

● PSF: Great Britain, Jan. - Sept. 1940

file
Confidential

PSF: Great Britain
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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

January 3, 1940

My dear Mr. President:

I enclose copy of a confidential note from the British Ambassador in which he requests me to bring to your attention the text of the communication the British and French Governments have just made to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments.

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure:

Note from the British
Ambassador.

The President,

The White House.

Department of State

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ENCLOSURE

TO

Letter drafted 1/3/40

ADDRESSED TO

The President

BRITISH EMBASSY,

WASHINGTON, D. C.,

January 3rd, 1940.

~~Confidential~~

Dear Mr. Secretary,

I have been instructed to inform the President in confidence that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the French Government have made a communication to the Swedish and Norwegian Governments to the following effect:-

Having regard to the League resolutions on help for Finland, His Majesty's Government and the French Government are giving all the indirect assistance in their power and trust that the Swedish and Norwegian Governments will do the same and afford all the necessary/

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necessary facilities for help to Finland from other sources. His Majesty's Government and the French Government assume that the Swedes and Norwegians can not be indifferent to the threat to the whole of Northern Scandinavia involved in the subjugation of Finland, and that they will be prepared to examine the question immediately in a spirit of mutual solidarity. As their own attitude must be an important consideration in this examination, His Majesty's Government and the French Government give an assurance that they are concerned with the preservation of
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the integrity and independence of Sweden and Norway as well as of Finland, and are therefore prepared to consider in what circumstances and in what form they could give an assurance of help against the possible consequence of these countries assisting Finland.

I should be very grateful if you would be so kind as to convey this information to the President.

Believe me,

Dear Mr. Secretary,

Very sincerely yours,

(SGD) LOTHIAN

Post Great Britain



7 January, 1940.

My dear Mr. President,

In pursuance of the promise I made you in the telegram I sent on Christmas day, I now enclose a précis of the reports we have so far received about the Naval action off Montevideo.

Yours sincerely,

Winston Churchill

The President of the United States.

NAVAL ACTION OFF MONTEVIDEO.

The first sighting report from H.M.S. AJAX, at 0615 hours 13th December, stated that the ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE was in position 34° South 49° West steering a course 275°. H.M.S. ACHILLES and EXETER were in company with AJAX. The ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE closed, and opened fire at 0618 with one turret on EXETER and the other on the two smaller cruisers. After two salvos she concentrated fire from her heavy guns mainly on EXETER, with an occasional salvo from one turret on the lighter ships. H.M. Ships attacked according to a pre-arranged plan with EXETER on one flank, and AJAX and ACHILLES on the other concentrating their gunfire. Flank marking was employed.

H.M.S. EXETER opened fire at 0620, H.M.S. ACHILLES at 0622 and H.M.S. AJAX at 0623. The 6-inch concentration firing by ACHILLES and AJAX commenced at 0625.

EXETER's B turret was hit by an 11" shell at 0624, all the bridge personnel being killed by splinters except the Captain, who then went aft and conned the ship from there. EXETER fired her starboard torpedoes 7 minutes later without effect and GRAF SPEE turned away under smoke a few minutes later, thereafter making considerable use of smoke and zigzagging. An aircraft was flown off AJAX for spotting at 0637, and continued this duty during most of the subsequent firing. At 0640 ACHILLES' director control tower

tower was hit, 3 men being killed and 3 wounded. Spotting was affected and 6" concentration firing from AJAX and ACHILLES was rendered temporarily ineffective.

EXETER's A turret was hit at 0641, whereupon she turned and fired her port torpedoes, resuming a westward course 7 minutes later. She continued firing from Y turret under local control until 0730, when power failed owing to flooding, and the vessel withdrew to eastward very shortly afterwards.

Meanwhile AJAX and ACHILLES continued to attack, proceeding at full speed, alternatively closing A arcs to shorten range and then opening to develop maximum gunfire. GRAF SPEE concentrated on the smaller cruisers from 0720, and AJAX received a hit which put X and Y turrets out of action at 0725. She then fired 4 torpedoes, causing the enemy vessel to turn away. At about 0745, after 81 minutes action at ranges from 19,000 to 8,000 yards, AJAX and ACHILLES withdrew, the former vessel at this time having only three 6" guns in action. ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE made off towards the River Plate, shadowed by our 6" cruisers. During this phase the German vessel made very accurate bursts of fire at AJAX (at 1915) and at ACHILLES (at 1010, 2055 and 2132). The last burst took place well within the River Plate. ACHILLES replied to the firing at 2057, and is thought to have straddled the GRAF SPEE.

ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE's 11" firing was very accurate throughout, particularly for line even at 12 miles during
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shadowing phase, though her 6" gunnery deteriorated considerably during the action. She made considerable use of smoke floats and frequently made large alterations of course to avoid punishment.

The British ships were fought with the utmost resolution and skill, excellent work particularly being carried out by repair parties. Casualties in EXETER were severe, amounting to officers, killed and died of wounds, 5, wounded 3; men, killed and died of wounds, 59, wounded 17. AJAX had 7 men killed and 13 wounded, including 3 seriously wounded. ACHILLES had 2 officers wounded, 4 men killed and 7 men wounded.

H.M.S. EXETER suffered much the greatest damage, the strength of her structure being reduced to 40% forward of 111 bulkhead. Ship's side, bulkheads and frames from the waterline upwards were badly shattered and distorted, upper and lower decks being partially torn away and deflected.

Only the two 8 inch guns of Y turret and one 4 inch gun remain fit for action. Two searchlights were riddled.

Engines and boilers are undamaged.

H.M.S. AJAX suffered the following damage:-

X turret out of action, Y turret damaged but in action. Extensive damage to upper deck and all compartments surrounding and above X lobby, but no underwater damage and vessel can steam at full speed.

H.M.S. ACHILLES

H.M.S. ACHILLES suffered no major damage and full speed and all armaments are available. Minor damage was caused to vessel above waterline and to electrical leads and apparatus.

The Admiralty naturally had incomplete reports of the damage caused to the ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE. It is believed that her main armament suffered no great harm, though the efficiency of the control tower, which received four hits, was seriously impaired. One 6" gun and one pair of A.A. guns were reported out of action, the rangefinder on the fore superstructure probably out of action, and one searchlight damaged. One aircraft was reported to be wrecked.

A large hole was made on the port side of the fore messdeck, and other small holes elsewhere. It was also reported that the vessel was holed twice below the water line, but this cannot be vouched for. In all she was hit between 50 and 60 times.

PSF
Great Brit.

February 1, 1940.

My dear Churchill

Ever so many thanks for that tremendously interesting account of the extraordinarily well fought action of your three cruisers. I am inclined to think that when we know more about the facts, it will turn out that the damage to the ADMIRAL GRAF SPEE was greater than reported.

At the time of dictating this, I think our conversations in regard to search and detention of American ships is working out satisfactorily -- but I would not be frank unless I told you that there has been much public criticism here. The general feeling is that the net benefit to your people and to France is hardly worth the definite annoyance caused to us. That is always found to be so in a nation which is 3,000 miles away from the fact of war.

I wish much that I could talk things over with you in person -- but I am grateful to you for keeping me in touch, as you do.

Always sincerely,

Right Honorable Winston Churchill,
The Admiralty,
White Hall,
London, England.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

February 1, 1940.

~~SECRET CONFIDENTIAL~~

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY:

The enclosed is an official report from the British in regard to the naval action off Montevideo.

Please see to it that it is kept confidential.

F.D.R.

Enclosure.

dj/FDR

Only copy sent to Navy. Original retained for President's confidential files. "Naval action off Montevideo".

REGRADED
UNCLASSIFIED

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The President of the United States.

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RECEIVED
JUN 14 AM '40

FIRST LORD OF THE ADMIRALTY

Letter to the President

From Sumner Welles----dated February 1, 1940

Re: PROPOSED MESSAGE TO THE NEUTRAL COUNTRIES----a copy of which he encloses; also Mimeographed copy of message which was released at State Dept on Feb 9, 1940 and relates to proposed diplomatic conversations of Sumner Welles----attached are two messages from Prime Minister Chamberlain about Mr. Welles anticipated trip abroad.

See--Welles folder-Drawer 1-1940 (Mimeo copy-Feb 9, 1940)

THE SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
WASHINGTON

PS: Head Britain
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file
personal

February 6, 1940

My dear Mr. President:

I am sending you herewith a copy of a message which the British Ambassador delivered in person this afternoon and which I think you will find very interesting.

Yours sincerely,



The President,
The White House.

Personal message from the Chancellor
of the Exchequer to the Secretary of
the Treasury.

I should like to add a personal word to the message about our dollar position which you will by now have received. The responsibility which rests primarily on me, of seeing that our gold and dollar resources are husbanded in such a way that we can if necessary face a long war, is a very grave one, and I particularly welcome the help and advice which you give to Mr. Paul Reynaud and myself. I know that, in order to give us your help, you need from us the fullest information which we can give you, and you may be sure that at all times it is my wish to keep you very fully informed. Whatever information you desire will be gladly supplied, but I know that you will understand that the uncertainties of war make it impossible for me to have at this time anything like a final picture of what our dollar requirements are likely to be, or any cut and dried plan of how they can best be covered. As regards our holdings of United States securities, of which you have full particulars, my desire would be to realise steadily, without forcing the pace to an extent which would result in a serious break in prices.

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February 14, 1940

For copy of the President's longhand letter to Chamberlain
of Feb 14, 1940 to be presented by Sumner Welles on his Secret
Mission abroad.

See: Sumner Welles-Drawer 1-1940

The Right Honorable Richard G. Casey, D.S.O., M.C.,
the newly appointed Minister of Australia to the United
States

Mr. Casey is forty-nine years of age; educated in Australia and at Cambridge University; served with the Australian Imperial Force in Gallipoli and France in the war of 1914-1918, for the last months of the war on the staff of Sir John Monash, Commander of the Australian Corps. After the war he was engaged in business until 1925 when he entered the newly formed Australian Department of External Affairs and served as Australian External Affairs Officer in London until 1931 when he resigned, returned to Australia, and was elected a member of the House of Representatives. In 1933 he became a Minister of State and in 1935 he was appointed Treasurer. He gave up this office and became Minister of Supply in 1939. He was appointed a Privy Councillor on March 9, 1939.

He made an extensive stay in the United States during the period 1920-1923, and visited Washington in the summer of 1937.

Mrs. Casey and their son and daughter are expected to arrive in Los Angeles on March 18.

PSF: St Britain

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

DIVISION OF PROTOCOL

March 2, 1940

White House:

The remarks of ~~the~~ President
should be dated before ~~they~~
are handed to the Minister.

G.T.S.

Have been dated



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

MR. PRESIDENT:

In handing to you today letters by which The King, my Sovereign, accredits me to be His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary with the special object of representing in the United States the interests of the Commonwealth of Australia, I am commanded by His Majesty to convey to you his hope that the appointment of a Minister especially charged with representing Australian affairs will tend to strengthen still further the friendly relations between the United States and British Commonwealth of Nations.

On behalf of His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia and of the Australian people, I convey their best wishes for your personal happiness and for the prosperity and well-being of the nation over whose destinies you preside. The Australian Government believes that the creation of this new link across the Pacific should be instrumental in further advancing the friendship between our two countries, which is already well founded on the bases of mutual interest, common political ideals and similar ways of life.

I need hardly assure you, Mr. President, that it will always be my anxious endeavour to do all that lies in my power towards these ends. It is a great satisfaction to me to be entrusted with a mission to a great country with which I have had such agreeable personal associations.

The new link which is being forged is described in the formal language of diplomacy as "an exchange of Ministers between the United States of America and the Commonwealth of Australia." But the welcome which I have received here and that which awaits the Minister for the United States in Australia indicate that the new development might be better described in a simple phrase as the stretching of the hands of friendship between your country and ours across the Pacific. The Government to which I am responsible hopes and believes that from this innovation will flow most beneficial results to our two countries.

March 5th, 1940

*file
personal*

The President
of the
United States of America

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

March 5, 1940.

Conf Memo to "Naval Person" (American Embassy-London)

From the President

Attached is memo to President from Adolph Berle-March 5, 1940
Re: President's message to Naval Person

See:Berle---Drawer 1-1940

Original of this document is in PSF G.B.; Church

THE REMARKS OF THE
NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA
THE RIGHT HONORABLE RICHARD G. CASEY, D.S.O., M.C.
UPON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF HIS
LETTERS OF CREDENCE

Mr. President:

In handing to you today letters by which The King, my Sovereign, accredits me to be His Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary with the special object of representing in the United States the interests of the Commonwealth of Australia, I am commanded by His Majesty to convey to you his hope that the appointment of a Minister especially charged with representing Australian affairs will tend to strengthen still further the friendly relations between the United States and British Commonwealth of Nations.

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your

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your country and ours across the Pacific. The Government to which I am responsible hopes and believes that from this innovation will flow most beneficial results to our two countries.

PSF Grant (Bureau)

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DRAFT OF
THE PRESIDENT'S REPLY
TO THE REMARKS OF THE
NEWLY APPOINTED MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA
THE RIGHT HONORABLE RICHARD G. CASEY, D.S.O., M.C.
UPON THE OCCASION OF THE PRESENTATION OF HIS
LETTERS OF CREDENCE

Mr. Minister:

It gives me great pleasure to receive from your hands the Letters by which you are accredited as His Britannic Majesty's Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary with the special object of representing in the United States the interests of the Commonwealth of Australia.

I greatly appreciate the expression of good wishes for myself and for the American people which you have just conveyed to me from your Government, and I take this occasion to reaffirm my abiding sentiment of good will toward the Government and people of Australia. I likewise entertain the confident hope that your presence in

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the United States and the presence of a Minister of the United States in Australia will tend to strengthen still further the friendly relations between the United States and the British Commonwealth of Nations.

To your most agreeable description of the link which this meeting consummates and to your exposition of its great significance and your hopes for its success, I can only add that the belief of myself and of the Government of the United States in the wisdom of its establishment and our feeling of happiness over the choice which your Government had made in yourself leave no doubt that the friendship between our two countries will be more firmly cemented. You may be assured that the welcome extended to you reflects a desire on the part of this Government to give you its most earnest cooperation and to make your sojourn in your high capacity a pleasant one.