal French colonial troops into combat with the British, and that in occupied France the de Gaullists claim to have his secret approval. This makes difficulties for him with the Germans.

Mr. Churchill has informed him privately that

de Gaulle

de Gaulle has been of no assistance to the British cause, and as he is a definite detriment to the Marshal's strict adherence to the Armistice terms, the Marshal does not understand why the British do not eliminate him from the problem.

The Marshal suggested that I bring this to the attention of my Government, and I have this date included it in a report by cable dispatch.

Yesterday evening at a late hour after the Marshal's departure on a visit to southern France, I received by telephone from his staff information that Henry-Haye reported by cable that you had authorized the Red Cross to send two shiploads of wheat to unoccupied France. This action met with enthusiastic expressions of approval and appreciation.

I have information from good sources that 95 percent., of the inhabitants of the unoccupied zone and 99 percent., in the occupied territory hope for a British victory.

Your splendid statement at the correspondents' dinner and your invaluable assistance in providing relief for the distressed people will probably increase the much smaller percentage of those who expect a British victory.

Up to the present time I believe that America is holding the friendly regard of all the French people, official and otherwise, except a small group of followers of M. Laval who are subsidized by Germany.

We must, however, keep in mind the fact that France is beaten down and thoroughly sick of the war, that there are now one and a half million war prisoner hostages, and that almost any peace proposal would appeal to most of the inhabitants.

Most respectfully,

William D. Leahy,

COPY of letter from President Roosevelt, Washington, D.C., to
Admiral Leahy, received by Admiral Leahy at Vichy, May 23, 1941:

The White House

Washington

Dear Bill:

I have received your letter of March 19, 1941, concerning your very satisfactory talk with Marshal Petain regarding my address at the White House Correspondents' dinner. It was my hope that this would provide some encouragement to those elements in France which still feel that their hope of future salvation depends upon victory of the democratic forces for which we are continuously working.

The efforts of Admiral Darlan and others of the Government to increase collaboration with Germany has definitely compromised our program of assistance to France. The two flour shipments which go forward this week represent a certain contribution, but this cannot be continued unless we receive positive evidence not only from the Marshal but from his Government that our efforts to aid are creating a positive resistance to German demands for further collaboration in support of their military aims.

I greatly appreciate the full and complete way in which you have kept us informed of developments and the changing picture in France.

Very sincerely yours,

(signed) Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Leahy Folder
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 28, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

I think we should re-read this in regard to the French Ambassador's reports to his Government on American public opinion. Evidently he does not report, among other things, the Gallop Polls.

It is something for us to keep in the back of our heads.

F. D. R.

Dispatch from the State Department sent to the Secretary of State by Ambassador Leahy re French Ambassador's reports to his Government.

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France Faldy
1-41

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

May 7, 1941

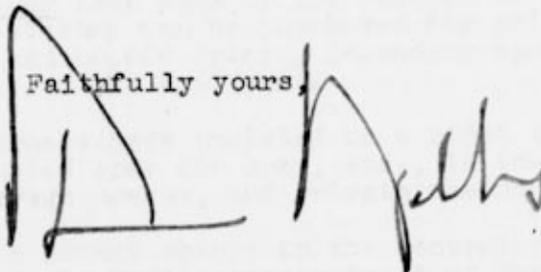
File personal

My dear Mr. President:

I have received today a personal letter from Admiral Leahy of which I enclose a copy for your information. I believe it will be of interest to you.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enc.
From Admiral Leahy,
April 23, 1941.

The President,

The White House.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, April 23, 1941

My dear Mr. Secretary:

Within the last few days there appears to have been a definite increase in the pressure that is being applied to the Vichy Government by Germany.

This is evidenced by an announcement that no more laissez-passers for the line of demarcation will be issued to any foreigners and by an increase in the difficulties encountered by Frenchmen in obtaining laissez-passers. I am informed by a French friend that he obtained a laissez-passer last week by the payment of 2,000 francs, and that they can be purchased for prices varying between 200 and 10,000 francs, depending upon the financial ability of the applicant.

Recently the Germans have insisted on a right to search in the unoccupied zone for arms, etc., in industrial plants, storage houses, and private residences.

There has been a recent change in the control of coastwise shipping on the Mediterranean coast of France from Italy to Germany.

Germany has sent 200 officers and soldiers to North Africa as an armistice commission.

"Tourists" are undoubtedly being sent to North Africa in considerable numbers with passports issued by M. de Brinon in Paris.

There appears to be increased pressure by Germany to require factories in the unoccupied zone to work for a German account.

It appears to have been decided that the Transsahara Railroad will be extended as expeditiously as possible and that the extension will be provided with German equipment.

The Honorable
Sumner Welles,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

We have reliable information that additional guards have been posted about the residence of Admiral Darlan, and there is a persistent rumor that M. Fontenoy, a Laval man, has disappeared from Abbeville. It is thought by many that he has been assassinated but some Frenchmen and others say that he may have been kidnapped by the Germans although he is definitely on the side of collaboration.

I have been unable to obtain any satisfactory explanation of the German purpose in bringing new pressure to bear on the Marshal's Government as outlined above, but it would appear probable that the Axis Powers now believe themselves to be in a position to begin a movement looking toward the occupation of French North Africa at some future time.

I have discussed this matter at length with Marshal Pétain and I find that while he is opposed to everything which he considers a violation of the armistice agreement, he is not prepared to take any action whatever in opposition to a German aggression.

He very definitely told me in our last interview that when he objects to German demands on the ground that they are not in accord with the armistice agreement, the Germans make their own interpretation and proceed to do whatever they wish to do. He says that he has no power to resist aggression by the Axis and that he can only use diplomatic methods in an attempt to discourage them.

I can find no indication whatever of a possibility that the Marshal might be induced to move his Government to North Africa, or that he might direct General Weygand to join cause with the Democracies. There is every indication that he will insist on remaining at the head of a continental government, or that he might resign if Germany should actually occupy all or any part of what is at the present time unoccupied France. He has definitely promised that the Fleet and the naval bases will not be turned over to Germany, and I am entirely satisfied that he will keep his word in this matter. A refusal by the Marshal's Government to turn over the Fleet or the bases is no assurance that Germany may not take both. There is no power in France to prevent occupation by Germany of the Mediterranean ports, and there is nothing that can effectively interfere with their taking the African bases except sea power provided from elsewhere than France.

The Marshal has officially expressed full confidence in Admiral Darlan and in his other Cabinet officers, but he has expressed to me confidentially that he is not certain of their full loyalty, particularly Admiral Darlan's, and that he must keep his eye on them.

The Marshal who is very old, 85 in a day or two, is not strong enough to carry the burden that he has assumed, and he is not, in my opinion, physically capable of withstanding the pressure that is constantly applied by Germany and by the collaborationists in his Government. There is no doubt whatever that the Marshal's memory of what happens from day to day is faulty, and for that reason he is desirous always of being given a written memorandum of points which we take up with him and which either he or I consider important. It has been my practice to give him such memoranda when I considered it appropriate to do so, and I find that in many or all such cases he has subsequently discussed the memorandum with Admiral Darlan. This indicates that it is not practicable to discuss privately with the Marshal highly confidential matters and to be sure that he will not inform his Ministers in regard thereto.

My relations with the Marshal are close and friendly and he seems to have full confidence in the friendship and good intentions of the United States and of the President. He has many times expressed a desire that I see him often, and he appears, when I do see him, very much pleased to have somebody to whom he can tell his troubles and difficulties, and to whom he can look for a sympathetic understanding.

The ever present difficulties here are that the Marshal is too old to carry his burden; that he has no power with which to oppose demands made by Germany, and that regardless of objections which he may offer to German demands, they proceed to carry out their intentions whether or not they are in agreement with the armistice convention.

Most sincerely,

WILLIAM D. LEAHY

P.S. There are today renewed rumors that M. Laval and M. Bonnet will be reinstated in the Government in the near future.

W.D.L.

Francis Galt
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 8, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you speak to me
about this?

F. D. R.

Letter to the President,
dated April 18, 1941, from
Admiral Leahy enclosing copy
of an article that appeared
in the Paris edition of
L'Oeuvre of April 15th.

France Folder
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 8, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you speak to me
about this?

F. D. R.

Letter to the President,
dated April 21, 1941, from Ambassador
Leahy, re pressure that is being
applied to unoccupied France by
Germany.



*file
Confidential*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

*Francis B. Miles
1-41*

May 13. 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

With regard to the attached letter of April 21st from Admiral Leahy which you sent to me for comment, the Admiral's impressions of the way things are going in Vichy are not very encouraging, but of course that is the situation with which we have become familiar through his telegraphic reports at the time of and since his writing this letter. As you and I have agreed in discussions of our handling of the Vichy Government, our only way of keeping our relations with the Marshal stabilized as much as possible is to continue to keep in touch with him and to support him insofar as we can without interfering with the British war measures.

Our present discussions with Vichy on the subject of the two vessels for the continuous shipment of wheat to Unoccupied France are going forward and our arrangements for permitting provisioning of North Africa are also progressing. I see no better course to pursue than to go on with these matters, subject, of course, to termination or reversal immediately upon Vichy taking any action detrimental to the British cause.

C. H.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 8, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you speak to me
about this?

F. D. R.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, April 21, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

There has been a marked increase within the last few days in the pressure that is being applied to unoccupied France by Germany.

This is evidenced by an announcement that no more laissez-passers for the line of demarcation will be issued to any foreigners;

by insisting on a right to search for arms, etc., in industrial plants, storage houses, and private residences in the unoccupied zone;

by changing control of coastwise shipping on the Mediterranean coast of France from Italy to Germany;

by sending 200 officers and soldiers as an "Armistice Commission" to North Africa;

by sending "tourists" dressed in civilian clothing to North Africa in considerable numbers;

by increased pressure to require factories in the unoccupied zone to work for a German account.

We are unable to ascertain the purpose of Germany in these new activities, and the Marshal's Government is not able to offer any effective opposition.

The Marshal, who is very friendly and who seems to have confidence in my good intentions, has asked me to see him often, and he appears, when I do see him, very pleased to have somebody to whom he can tell his manifold troubles and difficulties.

From his point of view, the essential difficulty is that he has no power with which to oppose German demands. He desires to adhere strictly to the terms of the Armistice and to keep France in an exactly neutral attitude toward the war.

He

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
President of the United States of America,
Washington, D. C.

He has told me that when the German demands appear to him to be outside the Armistice Agreement and when he objects on that ground, the Germans claim the right to make the final interpretation, and when he disagrees they carry out their intention without regard to his attitude in the matter. It is my conviction that any demands whatever that may be made by the Germans will either be granted by the Vichy Government or permitted without active opposition.

It appears from what the Marshal tells me of German methods that the only effective opposition would be armed resistance or the use of sabotage methods, and while the people of France are almost unanimous in their hatred of Germany, they have no arms, no organization, and very little fighting spirit at the present time.

Sabotage or guerilla warfare is discouraged by a knowledge of German methods of retaliation and by a fear of what would happen to the million and a half war prisoner hostages in German prison camps.

I find no indication whatever of a possibility that the Marshal might move his Government to North Africa or that he might direct General Weygand to join cause with the Democracies. I believe he will remain at the head of a Continental government or that, as a last resort, he may resign. He has promised that the Fleet and the naval bases will not be turned over to Germany and he will keep his word, but that does not give assurance that Germany will not take the ships and will not occupy the bases. There is nothing to prevent occupation of continental ports, and nothing that can effectively interfere with taking the African bases except sea power.

The Marshal tells me he is sure that Germany in the future faces trouble in all the occupied countries because of its wide dispersion of force, and he believes also that Germany cannot avoid a clash with Russia. He says that America is the only friend now remaining to France and is the only hope for the future of his country and of his people. This opinion seems to be shared by all Frenchmen who are not in the pay of the Axis Powers, and in order that we may retain their good will it seems to me wise to continue or expand our Red Cross relief work only to an extent that cannot be of any assistance whatever to the Axis Powers.

At the present time the Red Cross relief is being
distributed

distributed to under-nourished children and invalids efficiently and without leakage, and aside from its humanitarian aspect, this distribution does give us an effective means of influencing public opinion, to which the Marshal is very sensitive, and to which his Cabinet members pay some attention.

Even in North Africa, where the natives are restless under the conditions of food shortage and German propaganda, it would appear from this point of view advantageous to America and to Great Britain to permit the importation of necessities for current needs and in sufficiently limited quantities to prevent their being of use to the Axis Powers.

I realize that this is not a very pleasing outline of conditions and prospects here at the present time, which have all been reported to the Department by cable, but I think you should know about the powerless position in which the Marshal is placed in order that we may not indulge in expectations that cannot be accomplished.

The Marshal does not have full confidence in his Cabinet officers, particularly in Admiral Darlan, but he does not know of any other person who might be better. There is renewed gossip the last few days of Monsieur Laval being forced back into the Government. The Marshal will strongly oppose any such move, as will also Admiral Darlan, but I am not sure that the Marshal cannot be forced to yield.

I will, of course, not fail to give him advice in the matter of Monsieur Laval that will be useful from our point of view.

Most respectfully,

William D. Leahy



*file
confidential*

*Francis Fulda
1-41*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

May 13, 1941

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT:

These scurrilous attacks on Leahy are, in my opinion, a clear indication that the Germans are intensely annoyed at the success we have had in convincing the French people that this country is doing everything it can to support them against the oppression and degradation the Germans are attempting to fasten upon them. This matter of the French public attitude is of tremendous importance in the backing of Petain and even in the limiting of the Marshal's government in the extent to which "collaboration" might be accepted. As I see it, our only course is to continue our present policy toward Unoccupied France, and the more attacks, such as the Admiral sends us, appear in the German-controlled press, the more will we know we are getting our policy across with the French people.

Hue

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 8, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

Will you speak to me
about this?

F. D. R.

Vichy, April 18, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

There is forwarded herewith a typewritten copy of an article that appeared in the Paris edition of L'Oeuvre of April 15th.

Under present restrictions on communication between occupied and unoccupied France we rarely receive copies of the German-controlled Paris press. L'Oeuvre of April 15th crossed the line of demarcation in the pocket of a newspaper reporter acquaintance of mine.

This article is a good example of the method of attack on your Ambassador that has consistently been followed by the controlled Paris press. These attacks are, in my opinion, a compliment, and they do no harm to our cause except to probably make more difficult my contacts with the timid officials of the Vichy Government who are nearly all definitely afraid of disapproval by the Axis authorities.

The

The Honorable

Franklin D. Roosevelt,

President of the United States of America,

Washington, D. C.

The attitude of these officials will undergo a complete change immediately upon the availability of acceptable evidence that the German Army has met with a defeat anywhere. I am trying to hope that Greece will prove to them that the German Army is not invincible.

Most respectfully,

William L. Leahy.

P.S.

Marshal Petain told me last night that the Germans do not like his trips through France any better than they liked the one made by me, and that he will place at my disposal a private car at any time when I wish to make another visit to his people.

Encl.

article in L'Oeuvre of April 15th 1941-

MANIFESTATIONS DEPLACEES

La France n'a aucune hostilité de principe à l'égard des Etats-Unis, et sans doute en est-il de même pour toutes les nations d'Europe, y compris celles qui ont présentement le plus de raisons de regretter l'attitude officielle du gouvernement de Washington. Car l'inter-vertionnisme larvé du Président Roosevelt ne peut trouver aucune justification, sinon dans la conjonction étroite de certains grands intérêts anglo-américains. Le reste est littérature, ou propaganda. Et jamais prise de position n'a été plus absurde envers un continent avec lequel toutes les ententes pratiques sont naturelles et tous les accords de sentiment possibles.

Que dans ces conditions, et malgré le blocus, auquel les Etats-Unis participent, la France entretienne avec ceux-ci des relations diplomatiques normales et correctes, personne ne peut y trouver à redire. Mais il y a des limites qu'il serait prudent de ne pas dépasser, ni d'un côté ni de l'autre. On a vu arriver à Vichy, il y a quelques mois, un ambassadeur fort remuant, l'amiral Leahy. On dit qu'il a apporté comme don de joyeuse installation le déblocage de sommes importantes, en dollars, et que cela a consolidé certaines convictions anglophiles, ou hâté certaines conversions. Il se trouve aussi que l'amiral Leahy est franc-maçon et entretient à ce titre des liaisons internationales dont on devine assez la tendance.

Depuis qu'il est en France, l'amiral-ambassadeur exerce une visible influence sur le personnel dirigeant et dans les milieux politiques vichyssois. On le consulte beaucoup, il reçoit de même, et multiplie les contacts. Ami personnel du président Roosevelt et chargé d'exprimer les volontés de son chef, l'amiral Leahy n'a pas à jouer au plus fin ni à dissimuler ses préférences. Il ne peut qu'encourager les attentistes et affirmer sa sympathie à l'endroit des partisans de la "résistance" à la collaboration. Il ne s'en fait pas faute, et nous sommes bien obligés d'enregistrer les résultats de son action. Le moins qu'on puisse en dire est que la politique française n'a pas gagné en netteté, depuis que les conseils de l'amiral Leahy tendent à l'inspirer.

Dans ces conditions, et s'agissant d'un personnage aussi remuant, si le gouvernement français s'avise de le traiter avec une particulière faveur, cette conduite prend un sens. Elle ne peut qu'être interprétée comme une complaisance avouée à l'attentisme. Surtout quand les déclarations les plus solennelles contre M. de Gaulle manquent de vigueur. Or l'Amiral Leahy vient de faire le long de la Côte d'Azur une manière de tournée triomphale, très officiellement organisée. C'est là un fait symptomatique, et dont la gravité ne peut échapper à personne.

Bien entendu, il y a un prétexte, et qui peut paraître des plus naturels, des plus honorables, voire des plus délicats. On se souvient en effet que deux bateaux ont été affrétés par la Croix-Rouge américaine et ont apporté en France, par spéciale faveur, et avec la permission très exceptionnelle de Messieurs les Anglais, quelques tonnes de lait condensé, de médicaments ou de vêtements, destinés surtout aux enfants. Voilà un geste dont nous ne sous-estimons pas l'importance, et qui mérite en effet quelque reconnaissance

À l'égard du Comité qui en a pris l'initiative.

Mais il s'agit de la Croix-Rouge, et non du gouvernement des Etats-Unis. Et il faut bien dire que cet acte charitable, quelle qu'en soit la valeur symbolique, est assez peu de chose, si l'on considère le volume de nos besoins et la capacité économique des U.S.A. Et il reste que les navires chargés de farine ou de blé ne peuvent pas partir, il reste que le blocus est accepté, encouragé et entretenu par les Etats-Unis, en plein accord avec l'Angleterre. On peut répéter à satiété que cette mesure implacable est prise contre les Allemands: nous répondrons sans nous lasser que les Allemands n'en ont cure, mais que les Français en souffrent durement.

Or l'amiral Leahy est descendu par Lyon vers Marseille pour visiter les deux bienheureux bateaux, et il a ensuite poursuivi son voyage au pays du soleil, pour regagner ensuite Vichy-la-morose, à petites étapes. Voilà qui est son droit, et nous ne lui faisons point grief de ce tourisme nonchalant. Mais s'agit-il de tourisme? Ou bien d'une tournée de propagande pour une certaine politique?

Le gouvernement français ne s'est pas contenté de faire rendre les honneurs militaires à l'ambassadeur, et d'alerter toutes les autorités: il a aussi mobilisé la fameuse Légion, qui décidément sert de brigade des acclamations, et les enfants des écoles. L'opération a fort bien réussi, et la réception, après celle de Lyon, a pris à Marseille l'allure frénétique que l'on pouvait attendre de gens qui, une semaine auparavant, avaient toute une journée fleuri la dalle commémorative d'Alexandre Ier. Cela au moment précis où Pierre II prenait le pouvoir à Belgrade et exécutait les ordres de l'Angleterre.

Même succès à Toulon. Et mêmes clameurs à Nice ou n'importe où. Qui acclame-t-on? Pas la personne de l'amiral Leahy, mais une certaine politique. Moins la politique présente de Roosevelt, qui est encore prudente, mais celle qu'on attend, celle qu'on espère, la vraie, la bonne, celle qui, sans hésitation, ira jusqu'à la guerre ouverte aux côtés des Britanniques.

Il est tout à fait inutile d'atténuer les choses en de doucereux communiqués: les figurants de ces journées officielles ont rempli une mission très précise, ils ont extériorisé leur attentisme passionné, pour ne pas dire leur anglophilie délirante. Et ils ont agi par ordre. Il serait intéressant d'avoir sous les yeux les instructions qui ont été données aux chefs de file, et d'en connaître l'origine exacte.

Tout cela doit avoir une signification, qui dépasse de beaucoup la civilité diplomatique et l'expression d'une reconnaissance décente, mais limitée à son objet. Quel est le génie politique inconnu qui a pris en mains ce scénario, au moment précis où les troupes allemandes sont en train de balayer les Balkans et de jeter à la mer les Anglais? C'est ce qui s'appelle avoir le sens de l'opportunité, et une saine compréhension des événements. On voudrait achever de discréditer la France et

attirer

attirer la foudre sur Vichy que l'on ne procéderait pas autrement. On a envie de crier: "Au fou!"

(MARCEL DEAT)

P.S. On dit que le Maréchal s'est ému de ces manifestations intempestives et qu'il a blâmé le zèle de la Légion. Alors, qui a donné les instructions? Est-ce le général Laure?

Les
8ff

[Translation]

MISPLACED DEMONSTRATIONS

France has no hostility in principle with regard to the United States and doubtless the same is true for all the nations of Europe, including those which have at present the greatest reason for regretting the official attitude of the Washington Government. For the masked interventionism of President Roosevelt can find no justification except in a close union of certain Anglo-American interests. The rest is literature, or propaganda. And never has a position taken been more absurd with respect to a continent with which all practical understandings are natural and all accords of sentiment possible.

No one can find any fault with the fact that in these circumstances, and in spite of the blockade, in which the United States participates, France maintains normal and correct diplomatic relations with that country. But there are limits which it would be wise not to exceed, either on one side or the other. We have seen a very active Ambassador, Admiral Leahy, arrive at Vichy a few months ago. It is said that he brought as a joyous setting-up gift the news of the unblocking of important sums, in dollars, and that
this

this consolidated certain Anglophile convictions or hastened certain conversions. It is also discovered that Admiral Leahy is a Free Mason and on this account maintains international connections the tendency of which can easily be imagined.

Since he has been in France, the admiral-ambassador has exercised a visible influence on the directing personnel and in Vichy political circles. He is often consulted, he even receives, and he multiplies contacts. The personal friend of President Roosevelt and entrusted with expressing his chief's wishes, Admiral Leahy does not have to finesse or hide his preferences. He cannot but encourage the opportunists and affirm his sympathy with the partisans of "resistance" to collaboration. He has not failed to do this, and we are indeed obliged to note the results of his action. The least that can be said of it is that the French polich has not gained in clearness since Admiral Leahy's advice has been tending to inspire it.

In these circumstances, when so active a personage is concerned, if the French Government decides to treat him with particular favor, this conduct takes one sense. It can only be interpreted as avowed complacence with opportunism.

tunism. . Particularly when the most solemn declarations against Mr. de Gaulle lack force. Now Admiral Leahy has just made a sort of triumphal tour, very officially organized, along the Côte d'Azur. That is a symptomatic fact, the gravity of which can escape no one.

Naturally, there was a pretext, and it may seem one of the most natural, most honorable, even most delicate. It is recalled, in fact, that two ships were chartered by the American Red Cross and that as a special favor and with the very exceptional permission of the English, they brought to France several tons of condensed milk, medicines or clothing, intended particularly for children. There was a gesture the importance of which we do not underestimate and which does indeed deserve gratitude for the Committee which took the initiative.

But it is the Red Cross that is involved, and not the Government of the United States. And it may well be said that this charitable act, whatever its symbolic value may be, is little enough if one considers the volume of our needs and the economic capacity of the U.S.A. And the fact remains that ships loaded with flour or wheat cannot sail, the
fact

fact remains that the blockade is agreed to, encouraged and maintained by the United States, in full accord with England. It may be repeated ad nauseam that this implacable measure is taken against the Germans; we ceaselessly reply that the Germans care nothing about it, but that the French suffer severely from it.

Now Admiral Leahy went to Marseille via Lyon to visit the two blessed ships, and he then continued his journey to the country of the sun, going back then to Vichy-the-morose by easy stages. That is his right and we do not grudge him his nonchalant touring. But was it a tourist trip? Or was it a propaganda tour for a certain policy?

The French Government was not satisfied with rendering military honors to the ambassador and forewarning all authorities; it also mobilized the famous Legion, which certainly serves as a brigade of acclamation, and the school children. And the operation was most successful and the reception, after that at Lyon, assumed such a frantic pace at Marseille as could have been expected from people who, a week earlier, had strewn flowers for a whole day over the slab commemorating Alexander I. That at the very moment when Peter II was taking over the power in Belgrade
and

and executing England's orders.

The same success at Toulon. The same outcries at Nice or any other place. What is acclaimed? Not the person of Admiral Leahy, but a certain policy. Less the present policy of Roosevelt, which is still prudent, but that which is expected, that which is hoped for, the true, the good, that which, without hesitation, will go to open war at the side of the British.

It is quite useless to attenuate matters in softened news stories; those taking part in these official demonstrations performed a very definite mission; they made obvious their passionate opportunism, not to say their delirious Anglophilism. And they acted on orders. It would be interesting to see the instructions given to the leaders and to know their exact origin.

All this must have a meaning which far exceeds diplomatic civility and the expression of proper gratitude, but gratitude limited to its object. Who is the unknown political genius who took this scenario in hand at the very moment when German troops are proceeding to sweep the Balkans and to hurl the English into the sea? This is what is called having

a sense of timing and a sane understanding of events. Had it been desired to complete the discrediting of France and to draw the lightning on Vichy, this would have been the way to act. It makes one want to cry out "Madman!"

(MARCEL DEAT)

P.S. It is said that the Marshal is disturbed over these unopportune demonstrations and that he has blamed the zeal of the Legion. Then, who gave the instructions? Was it General Laure?

TR:AVA

Complete text of Petain's address

France Folder

1-41

Came to file

5/16/41

file
confidential

Frenchmen! You have learned that Admiral Darlan recently had an interview with the chancellor in Germany.

I had approved the idea of such a meeting. This new interview permits us to light up the pathway to the future and continue discussions undertaken with the German Government.

Today it is no longer up to public opinion, often worried because ill informed, to weigh our chances, measure our risks, judge our actions.

It is up to you, the French, to follow me without mental reservations on the road of honor and national interest.

If in the strict discipline of our public mentality we are able successfully to carry on negotiations under way, France will be able to rise above her defeat and maintain her world rank as a European and colonial power.

That, my friends, I have to tell you today.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE UNDER SECRETARY

May 14, 1941

1:20 p.m.

Mr. Bucknell telephoned that the following announcement has just been made over the radio:

"Marshal Pétain told France in a radio address that France must collaborate with Germany in Europe and Africa.

"He declared that France 'by necessity' must seek an understanding with Germany and that therefore she must collaborate with Adolf Hitler's plans for Europe and Africa."

1481 23227/429.
ADD PETAIN, VICHY.

THESE PLANS HAVE BEEN OFFICIALLY DESCRIBED AS CALLING FOR FULL COLLABORATION OF FRANCE IN GERMANY'S "NEW ORDER" IN EUROPE AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AFRICA AS A GREAT COLONIAL POOL TO FEED EUROPE WITH RAW MATERIALS.

"I APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE," SAID PETAIN, "THE MEETING OF VICE PREMIER ADMIRAL JEAN FRANCOIS DARLAN WITH HITLER IN GERMANY".

"WE WILL CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS," SAID PETAIN, "UNTIL WE REACH AGREEMENT.

"I CALL ON ALL FRENCHMEN TO FOLLOW ME IN THE PATH OF HONOR AND NATIONAL INTEREST SO THAT FRANCE CAN OVERCOME HER DEFEAT, AND SAVE HER RANK AS A EUROPEAN AND COLONIAL POWER."

5/15--RS422P

ADD PETAIN, VICHY.

PETAIN TOLD FRANCE THAT "YOU HAVE LEARNED THAT ADMIRAL DARLAN RECENTLY TALKED IN GERMANY WITH CHANCELLOR HITLER.

"I HAD APPROVED IN PRINCIPLE THAT MEETING. THAT NEW MEETING ENABLES US TO LIGHT THE ROAD BEFORE US AND CONTINUE THE CONVERSATIONS ENGAGED WITH THE GERMAN GOVERNMENT.

"IT IS NO LONGER A QUESTION TODAY FOR PUBLIC OPINION, WHICH IS OFTEN ANXIOUS BECAUSE IT IS BADLY INFORMED, TO WEIGH OUR CHANCES, MEASURE OUR RISKS AND JUDGE OUR GESTURES."

5/15--RS123P

5

ASSOCIATED PRESS, Vichy, France.
May 15, 2:09 P.M. (Washington time).

There was a growing impression tonight in informed French circles Vice Premier Darlan's negotiations with Germany, as approved by the French Government, gained time for France.

These circles insist that no definite agreement was reached -- merely a large system of collaboration being established.

Unconfirmed reports circulated that Darlan's next collaboration meeting would be with the German Foreign Minister Von Ribbentrop perhaps at Paris. The reports were accepted in some circles as having the earmarks of truth since it now was logical to start detailed negotiations.

The French pointed out however particularly to Americans that such negotiations naturally would last a considerable time.

The impression was being fostered by authorized French circles that the present situation is frankly one of compulsion and does not contain any menace so far as the United States is concerned unless there is an out-and-out attack by the United States on French possessions.

Vichy, May 15 3.33 p.m. (UP)

The government, after five months in which theoretically there was no censorship except on affairs concerning Marshal Pétain tonight clamped down a severe censorship on all foreign correspondents on information regarding collaboration with Germany.

The announcement said the action was to prevent publication of "false and tendentious reports".

Francis Folger

*file
Confidential*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: MAY 20, 1941

SUBJECT: U.S. - FRENCH RELATIONS

PARTICIPANTS: SECRETARY OF STATE HULL AND THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR,
MR. GASTON HENRY-HAYE

COPIES TO:

FORM 1-110

The French Ambassador called at his request. He proceeded quite fully to protest, on behalf of his Government, against the action of this Government in allegedly violating an agreement to the effect that French ships in our harbors would not be occupied without notice first being given to the French Government or to the Ambassador here.

He then proceeded to say that he was surprised at the emotional nature of the expressions here following a recent announcement by Marshal Petain about future "collaboration with Germany", and in which he expressed approval of what Admiral Darlan was doing. The Ambassador said he had cabled twice to his Government for the facts

facts relating to this announcement in order that this Government might be accurately informed.

He brought up the question as to whether the French Government could send back the two boats from France without their being occupied by the Coast Guard when they reach our harbors. He also inquired whether any French boat could come into our harbors without being placed in protective custody, and he made reference to the question of interference with shipping between France and North Africa.

The Ambassador then referred to the situation of the Syrian air bases and the recent German movements in that area. He said that the armistice terms authorized the German Government to control those air bases.

The Ambassador stated that history would show that the French have been badly treated; that they were forced to sign the armistice; that they should have received aid last year at a pivotal stage, and although they were promised such aid, there was a complete failure in the matter of supplying it. (He apparently was hinting at the failure of this Government to go into the war, or something of the sort, a year ago last spring.)

I then proceeded to say that in the light of the

portentous

portentous nature of the recent announcement by Marshal Petain, I had not even thought of the shipping matters, to which the Ambassador referred, much less had I given any consideration to them. Furthermore, there would be little done in this direction pending a thorough clarification of the full significance of the Petain announcement and all that was behind it, with special emphasis on whether there was envisaged collaboration above and beyond the terms of the armistice between France and Germany. I said that around May fourth, Marshal Petain had assured this Government that the integrity of the German-French armistice terms would be maintained by France, and that France, therefore, would not render military aid to Germany over and above the strict terms of the armistice. I added that he could imagine the astonishment of peoples here and everywhere when they saw the announcement of Marshal Petain with its clear, express and implied meanings; that the definite belief was created in every nation of the world that the French Government at Vichy had gone straight into the arms of the German Government presided over by Hitler, with all the implications of such a step; that the well known pro-Hitler officials of the French Government have
finally

finally taken over control, and, having done so, their first thoughts were to deliver France body and soul to Hitler. Such would appear to be the case if the accompanying acts and utterances of French spokesmen and the implications arising therefrom signify anything. It would seem that these pro-Hitler French officials have convinced others of their hope, if not their belief, that Great Britain would lose in the war, and, therefore, the wise course was to move into the camp of Hitler and Hitlerism, when everybody knows that Hitlerism is a system and a philosophy dedicated primarily to undertaking to destroy all individual liberty and the free institutions of conquered peoples.

I emphasized at this point that French officials in an attempt to justify this new attitude were making reference to wholly minor and microscopic considerations, such as the question of food supplies, the securing of some reduction in the expenses of occupation, and the failure of somebody to aid France last year, and that these considerations are but infinitesimal phases of the situation compared with the single important question of saving the liberties of all free countries possible by successfully resisting Hitler's march of devastation
across

across the earth. I also said with the strongest possible emphasis that this country, profoundly believing, as it does, that Hitlerism means the utter destruction and extinction of individual liberty and civilization wherever it spreads, is determined with all of its strength and resources to devote one year or five years or ten years, if necessary, in seeing to it that Hitler does not get control of the high seas of the world; and that any tyrant operating with barbaric methods, as in the case of Hitler, who must rely on the conquered peoples whom he has placed in a state of semi-slavery, for the stability and permanency of the structure of military and tyrannical rule he has built up at Berlin, cannot long survive on land. I said that this undertaking is primarily, of course, for the preservation of the liberties of the people of my own country, but incidentally also for the liberties of the British, and the early restoration of the liberties of the French among other peoples, who, in the present situation, should make common cause with us in every feasible way to this end. This should be the governing consideration, therefore, of those who have any interest at all in preserving or restoring the liberties and the popular institutions
of

of free countries and hitherto free countries; that this consideration apparently is brushed aside by the pro-Hitler French officials, who defend their course of delivering France to the mercies of Hitler for the indefinite future by referring to relatively trivial matters, such as the failure of somebody to aid France, or that ample food is not forthcoming from abroad, or that the occupational expenses were reduced, and 100,000 prisoners released. I said those who love liberty, as the French people do, would in my judgment not remotely think of such paltry considerations as these in exchange for the liberties, the wonderful institutions and the very soul of France. I added that this country is thoroughly dedicated to the success of the British, who are fighting for this great cause of popular institutions and life and liberty, and that any military aid rendered to Germany beyond the strict terms of the armistice is an attempt to slit the throat of the United States indirectly, and hence the deep feeling this country has in the reported new plan of "collaboration" between the Vichy Government and Germany; that no one has any idea of what all this plan contemplates; that constant secret conferences are going on between pro-Hitler French officials;

officials; that the pro-Hitler French officials and the press they control are almost daily threatening to fight Great Britain or even the United States about matters which have not in any sense been broached so far as the United States is concerned; that when France assumed a mandate over Syria she was bound by a pledge on the part of France in the United States—French agreement not to permit any interference with the sovereignty of Syria by a foreign nation. This obligation of France was not even raised by her at the time of the armistice, and in the next place the retention of control over French air bases in Syria by Germany would ordinarily contemplate control to prevent their undesirable or improper use to the detriment of Germany, and not complete license to Germany to transport any and all kinds of implements and supplies anywhere over Syria, which is exactly what Germany needs for the purpose of establishing a great base of operations against the British throughout the middle eastern area. On the contrary, one of the high French officials in Syria was openly expressing sympathetic interest in Germany and the French authorities in Syria, while perfectly mute and silent as to unlimited German occupation, were daily publishing violent threats
against

against the British if they dared in the least to resist this proposed establishment of a great German base in Syria.

I concluded by saying that all of these circumstances, together with Marshal Petain's announcement, caused the world, including the United States, to believe that there were far-reaching considerations involved, and possibly a military alliance. For this reason, few things have been more painful to this Government than to get this information and feel constrained to suspend many mutually desirable relationships involving shipping, commerce, etc., with France until there is a complete clarification of this recent development. I stated that the first thing the French Government should do, if the Ambassador is at all correct in his protestations that the French Government proposes to conduct its relations with Germany strictly within the limitations of the armistice, is to find suitable ways, which can easily be done, to correct the deep-seated impression to the contrary existing in this and all other countries.

I said that this Government would be very desirous of receiving in writing a clear statement and pledge by
the

the French Government to the effect that it will do no more than observe the terms of the armistice so far as extending any military favoritism to Germany is concerned, etc. The Ambassador said he would be glad to attend to this matter right away. He also agreed to my suggestion that the French Government should clarify its position in other countries as well.

I repeated again that I was not even thinking about these shipping and other minor matters about which the Ambassador was protesting, and could not do so pending clarification of the matters of major and urgent consideration. He did not request any different course on my part.

C.H.

AMERICAN RED CROSS

WASHINGTON, D. C.

CHAIRMAN'S OFFICE

Dear Mr. President:-

Here is a copy of a letter
from Richard Allen, our
delegate to France, which
I am sure you will
find interesting and most
informative —

Norman H. Davis

COPY

CONFIDENTIAL

THE AMERICAN RED CROSS
In France

Headquarters
1, Rue Beauvau
Marseille

May 13, 1941.

Dear Mr. Davis:

In a situation which is moving so rapidly as this one in France at this time, I dislike writing you a letter dealing somewhat with personal impressions and greatly with intangibles. Ten days hence the situation might easily be entirely different and I realize that there is a bare possibility that the present difficulties might be suddenly solved, although at this moment there seems very little prospect of that. I do feel, however, that some explanation is due to you of my cables 140, 142 and 143. It does not seem wise to go into details by cable and I know you are often somewhat mystified.

As you know, at the time of the arrival of the S.S. "Cold Harbor" on March 10th, there was a spontaneous demonstration by the general public and a most satisfactory volume of publicity concerning the relief supplies which the people of America were sending to France through the American Red Cross for the relief of the French children. There were literally thousands of newspaper reports concerning these supplies and hundreds of pictures were carried in the French press which does not normally use pictures as extensively as the papers in the United States. All over France, the people found different ways of expressing their appreciation and I do not think that there is any doubt that these supplies raised the morale of the French people tremendously.

From March 10th to April 2nd, when the "Exmouth" arrived, the publicity continued good and the general atmosphere was excellent. Just before the "Exmouth" arrived, the Yugoslavian Government fell and the German army marched into Bulgaria. There had been a demonstration in Marseille by the general public in favour of Yugoslavia for which, I am told, the Prefet and the other officials here in Marseille were very much criticized by their superiors in Vichy. When the "Exmouth" arrived, the newspapers continued to carry good accounts of this ship and the cargo which it brought to France for the French children. However, there was a definite cooling off on the part of French officials and I was told by several newspaper men here in

.....

(page 2)

France Folder

File
Personal

Marseille that the papers had received instructions not to carry the same type of publicity on the "Exmouth" as had been carried on the "Cold Harbor". Officials in Marseille showed a decided nervousness over Admiral Leady's approaching visit. We had long conversations with the Prefet here with reference to the arrangements which were being made for the Ambassador and we realized that, unless the visit were very carefully handled, manifestations by the French people were apt to occur which would create a serious situation between the French Government and the German authorities. Our plans for the Ambassador's visit were kept as simple as possible. There were hundreds of police officials on duty constantly the day the official receptions at the ship and at the Prefecture were being held. People were kept off the streets and the line of travel of the Ambassador's party pretty generally. In spite of this there were many evidences of the desire of the general public to show their friendship to the Ambassador and their enthusiasm for the relief which was being brought to France. The whole celebration, however, was very definitely greatly restrained. The newspaper accounts, however, did continue voluminous for some days then fell away to almost nothing.

The conversations which we had with the Government with reference to the flour which was coming from America rather clearly showed that something had happened to change the attitude of the Government. It was with great difficulty that we worked out a plan for the distribution of free bread. At one time, during our conversations with the Ravitaillement officials in Vichy, the ranking official at the Conference pounded the desk and said that, unless the wheat or flour could be turned over to the French Government to handle in the regular way, that it be sold through regular commercial channels, that we had best not send it. The representative of the Foreign Office, who was with me and the representative of the United States Embassy, immediately stood up and emphatically told the Ravitaillement man that he was being objectionable and the atmosphere improved somewhat. Finally, after several hours of conference on various days and after many telephone conversations and exchange of memorandums, we did arrive at a plan which they accepted but without enthusiasm. Part of the Ravitaillement officials state of mind was explained, of course, by the fact that the plan which we were proposing did present very great difficulties but I had the impression throughout our conversations that they were also thinking of the difficulties which would be created with the German authorities if America continued to send gifts of supplies to France for the French people and if the French people and the French press continued to show their enthusiasm for these gifts from America.

The "S.S. Leopold" arrived at 7:30 in the morning on May 1st. Since this was May Day there were no newspapers published that day. However, a representative of one of the French newspapers telephoned to me and stated that they had been given instructions not to carry accounts of the arrival of the "Leopold." Freeman Matthews, first Secretary of our Embassy in Vichy, was holding conversations with the French officials there with reference to a statement by the French Government thanking the American people for the supplies which had already come from America and for the two ships carrying flour. A statement was prepared in cooperation with the representative of the Foreign Office which seemed entirely satisfactory and which was approved by several important Government officials after some changes had been made in it. Finally, it went to Admiral Darlan for approval and there it was slashed to pieces and boiled down to three short paragraphs by Admiral Darlan himself. Attached you will see a copy of this release which appeared in the Marseille papers in the evening of May 5th and which has since that time appeared in practically all of the papers in non-occupied France. Not one word of publicity appeared in any papers concerning the arrival of the "Leopold," between the date of May 1st and May 5th, although several representatives of French newspapers had come to our office for material concerning the ship on May 1st and May 2nd. Attached also you will find a clipping of the release which is typical of the way it was handled in other papers. I am told, but have not verified this statement, that the Marseille papers were definitely rebuked for having carried head lines. Papers in other cities placed this article in the interior of the paper with very inconspicuous head lines. Since this article appeared, not one single line of publicity reference to flour ships has come to our attention.

At the time the "Cold Harbor" and the "Exmouth" arrived, representatives of the Italian commission at the port of Marseille, came on board in civilian clothes and asked a few questions concerning the cargo and a few more questions concerning the ship, including the quantity of oil carried and the daily oil consumption and the number of knots per day which the ship had made and then left. They were relatively inconspicuous.

In the case of the "Leopold" and the "Ile de Re" however, both the Italian commission and the German commission at the port of Marseille came on board the ship in uniform and stayed some thirty minutes questioning the Captains with reference to the cargo carried, but more particularly concerning the dimensions of the ship, the plans of the holds, the types of engines, the quantities of oil carried, consumed, the speed and so forth. In the case of the "Ile de Re" it was thirty minutes after the gang plank went down that I was permitted to say "How do you do"

to the Captain (In the case of the "Leopold" the commissions had gone on board several hours after the ship had arrived.)

On May 2nd, the Italian commission came in uniform to the Docks and demanded that several cases of clothing which had come on the "Exmouth", and which were about to be loaded on railroad cars to be sent out to the departments, be opened. It happened to be a the Docks at that time and instructed the foreman to open the cases. I believe I wrote you some days ago concerning these incidents and the fact that the cases opened contained children's dresses and layettes. The Italian commission did have the good grace to seem embarrassed by the whole procedure.

I sent you my cable 140 on May 5th after it had become apparent that we were going to experience some difficulties in the event of additional ships coming from America to France. I felt that we were in a considerably better position to bargain for the treatment which we would have to have if we talked to the Government officials before announcements were made that ships were leaving America (this precaution was totally unnecessary in the case of the "Nekeesport", the "Gold Harbor" and the "Exmouth" because all of the French officials had shown us every courtesy possible and had rendered us every facility promptly as we asked it.)

When I got word that future ships were probably coming, I went to Vichy on May 7th to talk with the Ambassador and Mr. Matthews with reference to the steps which we should take concerning future relief. I was told by Mr. Matthews of the difficulties which they had experienced in connection with the press release concerning the "Leopold" and the "Ile de Rhé". I talked with a high up official of the Ravitaillement department in an informal way and he said to me that he regretted the failure of the Government to permit a more adequate coverage of the arrival of the two ships carrying flour and assured me his office would do everything possible to bring about the necessary publicity which is so necessary if the plan for the giving of free bread is to be entirely effective. He told me that the German authorities were making it increasingly difficult for the French to accept gifts of supplies from America. He stated that there would be no question of letting in supplies which the French Government purchased in America and he hoped that any future shipments of flour would be supplies which had been purchased by the French Government. He stated that he thought there would be no question about our being permitted to continue to supervise the distribution but he added that there was very little prospect that publicity, with reference to our efforts, would be permitted.

As you know, since your instructions of last January, I have avoided giving interviews to representatives of the American Press. However, I did run into some of them at a large party which was given by Douglas Kourilur, a secretary of the United States Embassy in Vichy, and I found they were very much incensed at the fact that the Press censorship had not permitted that they considered proper publicity concerning the arrival of the American Flour. They had the whole story I think and were rather disgusted with me when I stated that the chief publicity with reference to the Flour distribution would come immediately preceding the first free distribution on May 25th. They stated that they thought there was no prospect of real publicity now and were rather emphatic in their advice that American should not send more supplies unless the publicity difficulty was straightened out. I assume this was the basis of the despatch referred to in your cable of 7 R 5. United Press despatch dated Vichy May 8th states increasing difficulty in American Red Cross negotiations with French Government was revealed today and it was learned that until this difficulty is wiped out there would be no more sailings of Red Cross ships from American ports." - This statement was theirs, not mine.

It is apparent of course to all Americans in France at this time that the difficulties are rapidly growing and that there may come a time in a not too distant future when American organizations will be greatly hampered in the giving of relief. We do not find any tendency on the part of the officials in the departments to hamper us in the least at this time and the distributions of milk, vitamins and clothing are moving along very smoothly and according to our pre-arranged plans. The Flour which is being sent out to the departments to be used as farine for children, is rapidly being shipped and I do not anticipate any great difficulty in making this distributed through our regular channels.

Our agreements with the Ravitaillement department with reference to the balance of the Flour also seem to be effective and this Flour is moving out from the port here very rapidly. The officials of the Ravitaillement department with whom we are in constant touch are most obliging and are showing every intention to carry out not only the letter of their agreement with us but also the spirit of the agreement. The final test, of course, will come when it is the moment for wide spread publicity with reference to the free bread distribution which will be given to the whole population in unoccupied France. Since the press is very closely controlled by the German authorities, it is reasonable to expect that there will be difficulties with reference to this publicity.

The Paris press which has recently made a series of attacks on Admiral Leahy and which resented very much the visit which he made to inspect the Red Cross activities in the South of France, have been rather outspoken in their feeling that American supplies coming to France now are for propaganda purposes only and have followed with the statement that there is really no need in France for the supplies which are coming from America. The French people I have seen, who know of this publicity in the Paris papers, have expressed great regret at this attitude of the Germans and have said that it is typical of them that they would confuse the finest human actions with selfish propaganda.

There is at present a great fear on the part of the French people that their Government is rapidly moving towards a close collaboration with the Germans. The whole French people are under the impression that the French industries are at this time working for the Germans. There is a fear that Marechal Petain, whom they trust implicitly, is losing his grip on the situation and that he is finally giving in to those who surround him. They express no confidence whatever in other officials in Vichy and the general moral of the people has declined greatly in the last three weeks. I believe it is accurate to say that a large majority of the French officials in Vichy now are collaborationists. This tendency towards collaboration is, I believe, not based on any enthusiasm for the Germans but is rather founded on the conviction that the Germans will win the war and that France should be on the winning side. The change came in Vichy at the time of the Yugoslavian fall and the Greek defeat. I think a real British victory would go far to change this attitude again, since most of the officials are without deep-seated convictions but are, on the other hand, opportunists. The sad part of this whole situation is that the French people are just as fine and just as solid as they ever were and I believe they would take great privations and great hardships stoically if they had the conviction that their Government was thoroughly honest and thoroughly reliable. However, in the face of a great lot of evidence that their Government is no better than that which brought about the downfall of France, the people do not have this confidence and I think anything could happen in the way of social upheavals if any opportunity presents itself.

This long letter I know must sound very pessimistic to you. It does reflect the attitude of a great many people in France. I believe definitely that we have reached the crest in our effectiveness here in France and that, from here on, we will inevitably face great difficulties in giving relief to the people who need it so badly and who appreciate it so greatly. What I would like to see us do is to bring to France sufficient

quantities of milk and layettes to take care of the need of the children through this next winter. Three shiploads of these supplies (that is 21,000 tons) would be adequate for this purpose if the bulk of the milk were powdered milk. You know, of course, that one gallon of milk powder makes seven gallons of milk. Consequently, 20,000 tons would, in fact, make 140,000 tons of milk.

Our organizations in the departments are now strongly established and it seems a reasonable assumption that, if we have stores of supplies in the cities, towns and villages of France, that no one would be able to take them away from the people without creating serious difficulties for themselves. Any plan which involved holding large quantities of supplies in central warehouses would, of course, be exceedingly dangerous and during the last two months we have made every effort to have the supplies scattered throughout the country and as near the people as we could get them. If the time is going to come when Americans cannot operate effectively in France, then I hope we will by that time have enough supplies to help the children of France through what is certain to be a tragically difficult winter.

With best wishes to you, I am

Very sincerely yours,

(signed)

Richard F. Allen
Delegate to Europe
American Red Cross

The Honorable Norman H. Davis
Chairman
American Red Cross
Washington, D.C.

France Folder

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

May 23, 1941

*File
Personal
Confidential*

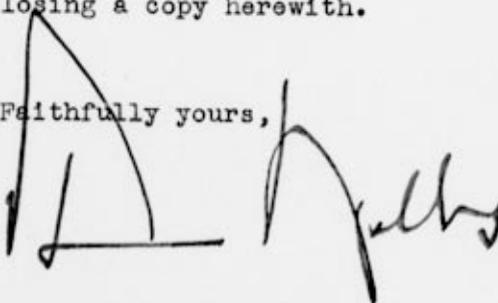
My dear Mr. President:

I have received this morning from Jacques de Sieyes, the de Gaulle representative in the United States, an air mail letter with which he enclosed a copy of a telegram he received yesterday from General de Gaulle's headquarters.

In the belief that this telegram will be of interest to you, I am enclosing a copy herewith.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:
From Mr. Jacques de Sieyes,
May 22, 1941

The President,
The White House.

COPY

FREE FRENCH DELEGATION
in the U.S.A.
730 Fifth Avenue, New York City

May 22, 1941

Mr. Sumner Welles,
Under-Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. Sumner Welles,

Allow me to bring to your attention
the text herein enclosed of the telegram
which I have received today from General
de Gaulle's headquarters.

Very sincerely yours,

JACQUES DE SIEYES

Representative of General de Gaulle
in the U.S.A.

May 21, 1941

LONDON MAY 21, 1941

NLT LIBFRANCE NEWYORK

DR 3876 A communiqué from Vichy dated May 19 announces that Government of Mr. Darlan has decided to reconquer the territories of the Chad of Gaboon and in general of French Equatorial Africa now maintained out of control Germany by Free France. At the moment when Vichy is trying to deliver Syria to the Reich it is evidently a case of execution of a promise made to Hitler by Admiral Darlan.

This news, to which wide publicity must be given, calls for following remarks:

1. General Falvy, who commands the French Colony of the Niger, has been released from a prison camp in Germany after having given oath to hold himself at the disposal of the German military authority at any moment,

2. The African territories administered by Free France are on the route of American war materiel towards the eastern basin of the Mediterranean. In this respect they have a strategic value of the first order,

3. Vichy's menaces cannot move the chiefs of Free France who are decided to derend to the last cartridge against the enemy and his accomplices the territories of which they have charge.

(Signed) FRANCELIB

Tr: :HSF

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PSF: France Folder
JOINT INTELLIGENCE CENTRE
FORTRESS HEADQUARTERS
GIBRALTER
22 June 1941

Dear Mrs. Roosevelt:

Thank you so much for your letter of May 26th, which gave me much pleasure

Here we continue to be in the expectative but the announcement today of Germany's action against Russia may give us a longer breathing space than we had expected/ At the same time it will, I hope, enable the authorities in French Africa to have more time to ponder over the situation. There have been reports recently of the Germans wanting to enter French North Africa through Tunis and then march into Centa, the Spanish Moroccan port facing Gibraltar to threaten the Western end of the Mediterranean.

French officers have told me and I believe it is equally our opinion that America can do much in French North Africa to give a fillip to their morale which is so badly needed, especially as they are so short of supplies.

As you know, French Admirals are liberally sprinkled over French North Africa Admiral Esteva is Resident-General in Tunisia (?), Admiral Abual, who was at Dunkerque, is Governor-General of Algiers & Admiral d'Harcourt is Town Commandant of Casablanca from where the German Armistice Commission directs its ramifications. All these Admirals, as the result of our necessary action at Oran last year, are anti-British, although there is reason to believe that many of the Lower Deck, especially those who hail from Brittany, are for us.

However the tradition of Lafayette is still strong with them and I feel certain that the sending of as many American observers as possible into North Africa & especially into French Morocco (with a knowledge of not only French but also of Arabic) would be invaluable for the purpose of counter-acting the very widespread German propaganda. The Germans from their Consulate-General in Tangiers are spending vast sums of money for this purpose.

If such observers could be supplied daily with American news bulletins for dissemination among both the French and native populations, it would do a world of good. Also the entry of American newspapers such as the Sunday edition of the New York Times if it were sent by airmail across the Atlantic to Lisbon and from there to Gibraltar to be sent direct by the weekly tugboat service to Tangiers or else by our plane service to Tangiers would be a very excellent thing.

If American ships should enter French Morocco and I know that the authorities here are not averse to that provided there are the proper guarantees, then the goods in these ships should be very clearly marked with American slogans and the American origin. Tea and sugar for the natives would be particularly good propaganda as well as filling a much needed want.

It is in French North Africa far easier for America to emphasise U.S.-British cooperation than for us and all we, like all French patriots, are anxious for the news to get there.

I have somewhat ? this question to you, but it is a very real one just now.

Lord Gort, the new Governor and Commander-in-Chief, has arrived and we could have no better General for defending the Rock as he is a real stayer and we are all very pleased here about it. It is pleasant to have the same Chief as I had in France.

Real summer has arrived and we are all in tropical kit. Most of us would welcome some activity instead of the usual routine life, somewhat reminiscent of France in the quiet months of the war.

An Italian plane was over here recently but succeeded in dropping its bombs on Spanish Territory and some French "Glen Martins" have been over but without doing any damage and that is all the excitement we have had so far.

The Spanish Army, as far as we can gather, still succeeds in preventing Spain from going over to the Axis as _____, the Foreign Minister is anxious for. I had a letter today from Mr. _____ in _____ who tells me "We are all very busy here and trying to shed the light of our intelligence on some rather dark and obscure spots".

I have followed with interest James' visit to the Far and Middle East and am so sorry he could not have paid us a visit here.

The President continues to do a wonderful job of work and his message to Germany over the sinking of an American ship is a masterpiece of its kind.

Please remember me very sincerely to all your family and also to Mrs. James Roosevelt,

Yours very sincerely,

Ted

Capt. E. G. De Pury

111 2 1941

Joint Intelligence Centre,
Fortress Headquarters,
Gibraltar,

22 June 1941.

Yours faithfully,
G. J. [Signature]

My dear Mrs. Roosevelt,

Thank you so much for your letter of May 26th, which gave me much pleasure.

Here we continue to be in the expectation but the announcement today of Germany's action against Russia may give us a larger breathing space than we had expected. At the same time it will, I hope, enable the authorities in French Africa to have more time to ponder over the situation. There have been reports recently of the Germans wanting to enter French North Africa through Tunis and then march into Algeria, the Spanish Moroccan port facing Gibraltar to threaten the Western end of the Mediterranean.

French officials have told me and I believe it is equally our opinion that America can do much in French North Africa to

If American ships should enter French
Hawaii & I know that the authorities
here are not aware to that provided there
are the proper guarantees, then the goods
in these ships should be very clearly
marked with American ^{slogans} ~~signs~~ the
American origin. Tea and sugar for the
natives would be particularly good propaganda
as well as filling a much needed want.

It is in French North Africa for
example for America to emphasize U.S. -
British co-operation that for us and
atwe alike, like all French patriots,
are anxious for the news to get there.

I have somewhat labored this
question to you, but it is a very
real one just now.

Lord Gort, the new Governor &
Commander-in-Chief, has arrived &
we could have no better general for
defending the Rocks as he is a real

(3)

stayer and we are all very pleased here about it. It is pleasant to hear the same Chief as I had in France.

Real summer has arrived & we are all in tropical kit. Most of us would welcome some activity instead of the usual routine life, somewhat reminiscent of France in the quiet months of the war.

An Italian plan was over here recently but succeeded in dropping its bombs on Spanish Territory & some French "Glen Martins" have been over but without doing any damage & that is all the excitement we have had so far.

The Spanish Army, as far as we can gather, still succeeds in preventing Spain from going over to the Axis as Serrano Suner, the Foreign Minister, is anxious for. I had a letter today from Mr. Welebell in Mexico who tells me

"We are all very busy here & trying to shed
the light of an intelligence or some rather dark &
obscure spots."

I have followed with interest
James' visit to the Far & Middle East and
am so sorry he could not have paid us a
visit here.

The President continues to do
a unmerciful job of work and his message to
Germany over the sinking of an American
ship is a masterpiece of its kind.

Please remember me very sincerely to
all your family & also to Mrs. James
Roosevelt,

Yours very sincerely,

1881

Capt. E. G. DE PORT,

ON AIR SERVICE



Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt,
The White House,
Washington,
D.C.



Handwritten signature/initials

Handwritten initials and number: 23644

U. S. A.

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June 26, 1941

Dear Bill:

I have written you very seldom of late because I have been more or less laid up with a low-grade infection, probably intestinal flu, since the first of May. The result is that my actual output of mail is about out in half.

You have certainly been going through a life that has aspects akin to punching bags, roller coasters, mules, pirates, and general hell during these past months.

I think that both you and I have given up making prophecies as to what will happen in and to France tomorrow or the next day.

I feel as if every time we get some real collaboration for the good of the French (especially for the children) started, Darlan and some others say or do some stupid or not wholly above-board thing which results in complete stoppage of all we would like to do.

Now comes this Russian diversion. If it is more than just that it will mean the liberation of Europe from Nazi domination -- and at the same time I do not think we need worry about any possibility of Russian domination. I do wish there were a nice central place in the ocean to which you and I could fly in a few hours and spend a few days together. I think of you both often.

My affectionate regards.

As ever,

Admiral William D. Leahy,
American Ambassador,
Vichy, France.

fdr/tmb



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, May 26, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

Since my last personal letter you have been informed by our cable reports that this Vichy Government has come out into the open as an advocate of collaboration with Germany. This new attitude has been brought about by British failure to succeed in Greece and Libya and by demands, the details of which are unknown, made by Hitler at the time of his interview with Admiral Darlan at Berchtesgaden on May 11, 1941.

The Marshal has announced that the agreement made by Darlan has, in principle, received the unanimous approval of his Government, and that the French people who can not have the information necessary to form an opinion should follow him without reservation (sans arriére pensée).

Admiral Darlan recently stated in a radio broadcast that Germany has not asked for the French Fleet; has not asked that war be declared on England; has not asked for any French colonial territory, and has not asked for the surrender of any of the sovereignty of France.

Admiral Darlan failed to give any information as to what concessions are included in Hitler's demands. He did say it is the duty of the French people to follow the Marshal in his work of national renovation.

We have much evidence that public reaction to this "collaborationist" move of the Government is highly unfavorable and that the Marshal has been so informed by some of his loyal officials in the field.

Our Embassy has received an average of fifty letters a day asking that America disregard the action of the Vichy Government and continue its sympathy with and its friendship for the French people.

The Marshal, who is completely and honestly devoted to the welfare of his people, is extremely sensitive to public opinion, which points to the desirability of making a special effort through the radio to accurately inform the French people and to avoid, at least at the present time, making any criticism of the Marshal in person.

People

The Honorable
Franklin D. Roosevelt,
President of the United States of America,
Washington, D. C.

People generally hear the B.B.C., broadcasts and some have receiving sets that get Boston. Most of them consider British news pure propaganda but have much confidence in American news items. A completely controlled anti-American press makes it impossible to get any accurate news to the people except by radio. Even with my excellent and very selective receiving set, interference here in Vichy almost completely blocks out the B.B.C., broadcasts in French. Broadcasts in English come through the interference very well.

There has, within the last few days, been a radical increase in the anti-American attitude of the press in unoccupied France. In the occupied zone we have been the principal targets for a long time but since the Hitler-Darlan agreement we get no favorable notice anywhere.

Our friends in the government offices frankly admit being ashamed of themselves, but all news items about America or about the Ambassador have, in the last few days, been refused publication; and one magazine, Sept Jours, which did print some photographs of the Embassy and the staff was required to black out the whole page before issue.

Princess Antoinette of Monaco recently made arrangements to have photographs made of the distribution of American Red Cross food to infants in Monaco, in which she has been a very active and an exceedingly efficient worker.

At the last minute, after all arrangements had been completed, the local censorship control refused to permit the pictures to be made.

The news of such incidents gets pretty good distribution by word of mouth and it does not improve the already low prestige of Admiral Darlan's group.

I am still of the opinion that a continued distribution of infant food through next winter will be of so much advantage to the cause of the Democratic Governments, by the maintenance of a smouldering if inarticulate opposition, to fully justify its cost.

In regard to all other shipments to continental France, it is my opinion that the present collaborationist attitude of Vichy fully justifies and points to the military advantage of clamping down tight on the blockade whether or not so doing involves engaging escorting French naval vessels.

A number of Frenchmen who earnestly desire a German defeat have told me that the experience of Poland, Norway, and Greece, has convinced them beyond the possibility of change that British promises of assistance have no value. They would have an entirely different estimate of the value of an American promise.

They believe that Germany will take Suez by a pincer movement from Syria and Libya, and will then close the Straits of Gibraltar by a move through Spain to Spanish Morocco. When once the Germans shall have reached North Africa in force French ports and bases may be occupied with or without French consent, and control of the Mediterranean will be lost to the British Fleet.

A seriously vulnerable point today in the German expansion plan is North Africa, and it is my opinion that a comparatively small army of 250,000 men thoroughly equipped with modern weapons, including aircraft, could, with General Weygand's poorly equipped force hold North Africa, insure control of the Mediterranean Sea, and shorten the duration of the war by half.

I do not know how Weygand would react to a bona fide offer of adequate assistance but at the present time at least part of his army would take sides with the assisting force.

It is discouraging to think of how easy it would be to start the German disintegration with so small an army if it were available and free to move.

The situation is not unlike that of a soldier in the other war who said if he had some ham he would make some ham and eggs if he had any eggs.

Some day to win the war superior force must be applied to a weak point in the German military campaign and it is certain that weak points will develop from time to time. Today the vulnerable spot is North Africa.

I do not know how much difficulty the current press campaign is going to place in the way of my having any useful influence with the Marshal, but I feel that he has a friendly personal interest in me, that he is appreciative of your personal interest in his difficulties, and that he is grateful for the assistance America has already given to his distressed people. I also believe that there are many possibilities in this collaboration movement that will not meet with his willing acceptance.

At any rate, I shall make such effort as is possible through personal contact to keep him from going altogether

along

along with the collaborators who will, of course, do whatever they find possible to prevent my seeing the Marshal.

The Embassy is under constant surveillance, and some of our acquaintances in the government offices have already been told that they visit the Embassy too often.

As an evidence of public reaction to "collaboration", there is enclosed a letter taken at random from the large number received within the past few days.

Most respectfully,

William T. Leahy.

Encl.

COPY of letter from President Roosevelt to Admiral Leahy, June 26, 1941,
Washington, D. C.:

The White House
Washington

June 26, 1941

Dear Bill:

I have written you very seldom of late because I have been more or less laid up with a low-grade infection, probably intestinal flu, since the first of May. The result is that my actual output of mail is about cut in half.

You have certainly been going through a life that has aspects akin to punching bags, roller coasters, mules, pirates, and general hell during these past months.

I feel as if every time we get some real collaboration for the good of the French (especially for the children) started, Darlan and some others say or do some stupid or not wholly above-board thing which results in complete stoppage of all we would like to do.

Now comes this Russian diversion. If it is more than just that it will mean the liberation of Europe from Nazi domination -- and at the same time I do not think we need worry about any possibility of Russian domination. I do wish there were a nice central place in the ocean to which you and I could fly in a few hours and spend a few days together. I think of you both often.

My affectionate regards.

As ever,
(signed) Franklin D. Roosevelt.

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

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confidential* France
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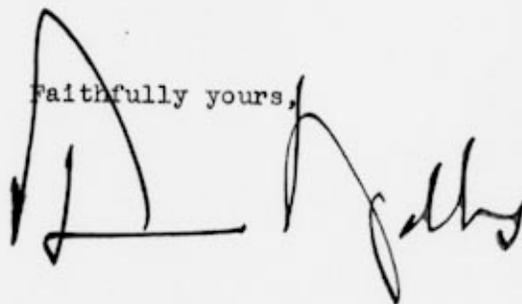
July 15, 1941.

My dear Mr. President:

I am enclosing a copy of a personal letter
I have received from Admiral Leahy under date of
June 30. I believe this letter will be of interest
to you.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enc.

The President,
The White House.

C O P Y

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, June 30, 1941.

My dear Mr. Secretary:

The receipt is acknowledged of your note dated May 19th in regard to Mr. Davila's desire to visit the United States, and I have caused the contents thereof to be transmitted by telephone to Mr. Davila as coming from me and without informing him as to the source of my information.

There is little or no news here that has not been fully reported in our cable dispatches. All of us, including those Frenchmen whose hearts are in the right place, are distressed by the slowness of British progress in Syria. As reported by cable, the Vichy Government started the Syrian campaign with no hope of defeating the invaders but felt it necessary to carry out their repeatedly announced determination to resist invasion of the colonies by anybody. They probably also were advised by Germany to resist in Syria, and the result of the campaign to date has been to reduce the level of British prestige to the neighborhood of plus or minus zero. If what still appears to me to be the unlikely event of a British failure in Syria should happen, as has been the case in every other military effort made by England, or if Germany accomplishes an early defeat of Russia, the ranks of the collaborationists will be crowded with recruits.

Admiral Darlan, either because he believes the United States is conspiring against him, or to discredit America at the instigation of Germany, has apparently succeeded through his press campaign and through instructions to his subordinates in making me look like poison ivy to his colleagues in the Government who seem to be principally concerned with the prospect of holding their jobs. In my not infrequent personal contacts with Darlan he appears friendly and courteous, as one sailor to another, but it is impossible for me to have any confidence in anything he says.

I find it increasingly difficult in the last two or three weeks to have much social contact with subordinate officials of Cabinet rank, but there is as yet no difficulty in seeing and talking freely with the

Admiral

The Honorable
Sumner Welles,
Under Secretary of State,
Washington, D. C.

Admiral and the Marshal. There is no difficulty in talking frankly with both of them, and the Marshal gives me an impression of frankness with some feeling that he shows in the presence of Darlan a shrewdness of age. I almost used the word "foxyness".

This is indicated by information coming to us from subordinates in the Government, probably with the Marshal's knowledge, that is not in exact agreement with his statements made to me in the presence of Admiral Darlan.

It has of late become increasingly apparent that Admiral Darlan does not like to have me see the Marshal alone, and either he or General Huntziger have managed to be present at most of our conferences.

I did succeed, however, last week during Admiral Darlan's absence in Paris in having an interesting talk with the Marshal about the invasion of Russia and the prospects in Syria which were fully reported to the Department by cable.

It is very apparent that the Marshal believes Germany will accomplish a rapid success in Russia and will then either make an offer of peace or will proceed vigorously against Great Britain either in the Mediterranean area or by an invasion of England. He expressed doubt about the practicability of a successful invasion.

If Germany should fail in its Russian adventure, or if England should accomplish a useful military success against the German Army anywhere, I have little doubt that the Marshal would see the advantage to France of eliminating his unpopular collaborationists and moving over toward the other side of the controversy.

Since the attack on Russia I have talked with a number of my colleagues here and with many Frenchmen with the purpose of getting their estimate of the prospects of German success.

The Russian Ambassador, Bogomolov, who has had no military experience, is a collegiate type and is apparently thoroughly informed in Russian history. He says that the Russian Army is fully prepared to make an effective resistance, that all the people of Russia,

including

including the Ukrainians, will fight to the last man and will destroy with fire any territory that they may be forced to evacuate. He said that if it should become necessary, the tactics of Napoleon's time will be exactly repeated and that plans for such action have been made and are thoroughly understood.

It is believed that the sudden breaking of diplomatic relations at noon today was a complete surprise to Bogomolov and to his Embassy staff. I indulge in a hope that the Swedes, or somebody other than this Embassy, will be designated to take care of Soviet interests which will consist principally in looking after a large number of alleged "Reds" who are now being taken into custody.

Some non-partisan, and, presumably well informed, civilians have told me that for more than ten years Germany has been building up a revolutionary party in disaffected parts of the Soviet Union, including the Ukraine, where it may be expected that the population will go over to the German side almost unanimously at the first promising opportunity.

Frenchmen in official, military, and civil life seem generally to believe that the German campaign in Russia will be successfully completed in about two or three months, that the border states of Russia will be organized as buffer states under German influence, probably with some grand dukes as chiefs of the different states; and that Communism will be driven back into the less fertile parts of Russia, or destroyed completely. The French governing class is afraid of Communism and there can be no doubt that Hitler's so-called attack on Communism has improved his standing in their estimation.

Most of my contacts of all classes feel that a successful completion of the German campaign in Russia will be followed by peace proposals that Great Britain will accept.

They also express a belief that failure by the German Army to complete its control of the border states before October, when the cold weather comes, will be the beginning of the end for Nazi Germany.

Most of them seem to hope for a German failure but not to expect it. This number, of course, does not include the real collaborationists.

The

The local political situation has shown no perceptible change since Darlan's agreement with Germany except that there is an evident lessening of the Marshal's popularity. He still has, however, the confidence of a great majority of the people of France who have a thorough dislike for his ministers, particularly Darlan and Huntziger, who are thought by the people to be the active proponents of "collaboration".

Food supplies are inadequate in unoccupied France, where my information is accurate, and prospects for next winter point to almost famine conditions.

I do not have accurate information from the occupied zone but it is reasonable to assume that the food situation there is no better.

With expressions of personal regard,

Most sincerely,

WILLIAM D. LEAHY



*file
personal*

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1-41*

**EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Vichy, July 28, 1941

Dear Mr. President:

Your notes of June 17 and 26 arrived in the last pouch and I immediately sent by mail to the Union Fédérale de Combattants du Limousin an expression of your appreciation of the souvenir dinner set of porcelain which they sent to you some months ago.

Your recent indisposition with "flu" or whatever it was has been fully reported and exaggerated in the local press, and has been a matter of real concern to all of us who appreciate the necessity for a continued understanding control of America's vital interest in the international problem.

The condition of your health has also been a matter of interest to our local "collaborationists" who undoubtedly hoped for the worst.

Recent action by the Vichy Government in giving to Japan its colonies in Asia does not to me indicate any change in its general policy which remains committed to collaboration in spite of indications from Russia that Hitler's prospect of winning the war has in the last month been sensibly reduced.

From a reasonably reliable source in the French War Ministry we have an estimate that Germany has to date suffered in Russia one million casualties, killed and wounded. They should not be able to endure that rate of loss for a long time, and the few anti-Axis Frenchmen with whom I make contact hope and believe that winter will come in time to interfere with the German campaign and immobilize for months a great army in Russia. There is of course at least a chance of a winter collapse of the service of supply such as that which ruined the Russian campaign of Napoleon I.

Rumors are persistent here that at the end of the Russian campaign Germany will make peace proposals that it will be difficult to refuse.

The President,
The White House,
Washington, D. C.

The ...

The Vichy Government and the inhabitants of unoccupied France will in my opinion welcome a peace at almost any price. Because of lack of communication facilities we are not well informed as to the popular attitude in the occupied zone, but such information as we have indicates that it is highly probable that the people there who have lived for a year under direct Nazi rule would prefer a continuation of the war to permanent slavery under German masters.

Indications here point to a German move against the Mediterranean upon the completion of the Russian campaign regardless of its outcome. It is practically certain that Germany some time ago demanded the use of French African bases, and that Darlan was unable to deliver them because of the resistance offered by General Weygand. It is generally believed here that the demand will be renewed and that Weygand will at that time not succeed in preventing use of the bases by Germany.

General Weygand may possibly resign rather than agree to give away the African Empire, but he is a thoroughly disciplined soldier, he is completely loyal to the Maréchal, and he may salve his conscience with an acceptance of "orders is orders".

Now that Vichy has without objection handed Indochina over to Japan it will be difficult to refuse Germany a present of French Africa when a new demand backed by threats is made.

Admiral Darlan told me that Germany is not involved in the Indochina affair and, in fact, knew nothing about it until after a decision was made.

In view of the certain advantage to Germany of getting us involved in the Pacific, and in consideration of the complete control of the Vichy Government heretofore exercised by Germany, that statement is difficult for me to swallow, and my personal inference in regard thereto is obvious.

It is entirely possible that Marshal Pétain was not informed until the negotiations were practically completed. He gave every appearance of being worried when I talked with him about what I termed the prospective "cession of Indochina to Japan".

For ...

For so long as the Marshal retains the full legal authority of an absolute dictator it is possible for him to take charge and exercise his authority, but at the age of 85 such action appears improbable, and it seems to me that he is surely if slowly being manoeuvred into a position where his only purpose will be to hold the loyalty of the French people and to make speeches to school children and veterans.

The Marshal continues to be cordial and friendly in his personal relations with me. Admiral Darlan is also outwardly friendly but I know that he suspects an ulterior motive in everything we undertake and that he is very successful in making it difficult for me to talk privately with the Marshal.

All of us in the Embassy are under constant police surveillance, all our telephone conversations are reported, and at least some officials of the Government have been warned to not become too friendly with any of us.

The de Gaulle movement has not the following or the strength that is indicated in British radio news and in the American press. The Frenchmen with whom I can talk seem to have little regard for M. de Gaulle, even those who are completely desirous of a British victory and whose hopes have been stimulated by the slow progress of Germany in Russia. I have conclusive evidence that there does exist in the occupied zone an organization of de Gaullists which is devoting itself with some small success to sabotage methods of annoying the invaders, and to propagandizing the inhabitants.

The radical de Gaullists whom I have met do not seem to have the stability, intelligence, and popular standing in their communities that should be necessary to success in their announced purpose.

One of them recently told me that all the Ministers of the Vichy Government are under sentence of death which can be carried out at any time and which will be carried out when it suits the purpose of their organization.

That statement is probably only a sample of the propaganda that is being spread about but there is much evidence that the Ministers are apprehensive, and at least some of them are carefully guarded by both uniformed and secret police. Both the Marshal and Admiral Darlan are constantly surrounded by both
military ...

military and plain clothes guards.

While the Marshal personally still holds the confidence of a great majority of the common people of France it is certain that his popularity is decreasing because of recent approaches to full collaboration, the Syrian fiasco, the failure of Germany to repeat in Russia its performance of last year in France, and the turning over of Indochina to Japan.

I am in complete agreement with you that it is impossible to guess what will happen in France tomorrow or the next day, and it is almost as difficult to point to any useful accomplishment that we have made here since my arrival six months ago.

The French people are still friendly with America and practically all of them look to you as their one and only hope for release from Nazi rule.

The French Navy has remained neutral.

The African bases have not yet been turned over to the Axis.

We continue to make every effort that is within the scope of diplomacy to hold these advantages which include about the only assets that seem to pertain to us in the present situation; and unless the Germans continue to meet with effective opposition in Russia I venture a prophecy that the Axis will again demand and this time obtain permission to use the French African bases.

From this point of view today it appears that only a very apparent Axis setback somewhere will sufficiently discredit the "collaborationists" to hold France in even its present near neutral position.

Most respectfully,

Williams Leahy

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

August 21, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

SUMNER WELLES:

I think this is an excellent
letter. Go ahead and send it to
Leahy to deliver.

F.D.R.

France Folder

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

August 18, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

Just before you left on August 3, you asked me to prepare for you a draft of a personal letter which you might send to Marshal Pétain. I told you that I felt your letter to Dr. Salazar had been productive of such highly beneficial results that I believed it would be helpful for you to make a similar approach to Marshal Pétain by means of a personal and confidential letter which Admiral Leahy could deliver to him.

I am submitting herewith a draft of such a letter for your consideration. If it is satisfactory, please return it to me with your signature and I shall then send it with a personal letter to Admiral Leahy, asking him to deliver it.

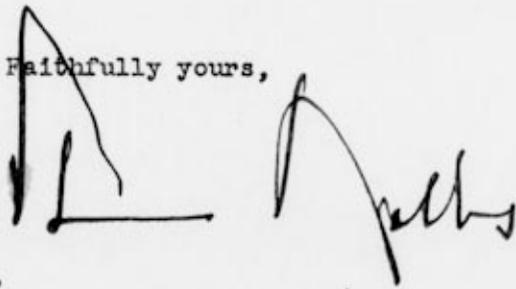
Believe me

Faithfully yours,

Enc.

The President,

The White House.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be "C. Hull", written over the typed name "Faithfully yours,". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Aug 21, 1941

My dear Marshal Pétain:

I am writing this entirely informal and confidential letter to you in the belief that it may be easier for me, in this manner, to give you a clear understanding of the position of the Government of the United States and of the American people in matters relating to the integrity of the French Empire.

The Government of the United States recognizes the limitations imposed upon the French Government in Metropolitan France by the Armistice provisions. It is, however, of the utmost importance to the United States that the continued exercise by France of jurisdiction over the territory of French North Africa and over all French colonies remain unimpaired inasmuch as only in such manner can there be afforded complete assurance of security to the Western Hemisphere insofar as the regions mentioned are concerned.

It, therefore, remains the consistent desire of the United States that there be no infringement of French sovereign control over these territories, provided of course that such control remains in reality purely French, and completely unimpaired.

I repeat that so long as these conditions obtain, the Government of the United States has no desire to see existing French sovereignty over French North Africa or over any of France's colonies changed or infringed.

This policy of the United States I made emphatically clear in the message which I addressed on July 10 to the Congress of the United States concerning the steps which had been taken to assist the people of Iceland in the defense of the integrity and independence of their country.

I feel sure that there has never been any doubt in your own mind with regard to this question and that the questions which have been raised with regard thereto in the press have had their origin in false reports deliberately circulated by propaganda emanating from governments which have desired to impair the traditional relations between our two countries.

For all of the reasons I have mentioned above, this Government will view with lively gratification any steps which have been or may be taken by your Government to prevent German penetration into French North Africa or other French possessions and to strengthen their defense so as to render any surprise attack by Germany, or powers cooperating with Germany, less likely of success.

Because of the belief of this Government that it is the desire of the French Government that any efforts on the part of Germany or on the part of the governments associated with her to extend their control over French colonies be prevented, I have authorized the participation of this Government in such arrangements as the North African trade agreement in order to make clear the desire of the American people and of their Government to do what may be possible to relieve the economic distress of the populations in those areas. I hope that conditions may continue to make it possible for this Government to participate in such measures.

I have felt it desirable to clarify the situation completely and frankly in order to have the assurance that there may not be the slightest misunderstanding between you and myself.

May I add that it is a source of great gratification to me that Admiral Leahy is accredited to you and is in a position to explain to you the full measure of American determination to carry out our present program looking toward ultimate defeat of the forces of aggression typified by Germany and its associates. Admiral Leahy is fully informed as to the extent of our progress. I hope that you are relying on him for your judgment as to the determination of the United States and the American people in this world crisis, as I am confident that he is in a unique position to give you the true facts with regard to our armament effort.

With the assurances of my highest consideration and of my personal regard, believe me

Yours very sincerely,

His Excellency
The Marshal of France,
Phillipe Henri Pétain,
Chief of the French State.

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File
Personal

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

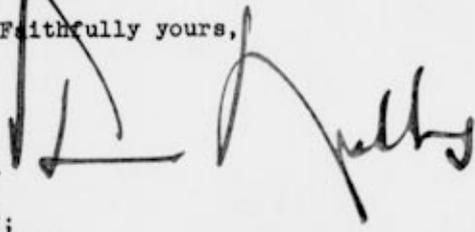
October 27, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

There are enclosed a letter from Marshal Pétain in reply to your personal and confidential letter to him of August 21, 1941, a translation thereof, and a copy of Admiral Leahy's letter to me enclosing the Marshal's communication.

Although there are statements in the Marshal's letter which might give rise to further observations on our part, I believe that, at least for the time being, you will feel that it might be well under present circumstances to consider the Marshal's letter a reply to your communication which does not require any further response.

Faithfully yours,



Enclosures:
Letter from Marshal Pétain of September 17, 1941;
Translation thereof;
Copy of Admiral Leahy's letter of September 18.

The President,

The White House.

LE MARÉCHAL PÉTAÏN

CHEF DE L'ÉTAT

VICHY, le 17 septembre 1941.



Monsieur le Président et Cher Ami,

Je vous remercie très sincèrement d'avoir bien voulu m'exposer, avec toute la netteté qu'autorise une communication de forme personnelle, la position du Gouvernement des Etats-Unis et du peuple américain en ce qui concerne la question de l'intégrité de l'Empire français.

J'ai été particulièrement heureux de trouver dans votre lettre cet esprit de loyale franchise et de compréhension amicale qui, dans les circonstances tragiques que traverse le monde, doit permettre d'écarter tout malentendu entre nos deux

.....

pays également fidèles au maintien des relations qui les unissent
traditionnellement.

C'est donc avec une très sincère satisfaction que je
prend acte du désir du Gouvernement américain de ne voir se
produire aucun changement ni aucun empiètement sur la souveraineté
française actuelle en Afrique du Nord ou dans une colonie fran-
çaise quelconque, tant que la France exerce sur ces territoires
un contrôle souverain et absolument entier. Cette affirmation
met heureusement fin à certains bruits, d'origine sans doute
tendancieuse, mais auxquels les déclarations de personnalités
américaines avaient donné publiquement écho, relatifs à de
prétendues nécessités stratégiques risquant de mettre en cause
la situation de territoires français d'outremer.

En ce qui concerne le maintien par la France de
l'exercice de tous ses droits de souveraineté sur les territoires
de l'Afrique française du Nord et sur toutes les colonies fran-

LE MARÉCHAL PÉTAÏN

CHEF DE L'ÉTAT



gaises, je vous répète de la façon la plus catégorique que le Gouvernement français a toujours été et est toujours résolu à en assurer le respect contre toute attaque. Sa volonté à cet égard est toujours aussi ferme et il en a donné des preuves indiscutables en plusieurs circonstances.

Permettez-moi toutefois de constater que les seules attaques qu'aient eues à subir les territoires relevant de l'autorité ou de la souveraineté de la France ont été effectuées par des forces armées britanniques ou par des rebelles français ouvertement appuyés par ces forces, attaques sans justifications qui ont abouti dans certains cas à l'occupation militaire et qui, malgré leur caractère évident de violence, n'ont provoqué aucune condamnation ni même aucune réprobation dans les milieux dirigeants américains.

Ces agressions ne peuvent que confirmer le Gouvernement français dans sa volonté de renforcer tous les moyens de défense

MINISTRE DES AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
PARIS, le 10 Mars 1954

dont il pourrait disposer pour assurer le respect de ses droits; et je puis vous donner l'assurance qu'il considère comme son premier devoir de s'opposer, avec toutes ses forces, à tout ce qui pourrait mettre en péril le maintien de sa souveraineté sur les territoires dont il a la garde.

Mais, comme vous le rappelez vous-même, la France se trouve actuellement sous le régime de deux conventions d'armistice qui lui imposent certaines obligations limitant sa liberté d'action, notamment en ce qui concerne l'aménagement de ses forces militaires. Elle doit à cet égard subir la présence en Afrique du Nord de commissions de contrôle dont l'autorisation est indispensable pour procéder à tout renforcement des moyens de défense militaire. La présence de ces Commissions ne saurait être invoquée pour mettre en doute la sincérité des efforts que soutient le Gouvernement français pour augmenter, plus particulièrement en Afrique, ses moyens de résistance contre toute

tentative d'atteinte à sa souveraineté et à ses droits.

Cependant, puisque vous voulez bien vous placer vous-même sur le terrain de l'entière franchise, permettez-moi de m'exprimer à mon tour à cœur ouvert. Je ne reviendrai pas sur le triste chapitre - rappelé ci-dessus - des agressions anglaises dont l'Empire français a été l'objet. Mais je tiens à attirer votre attention personnelle sur la situation tragique où l'incompréhension hostile, pour ne pas dire inhumaine, de l'Angleterre met nos malheureuses populations européenne et indigène de Djibouti; je me refuse à croire que le Gouvernement et le peuple américains puissent rester insensibles au sort de cette poignée d'hommes dont l'héroïque fidélité à leur patrie ne peut menacer aucun intérêt britannique.

J'ai encore plus à cœur, à l'occasion de ce libre échange de vues dont je vous remercie d'avoir pris l'initiative, de protester de toute mon indignation contre les efforts odieux

déployés chaque jour avec plus d'acharnement par la propagande
anglaise pour semer le désordre en France. Je n'insiste pas sur
les injures grossières que laisse diffuser le Gouvernement bri-
tannique sur ma personne ou sur mes collaborateurs. Mais il est
de mon devoir de m'élever de toute mon énergie contre tout ce
qui est de nature à diviser les Français, dans un temps où le
malheur nous impose de rester plus unis qu'à aucune autre époque
de notre histoire. Il est de mon devoir de dénoncer au Président
de la grande République américaine une campagne systématique-
ment hostile qui risque d'affecter non seulement la situation
intérieure française, mais aussi les intérêts américains essen-
tiels. Le déchaînement de troubles en France provoquerait en
effet sans aucun doute, sous une forme et dans des limites
impossibles à prévoir, une intervention des forces armées alle-
mandes et une extension de l'occupation qui irait directement
à l'encontre des intérêts essentiels américains, si clairement

définis dans votre lettre.

Ainsi que vous m'y aviez invité, c'est en toute franchise et en toute loyauté que j'ai répondu à votre lettre du 21 août. Cette réponse vous apporte, je l'espère, tous les apaisements que vous attendiez. Soyez sûr en tout cas qu'elle s'inspire uniquement de la très haute sympathie que j'éprouve pour votre personne et de la fidélité aux liens de traditionnelle amitié qui unissent nos deux peuples. Je suis heureux de la confier aux bons soins de l'Amiral LEAHY qui sert ici avec tant de dévouement la cause de l'amitié franco-américaine et qui est toujours assuré de trouver auprès de moi et de l'Amiral DARLAN l'accueil que justifieraient seules la sûreté de son jugement et l'étendue de ses informations si je ne connaissais la confiance particulière dont vous l'honorez./.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur le Président et Cher Ami,

l'assurance de ma plus haute considération et de ma bien sincère
sympathie personnelle.

Ph. Pétaing

Monsieur Franklin Delano ROOSEVELT

Président des Etats - Unis d'Amérique

(TRANSLATION)

Vichy, September 17, 1941

Mr. President and dear friend:

I want to thank you most sincerely for having stated to me, with all the clarity which a personal letter permits, the position of the American Government and the American people with regard to the question of the integrity of the French Empire.

I was particularly happy to find in your letter that spirit of loyal frankness and friendly understanding which, in the tragic circumstances of the world at present, should permit the dissipation of any misunderstanding between our two countries, which are both equally faithful to the continuance of the relations which traditionally unite them.

And so it is with very sincere satisfaction that I note the desire of the American Government to see neither change in nor encroachment on present French sovereignty in North Africa or any other French colony so long as France continues to

maintain

maintain there a complete and sovereign control. Fortunately this statement puts an end to certain rumors, doubtless of tendencious origin, but to which the statements of American personalities have given public echo, relative to pretended strategic necessities which raise the question of the position of French overseas territories.

As concerns the maintenance by France of the exercise of its rights of sovereignty over the territories of French North Africa and of French colonies, I repeat to you in the most categorical manner that the French Government has always been, and is always, determined to assure the respect thereof against any attack. Its determination in this respect remains as strong as ever; and it has given unquestionable proof thereof in several instances.

Permit me, however, to point out that the only attacks to which territories under French sovereignty or authority have been exposed have been carried out by British armed forces, or French rebels openly supported by those forces, attacks without justification which have ended in certain cases in military occupation and which, in spite of their
clearly

clearly violent nature, have provoked no condemnation or any criticism among American leaders. These aggressions can only confirm the French Government in its determination to strengthen its defences by all possible means and to oppose with all its force whatever could imperil the maintenance of its sovereignty over the territories which it guards.

But as you yourself point out, France is at present under the régime of two Armistice conventions which impose certain limitations on its liberty of action, notably with respect to the disposition of its military forces. She must in this respect permit the presence in North Africa of control commissions whose authorization is indispensable to the carrying out of any reinforcement of its means of military defense. The presence of these commissions should not be considered as casting any doubt on the sincerity of the efforts of the French Government to increase, especially in Africa, its means of resistance against any attempt to infringe its sovereignty and its rights.

However, as you are good enough to be entirely frank with me, allow me to express myself on the same basis. I shall not revert to the sad

chapter, mentioned above, of British aggressions against the French Empire, but I want to draw your personal attention to the tragic situation in which the hostile, not to say inhuman, lack of understanding on the part of England places our unfortunate European and native populations at Djibouti. I refuse to believe that the American Government and people can remain unmoved at the lot of this handful of men whose heroic loyalty to their country cannot possibly threaten any British interest.

Even closer to my heart is my desire, on the occasion of this free exchange of views which I thank you for having initiated, to protest with all my indignation against the odious efforts exerted every day with greater violence by English propaganda to sow disorder in France. I pass over the gross insults which the British Government permits to be broadcast with respect to my person and my collaborators, but I must protest with all my strength against everything that is calculated to divide the French people at a time when our misfortune demands that we remain more united than in any other period of our history. It is my duty to denounce to the President of the great

friendly

friendly American Republic a systematically hostile campaign which is likely to affect not only the internal situation of France but also essential American interests. The outburst of troubles in France would doubtless provoke in a form and with limits impossible to foresee an intervention of German armed forces and an extension of the occupation which would run directly counter to the vital American interests so clearly defined in your letter.

As you requested, it is with a completely frank and straightforward spirit that I have replied to your letter of August 21. I trust that this answer will prove to be the reassuring one that you expected. In any event please be assured that it is inspired only by my very great personal liking for you and my fidelity to the ties of traditional friendship which unite our two peoples. I am happy to entrust it to the care of Admiral Leahy, who so devotedly serves the cause of Franco-American friendship here, and who is always assured of finding with me and with Admiral Darlan the friendly reception which his excellent judgment and wealth of information would of themselves deserve even if

I did not know of the very special confidence which you repose in him.

Please accept Mr. President and dear friend the assurance of my highest consideration and my sincere personal good wishes.

(Sd)

Ph. Pétain

COPY:NNE

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Vichy, September 18,

My dear Mr. Secretary:

There is forwarded herewith enclosed, for delivery to the President, the reply made by Marshal Pétain to the President's personal and confidential letter to the Marshal of August 21, 1941.

This reply, which was composed by RoCHAT in accordance with instructions given by Admiral Darlan, was received this date and a summary was immediately reported in our cable No. 1195, September 18, 11 A.M.

It would appear that the Marshal does not consider the Indochina agreement a surrender of any French rights of sovereignty, in which case a similar agreement with any nation covering other French colonial territory would not be inconsistent with his "maintenance of French sovereignty".

I have a definite impression, from conversation with Admiral Darlan, that he will endeavor to induce the Marshal to at least make commercial facilities of Bizerta-Tunis
available

The Honorable

Sumner Welles,

Under Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

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available to the Axis Powers when a demand therefor is made. Such a concession would not be considered by Vichy a relinquishment of "sovereign rights".

Very truly,

(Signed) William D. Leahy.

Encl.