

• PSF

Italy: William Phillips 1935-~~1938~~ May 1939

PSF: Phillips

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

P.F.

August 6, 1935.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Dear Mr. President:

I did not fail to send a telegram to our Minister in Cairo, suggesting that he endeavor to get the further information with regard to Italian troops which you desire.

We are just in receipt of a strictly confidential telegram from Mr. Fish, saying that he has had a talk, in confidence, with our Consul at Port Said, that it may be possible for the Consul to obtain the information desired and that there appears to be no serious objection to making such an attempt. Mr. Fish will report the result as soon as possible, but he adds that any undue haste might defeat the object.

We have also received a strictly confidential written despatch, dated July 8th, from Mr. Fish with regard to troop movements through the Canal. It appears

The President

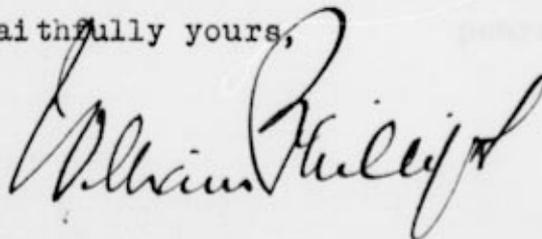
The White House.

*[Faint signature]*

pears that when the Consul first visited the Canal authorities they declined to give him any information on the subject, advising him at the same time that the Italian authorities had requested the Suez Canal Company not to divulge any information on the subject. However, despite this attitude of the authorities, the clerk of the Consulate was able to obtain access to the pertinent statistics and ascertained that up to July 1 last a total of 88,130 Italian troops had passed southward through the Canal on the way to Italy's East African colonies. 8,600 members of the Italian expedition had, up to July 1, been returned to Italy, presumably on account of illness.

It would seem to me that, with such a large proportion of troops being invalided at the commencement of the rainy season, with the full force of the tropical rains during July and August, a larger percentage of invalided troops may well be anticipated.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text "Faithfully yours,".

Excerpts from both these letters  
published in William Phillips, Ventures  
in Diplomacy (Boston; Beacon Press,  
1952), pp. 204-205.

RJ  
3/28/56

PSF Phillips <sup>(Student)</sup> Solder

May 17, 1937.

Dear Bill:-

It is good to find your interesting letter of April twenty-second on my return. Your personal impressions are a great help.

The more I study the situation, the more I am convinced that an economic approach to peace is a pretty weak reed for Europe to lean on. It may postpone war but how can it ever avert war in the long run if the armament process continues at its present pace -- or even for that matter at a slower pace? The answer they all give to any plea for reduction in armaments is that millions of workers would be thrown on the street. How do we make progress if England and France say we cannot help Germany and Italy to achieve economic security if they continue to arm and threaten, while simultaneously Germany and Italy say we must continue to arm and threaten because they will not give us economic security.

Anything, of course, that postpones war is that much to the good. The progress of the disease is slowed up but the disease remains -- and will probably prove fatal in the next few years.

Such are my feelings after a successful fishing trip in which I was able to get sufficiently far away from the forest to look at it as a whole

without being lost among the individual trees.

I hope you and Caroline have had a wonderful cruise through the Greek islands.

Love to you all,

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

Rome, April 22, 1937.

Personal and [REDACTED]

Dear Mr. President,

The atmosphere surrounding Italy's international relations changes so rapidly that a letter written in Rome is out of date when it reaches Washington. Nevertheless, in response to your request, I am venturing to give you a few personal impressions of the present trend of affairs.

More and more it is realized here that peace is absolutely essential for Italy. The Duce has recently emphasized this, not only to Tom Lamont, who is now in Rome, but to other American visitors. He said, in his customary dramatic way, "I must have peace", and at the same time he expressed his wish for economic cooperation with other countries. Both he and Ciano are planning public utterances along these lines in the near future, and their intention in this respect may result from a variety of causes. There is deep concern over the Spanish situation. The Italians recklessly assumed the entire burden of supporting Franco in the belief that Italian soldiers are invincible.

But

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

But now the Government fervently hopes to find some way of withdrawing the "volunteers" without too much loss of face, perhaps after a mild victory somewhere, or a little later through mediation.

It may be that the growing anti-Italian sentiments in America and in England have convinced the Duce that he must adopt different tactics. Anyway, he now realizes that he is regarded abroad as a man who wants war and that his entente with Germany merely aggravates this feeling in foreign countries. He is certainly in a curious position. Through his dynamic personality and great human qualities he has created a new and vigorous race throughout Italy. He is essentially interested in bettering the conditions of the masses and his accomplishments in this direction are astounding and are a source of constant amazement to me. To inspire in the people a "martial spirit" and intense patriotism are the methods which he has adopted to lift the people out of the "slough of despond" into which they had sunk before he appeared on the stage.

His bellicose language and the rattling of the sword, which so alarms the rest of the world, is, in his opinion, necessary to keep alive this new spirit of the Italian people. But he must see now that his present course cannot continue indefinitely since the rest of the world is taking

him

him too literally. Forces are in the making abroad which are unhealthy and even dangerous for Italy's future.

Being the intelligent man he is, I am hopeful that there may come about soon a change of front and the adoption of more conciliatory attitudes.

However, if he intends to adopt a policy of economic cooperation with other countries, he will probably have to do so gradually as the public here has been thoroughly trained to believe in economic self-sufficiency.

There is another thought that I would like to express. Mussolini is sincerely anxious to have good relations with Great Britain. He nearly succeeded in doing so with the signature of the gentlemen's Mediterranean agreement, but unfortunately immediately thereafter both London and Rome committed a series of stupid blunders which, aggravated by the press on both sides, have reduced mutual good feeling to near the zero point. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the Duce wants badly to get back into Great Britain's good graces and Ciano is certainly trying his best to do so.

Italy's relations with Germany are for the time being intimate. The Foreign Office group tell you that this intimacy is essential for the peace of Europe, that, as a result, Italy is in a favorable position to put the brakes on Germany should a crisis arise, and that no other country

is

is at present able to do so. Whether the Rome-Berlin axis is made of steel or wood, only the future can tell. Personally I have my doubts as to its durability.

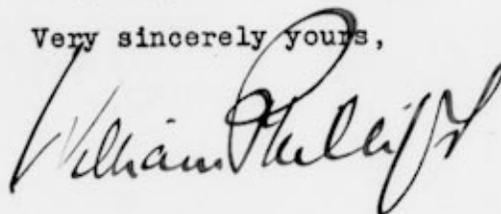
Again I am convinced that Italy has no other Mediterranean ventures in mind. Frequently Mussolini has referred to Italy as a "satisfied Power". It is certain that the Italians have begun to appreciate the enormity of the task that lies before them in Ethiopia, which will strain every resource, economic and financial, for many years to come. They cannot possibly embark on any new Mediterranean experiments at present and, as I have said, they are already sick and tired of their venture in Spain.

Not long ago I asked Ciano for an expression of his views with regard to limitation of armaments. He replied that until the Ethiopian problem had been satisfactorily adjusted at Geneva, Italy would not take part in any conferences under the auspices of the League, but that thereafter Italy would be glad to associate herself with the United States in any general movement towards world-wide armament limitation.

None of these thoughts will be new to you but I am giving them to you nonetheless because it is a pleasure to talk with you even on paper. Caroline has returned  
and

and says that you are in the best possible health, all of which is the best of news. While you are enjoying your cruise, we shall be taking a brief trip through the Greek islands with Chester Aldrich of the American Academy here and his young artist students.

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text "Very sincerely yours,".

August 11, 1937.

Dear Bill:-

John has written most enthusiastically of his days with you and it was mighty good of you to do so much for the two of them. I am proud that John seems to have interested Mussolini.

What you say about the rapid changes in the international situation well illustrate my feeling that just about everything international is on a day to day basis -- everywhere, that is, except in North, Central and South America where we seem to have aided in achieving a fair stability.

I am delighted that you are leaving for home September second. I may be at Hyde Park when you arrive and hope that you will run up there to see me. A little later on I may take a trip West.

Our best to you all.

Affectionately your old friend,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

PSF Phillips

Rome, July 30, 1937.

Dear Mr. President,

It was great fun to have your son John with me for a few days. I went to Naples to meet my three boys who came over on the same ship and I brought the two Johns and my boys back to Rome with me. I was so anxious that your John should see as much as possible of Naples and Rome during his brief stay that I put him through a somewhat heavy program which, I may say, he bore in a generous and courageous spirit. During our one day in Naples I took him to Herculaneum, Pompei, the National Museum, and motored him back to Rome, stopping on the way to inspect the two Caligula boats recently brought up from the bottom of Lake Nemi, - a program which should have taken at least four or five days. He may have written you about his audience with the Duce. I introduced him and let him do most of the talking, which he did with ease and confidence. He spoke of his interest in the development of the Pontine Marshes, through which we had motored on our way up from Naples,

in

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

in the Forum Mussolini, which we had visited thoroughly in the morning and which is the Duce's special pet, and it was quite clear that Mussolini responded with pleasure to John's expressions of interest. The interview was highly successful and I felt proud of John and have wanted to tell you so.

Internationally, the situation here continues to be kaleidoscopic. Only a few weeks ago the most intense bitterness was manifest in the press and in Government circles against the British, whereas today there is a very evident effort being made in Rome and in London to restore friendly relations. In conversation with Count Ciano yesterday I expressed the hope that the more favorable tone of the Italian press reflected the attitude of the Government. He admitted that this was so and seemed hopeful that a decided change for the better was actually taking place in the relations of the two Governments.

As you know so well, the cordial or non-cordial relations of Italy with other powers is determined by the recognition or non-recognition of Ethiopia, and I only hope that at the next meeting of the League of Nations in September, ways and means will be found to give general de jure recognition. My information is that the British

Foreign

Foreign Office is most anxious to bring this about, realizing that they cannot make any real progress with Italy until they have recognized the Empire. Many countries of course have already done so in one way or another, some by accrediting Consuls to Addis Ababa, others by using the title of Emperor in formal address to the King of Italy, and still others by formal recognition of Italian sovereignty.

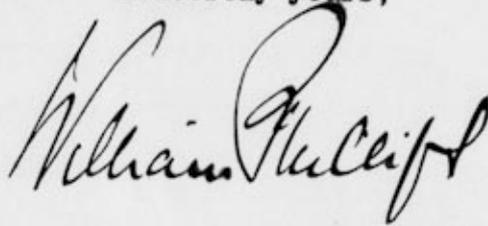
Whether we could take some similar action before the meeting of the League in September is a matter for the Department's decision. Personally, I wish we could do so for I do not see the use in shutting our eyes any longer to facts even though, from our point of view, they may be unpleasant.

The slaughter that is taking place at the present moment around Madrid is frightful and I only hope that the American volunteers who, to my surprise, are taking part in the struggle, will not be entirely wiped out. Just how many have enlisted we do not know, but a young Associated Press correspondent, just back from Madrid, reports that many hundreds have done so. The Italians  
remain

remain always confident that Franco will win.

I sincerely hope that after the adjournment of Congress you will be able to take a well-earned holiday. If all goes well, I am planning to sail for the United States on leave on September second and am looking forward tremendously to a talk with you during the two or three weeks that I shall be in America.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

published in  
Foreign Relations  
of the US, 1937

VOL. I PAGES 156-157  
*General*

*file  
preserved*

*P.S.F. Phillips*

Rome, November 19, 1937.

Dear Mr. President,

On my return to Rome I found that the scene had changed considerably and is still changing. There was more emphasis placed on the Rome-Berlin axis and the press campaign against England and France was being resumed with all its customary vituperation. And now more recently, the United States is coming in for unfavorable notice, although as yet without the bitter criticism bestowed upon the British and French, and certainly without the bitterness of our own press against Italy. Happily, the Italian press is not allowed to carry American criticisms and I do not believe, therefore, that anyone except those at the top have any idea of the anti-Mussolini attitude of our press. During the last two or three days the only news from America found in the Italian papers is a reference to your toothache, and this makes sad

reading

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

reading for all your friends.

The principal event, of course, since my return has been the three-cornered Anti-Comintern Pact. For days after its signature by Italy, the press sang its praises and those of the Japanese Government and people to such an extent that one became nauseated.

I have, of course, taken the occasion to call upon Count Ciano for an explanation of the affair, and have reported everything that I could gather to the Department. Every sort of oral assurance has been given me that the Pact has no ulterior motives and is merely an official expression of the well-known anti-communist sentiments of the three Governments. But I am far from convinced. The Rome-Berlin axis began in the same way, with the repeated assurances in similar vein, but nevertheless it has grown into a strong alliance between the two Governments. I repeat the word "Governments" because I cannot discover any enthusiasm outside of Government circles for this close tie-up with Germany at the expense, apparently, of good relations with other Powers. Italians do not like Germans, nor do Germans like Italians. But people here are suppressing their own personal feelings  
and

and are willingly obeying instructions from above to shout and hurrah whenever an official German appears in their midst, and we are having a continuous stream of such personages. It seems clear that Italy's signature to the Pact was obtained by pressure from Germany, acting presumably at the request of Japan, and that the Duce was reluctant to sign. However, now that the deed has been done, official circles are enthusiastic.

As I have also reported to the Department, Ciano has given me new assurances with regard to Italy's attitude towards Spain. He has declared emphatically that the Spanish people would not permit the alienation to any foreign Power of "one inch of Spanish territory", and that if any Spanish Government attempted to do so it would be its death blow. He has also assured me that Italy does not ask for any favored position, political or economic, in Spain, although at the same time he added that it would be pleasant to have some cash recompense for the Italian efforts in Spain.

There is no doubt in my mind that they would like to be well out of the Spanish imbroglio for already there are certain distress signals appearing on the horizon.

Prices

Prices are rising rapidly, especially that of coal. For example, a year ago the authorized price of a medium quality was one hundred fifty-three lire a ton; now the authorized price is two hundred fifty lire, and the purchasing price is, of course, even higher. Food and even bread are becoming dearer, and it is to be remembered that the masses are desperately poor. Although still in whispers, complaints are heard quite generally against a continuance of the Spanish campaign, and unless the Italian troops can soon be withdrawn I think there will be outspoken dissatisfaction. The extent of the present dissatisfaction is exceedingly difficult to discover, but I am asking a member of the Embassy staff to go to Genoa and Milan for the purpose of ascertaining whether or not in those two industrial centers there is anything of importance to learn in this respect.

I did not fail to inform Count Ciano of the extent of the jittery feeling in America with regard to European affairs and that the continual reference here in high circles to the importance of armament and military might is making a thoroughly bad impression. But Ciano seems elated at his new German and Japanese entente and does not show any particular

cular interest with regard to the attitude of America. On the other hand, in conversation with another member of the Government, I discovered real concern.

I realize that this letter contains nothing new to you but it is always a pleasure to talk to you and I know you will allow me to do so from time to time.

With every good wish for your success in your Congressional program, which I am following with intense interest,

Sincerely yours,

*William Phillips*

PSF: Phillips

February 17, 1938.

Dear Bill:-

I love your letter and also the magnificent picture of a friend of ours doing the goose-step. It is wonderful what middle-aged men can do when driven to extremes.

When you get back I will tell you more about these enthusiastic Camillas. Meanwhile, do not let your hair grow gray over it and pray with me that she will have a nice visit with Der Fuehrer.

All goes well here in spite of things you may read.

My best to you all,

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

Rome, February 3, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

I am glad to have your letter about Mr. and Mrs. Fulton Oursler and shall naturally do everything possible to have them meet Mussolini. Yesterday I took the matter up personally with Count Ciano and in addition to my letter to him, I showed him your letter to me, which I am sure impressed him with the importance of the matter. The Duce has not been willing to receive any Americans of late and I was glad, therefore, to have your letter to show in addition to my own request. Ciano seemed to think that the matter can very easily be arranged if the Duce is in Rome at the time of their visit.

I have had less success with our mutual friend Camilla Short, who has been here now on her "secret" errand for two weeks or more and is still here. Yesterday we received her official turn-down from the office of the Duce.

The President,

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The White House,

Washington, D.C.

I have done what I properly can in her behalf but, in view of the special circumstances and the absence of any instructions from you, I could not do much more than make the usual request, although I added to it orally Camilla's friendship with the Roosevelt family, etc., etc. Her ardor, however, is not dampened in the least and I suppose she will now go forth in battle array to Berlin.

During these troublesome times I am doing everything I can to persuade Italy to be sensible and I have succeeded in establishing such relations with Count Ciano as make it easy to talk to him with the utmost frankness. Probably Rome is not altogether to blame for the continued tension with London. At any rate, many of the higher-ups are thoroughly convinced that the British Government does not wish to settle their problems with Italy until the British armament program is completed and Britain is ready to enforce her own terms. This may or may not be true, but while that impression exists here it has unfortunate results. Eden, as you know, is regarded as an arch fiend who is bent on destroying Italy's future. That, too, adds to the difficulties of the resumption of friendly conversations. I shall not lose an opportunity to endeavor to persuade

persuade Italy to go the limit in efforts to reach a solution with the British, believing, as I do, that the key to much of the European mess lies in better relations between England and Italy. The triangle must not be permitted to develop into a formidable military alliance, and for the present at least I am sure it has not reached that point.

With warmest remembrances,

Sincerely yours,

William Phillips

*I enclose a clipping showing the latest thing  
in goosestep. It is known as the  
"passo romano"!!*



PSF Phillips

✓

March 22, 1938.

My dear Mr. Ambassador:-

Many years ago I had the privilege of making the acquaintance of a very delightful California couple -- Mr. and Mrs. Adolph C. Miller. He is a man of the highest attainment, is deeply interested in the affairs of the world and stands at the head of our original thinkers in economics. Mrs. Miller is an especial friend of my wife, and she also is a delightful person, greatly interested in music and the arts.

If by any chance they should visit Rome, I trust that you will see them and make it possible for them to visit the many points of interest, and perhaps you will be good enough to have them to Tea with you and Mrs. Phillips.

Accept, my dear Mr. Ambassador, the expression of my sincere good wishes.

Faithfully yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

March 22, 1938.

Dear Adolph:-

I am delighted to have those quotations from Messrs. Lincoln and Miller -- and I propose to use them.

It was grand to see you both and I hope you will have a wonderful trip.

I am enclosing a note for Bill Phillips and when I see Bill Bullitt in Warm Springs I will tell him about your visit to Paris, and just as a precaution get him to send a line to Wilson, our Charge d'Affaires, in case Bullitt is not back when you get there.

As ever yours,

Adolph C. Miller, Esq.,  
2230 S Street, N.W.,  
Washington, D. C.

Italy

April 4, 1938.

Memo from CordellHull with unsigned memorandum from  
the Italian Ambassador

In re-meaning of word Fascism and what it stands for in  
Italy as against the American Interpretation etc.

SEE--Cordell Hull folder-Drawer 1--1938

*file  
State*

Letter to President  
From Sumner Welles

April 18, 1938.

Enclosure suggestion of what Pres. might  
want to say at press conference with re  
British-Italian Agreement.

Attached is Halifax's communication  
to Kennedy on same subject.

SEE--Sumner Welles folder-Drawer 1--1938

P.S.F. Phillips

#2

file  
private

Rome, May 13, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

The Fuehrer and his staff of one hundred twenty, which included his personal cook, have left Italy, and Rome has ceased to be a city occupied by an Italian army. Everyone is breathing sighs of relief that the show is over without any unhappy accidents or incidents. Certainly it was a brilliant affair and the Italians have proved themselves past masters in stage and artistic direction, as well as in the perfection of efficiency and discipline.

The precautions taken for Hitler's safety were wonderful to behold but are understandable in view of the near panic of the Italians at the responsibility which they had assumed in having Hitler for eight days in the country.

Mary Miller and I attended the military review, for I was curious to see the effect of the "passo romano", which was to be performed for the first time, and Mary

refused

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

refused to miss any trick. As no reservations were provided for Chiefs of Mission, we had to find our places in a public stand, and it was indeed a wearisome affair. The review opened with perhaps three-quarters of an hour of "passo romano", well done in an athletic sense but of course to us painful in the extreme. Evidently the best part of the army had been trained for this performance, and in appearance and physique they were certainly good to look at, but the "passo" turned them into mere puppets. You could feel that they hated it and resented the indignity, and that the public felt the same way, for there was not a cheer until the end of this part of the procession when the "passo italiano", with its easy and natural swing, came into view. My guess is that the Italian goose step will be buried by public disapproval.

I heard an amusing and true anecdote in connection with Hitler's arrival at the Quirinal, where he was staying. When he was at last shown to his bedroom at eleven-thirty p.m., he asked whether his bed had been made up by a woman. He was answered in the negative. Thereupon he insisted that a woman should be found to remake it, which presented certain difficulties because

all

all the women domestics had either gone to bed or left the Palace for the night. However, finally after much frantic search, the bed was remade as requested.

On the whole, Hitler made a favorable though rather colorless impression. Towards the end of the visit, he was evidently exhausted, although Mussolini, who was with him continuously, did not show a vestige of fatigue and appeared always with his usual buoyancy.

My Naval Attaché was greatly impressed by the Naval Review and especially by the astonishing performance of ~~the~~ ninety submarines in close formation in lines of ten. At a given signal, all disappeared in seventy-five seconds and appeared five minutes later at a considerable distance and on the same course and in precisely the same formation. Our Air Attachés were equally astonished by the perfection of the air maneuvers.

The only official statements made during the visit were contained in the exchange of toasts at the banquet, and I attach two extracts from Hitler's speech which may have escaped your attention and which have some interest. Mussolini's speech consisted of diplomatic and friendly generalities.

Ciano assures me that there are no new undertakings or secret agreements with Germany as a result of the conversations,

versations, although he adds that the Rome-Berlin axis is of course stronger, - a line of talk which he gets off because of Hitler's well-known anxiety over the successful British-Italian and French-Italian negotiations.

Ciano continues to tell me that Czechoslovakia lies well outside Italy's sphere of interest, that the Prague Government has never been friendly to the Italian Government and is in fact "an enemy" of Italy's friends, namely Germany, Poland, and Hungary. I am fairly well satisfied from Ciano's statements to me that Italy has not made any great effort to restrain Germany in her ambitions in Czechoslovakia, but to other colleagues he has hinted that he said to Von Ribbentrop that it would be wise to go slow and hoped matters could be achieved by peaceful means. He gave me as his personal opinion that Hitler will not take any step at present with regard to Czechoslovakia which might cause serious trouble. While Ciano maintains his customary attitude of indifference with regard to the fate of Czechoslovakia, I cannot but feel that with the German advance through Austria the Italian Government may well be alarmed that further progress in an easterly direction will mean a loss of Italian trade within what Italy regards as her sphere of interest.

It

It is known that Hitler was amazed and rather stunned by the brilliancy of the whole show, and in view of his emotional character, it is safe to predict that he has gained a new respect for Italy as a first class Power. If this is true, the great show will have proved its worth many times over. I doubt, however, whether Hitler's entourage, composed of hard-faced men who share the German contempt for the Italians, were equally impressed.

As you no doubt have heard, the Vatican remained in a hostile attitude. Hitler made no suggestion to call upon the Pope, who was already established in his summer home outside of Rome. In a gesture which showed the Pope's displeasure, the Galleries of the Vatican were closed to everyone while Hitler was in town.

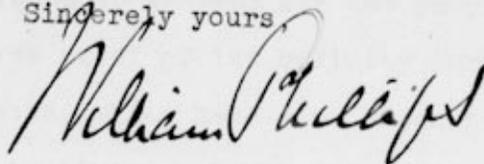
There is another matter which I venture to speak to you about. From this distance, it looks as though the U.S.A. and Italy were drifting steadily apart at a time when the rest of the world is assuming normal relations with her. The attitude of our press and of some of our public men (Woodring and Borah are the latest) is having its effect and the Italian press has begun to retaliate.

The influence for good which America could exercise here, and my own influence for whatever it is worth, will suffer accordingly and may not be welcome when it is needed, as it surely will be in the not distant future. It is the loss of our power to extend our moral influence in a situation where we might be of constructive usefulness which discourages me a bit and makes me wonder whether we are adopting the wisest policy in our future relations with this country.

Sometime may I have the benefit of your advice?

With warmest personal regards,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "William Phillips".

Enclosure.

Translation of extracts from toast of Hitler to the Duce.  
May 7, 1938.

. . . . . There has now arisen in Europe a bloc of one hundred twenty million men determined to safeguard their eternal vital rights and to withstand all forces which might seek to oppose their natural development.

From this struggle against a world of incomprehension and opposition, which Germany and Italy have had to wage shoulder to shoulder, there has gradually developed a cordial friendship between the two peoples. That friendship has given proof of its solidity during the events of recent years, which have also demonstrated to the world that the legitimate and vital interests of the great nations must in every case be taken into account.

. . . . .

To the north of your country numerous races form a new German Empire. Now, you and I, having become immediate neighbors and taught by the experience of two thousand years, intend to recognize the natural frontier which providence and history have clearly marked out for our two peoples. It will afford Italy and Germany,

with

with its clear-cut division of the area open to the life of the two peoples, not only the good fortune of peaceful, sure, and lasting collaboration, but also a bridge for reciprocal assistance and cooperation. It is my unshakable will and it is also my political testament to the German people that the frontier of the Alps, erected between us by nature, be considered forever inviolable. I am certain that for Rome and for Germany there will result a glorious and prosperous future.

PSF Italy: Phillips

May 18, 1938.

Dear Bill:-

That is an extraordinarily interesting letter of yours. What a show it must have been! It must have cost a lot but I suppose it could be justified on the plea that it is just like F. D. R.'s policy in spending money for public works!

Did you know that Phil La Follette started his Third Party with a huge meeting in Wisconsin, the chief feature of which was the dedication of a new emblem -- a twenty foot wide banner with a red circle and a blue cross on it! While the crowd present was carried away with the enthusiasm of the moment, most of the country seem to think this was a feeble imitation of the Swastika. All that remains is for some major party to adopt a new form of arm salute. I have suggested the raising of both arms above the head, followed by a bow from the waist. At least this will be good for people's figures!

You and Caroline must have been deeply insulted by not being invited to any of the indoor or outdoor functions. I shall have to get Harry Woodring to make another speech!

From the above you will see that your old friend retains his sense of humor, and, I hope, his sense of proportion. Things here are running along in much the usual way for an election year. The papers are just like the same papers

in 1934 and 1935. We seem to have survived in  
past and will do so again.

My best to you both.

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, May 5, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

Mr. and Mrs. Miller have duly arrived and I am delighted to have your letter introducing them to me. I am doing what I can to add to the pleasure of their stay and have offered them a cup of tea, as you so kindly suggested.

They have come at an interesting moment. We have witnessed the arrival of Hitler from a window overlooking the Piazza Venezia and the Via dell'Impero, with the Colosseum in the background floodlighted on the outside and illuminated from within with red lights. The lighting of the Roman Forum through which the Via dell'Impero passes was beautifully and artistically done, and together with the vast crowds and the double and sometimes triple lines of military bordering the entire route from the station to the Quirinal, the sight was extraordinarily dramatic.

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

The

The arrival was certainly well staged, but of particular interest was the lack of enthusiasm among the crowds. As Hitler passed us, Mary remarked, "What a frost", but in this she exaggerated a bit.

Throughout Italy the public attitude towards Hitler's visit is most curious. Everywhere people of all classes openly express their dislike of Germany and of the extravagant preparations for the visit, which I cannot attempt to describe in detail without taking too much of your time.

Every railroad station along Hitler's route to Rome is covered with German and Italian flags and almost all buildings, houses, and cottages near the tracks fly the two flags. I only hope the poor wretches who live in these hovels will be allowed to keep these flags which have been furnished them. They could be turned into much needed clothing!

All German Jews in Rome, Naples, and Florence, the three cities that Hitler will visit, have been arrested, and will remain so until Hitler leaves Italy. Some are in prison, some have been taken to buildings outside of the city where they are closely guarded, and some have temporarily left the country.

In

In Florence I know that five German Jewish children between fifteen and seventeen have been taken from school and placed in custody, and two of them are girls!

The German police are believed to have assumed charge of Italian police headquarters and to be running this end of the show. Yesterday an Italian lady told me that she had asked certain information of a street police officer in Italian uniform, and, after a blank stare, received in reply in guttural German "Sprechen sie Deutsch?"

The public is not only unfriendly but is still smarting under the recent German-Austrian anschluss which has brought German armies and guns to the Italian frontier. It is well known that Mussolini personally does not like Hitler, nor do Italians the country over like Germans. And there is fear of the ultimate loss of Trieste to Germany, or at any rate of the appearance of a German port on the Adriatic. In brief, there is no enthusiasm to be found anywhere for Germany or the Germans at a moment of announced national rejoicing.

However, the plans for Hitler's reception were begun months before the British-Italian agreement had changed the European atmosphere, and Mussolini apparently

feels

feels a certain responsibility for returning the "hospitality" which he received a year ago in Berlin and is determined to go it "one better".

Then too, Mussolini must know that Hitler does not have much respect for Italian armament in comparison with his own. It would be like him, therefore, to take this occasion to give a highly dramatic display of his army, navy, and air force in order to impress the visitors with his military power. The review yesterday of fifty-two thousand Blackshirts (militia) which Mary and I attended (Adolph being laid up with a cold) was an astonishing sight. It was not a march past but a demonstration of perfect rhythmic display in physical movements, directed by the voice of one leader. The effect was indescribable.

Today is the great naval review at Naples, tomorrow a huge military parade in Rome, and the evenings are taken up with gigantic music and dance festivals in outdoor Stadiums expensively prepared for the occasions. It is difficult to find the explanation for such an outlay. Perhaps in view of the underlying fear of Germany, Mussolini may feel that after such a reception Hitler will hesitate to take any step which would be against Italian interests. It may be a sort of bribe for Hitler's good  
behaviour

behaviour to Italy in the future. And then, too, Mussolini is aware that the Italian public loves a good show, - a lavish display of bunting, music and bright lights, - and as long as the show had to be, the dramatic quality in him preferred to give it on a scale not only to dazzle the Germans but the Italians as well.

I repeat, however, that the public is not responding with any enthusiasm, although they are turning out in force for every one of the several spectacles.

The attitude of the Vatican is interesting. Rome is filled, as you know, with Catholic schools and colleges of different nationalities, and among them, the North American College with about two hundred and fifty American priests, and since Hitler's arrival no priest is permitted in the streets during a procession or on any public occasion. The Pope has gone to his summer home about twelve miles from Rome. He is willing to receive Hitler without any conditions attached to the visit if the latter asks for an audience, but so far, I am informed, Hitler has made no such request. The Pope is not at all pleased with Mussolini for having staged Hitler's reception on such a grand scale and within a stone's throw of Vatican City.

To me, the whole thing is rather pathetic. There

would

would have been more dignity, from our point of view, without this vast display and expenditure, and Italy's prestige abroad would have gone up with a lesser effort to please the Germans. But that apparently is not the Italian viewpoint, nor perhaps the German, where outward display is necessary and desirable at times for external and internal consumption.

Underlying it all, and what seems to me uppermost in the minds of Italians of all circles, is a spirit of thankfulness that the past hostile attitude towards England has been allowed to disappear as a result of the successful British-Italian negotiations. And I am satisfied that all the German and Italian outward demonstrations of sympathy and friendship which are now taking place will not affect in the slightest degree the return to the more normal relationship between Great Britain and Italy.

On the theory that this is a German-Italian love feast, Chiefs of Mission are not being invited to any indoor or outdoor function, nor given seats at any of the reviews. So far I have attended only the one spectacle to which I have already referred, and then only as one of a crowd of over one hundred thousand persons. It is said that the Palace has avoided giving

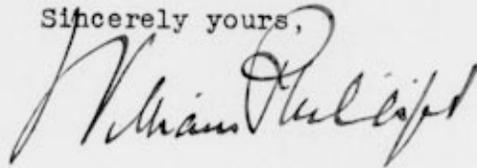
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any function with diplomats present in order to avoid any "embarrassment" arising out of the fact that some nations have not recognized the "Emperor", and this may be true.

Already I have taken up too much of your time, but I shall give you my further impressions after the departure of Hitler from our midst.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "William Phillips".

PSF Phillips-Italy

d-2  
July 7, 1938.

Dear Bill:-

Just a line to thank you for yours  
of June twenty-third, which arrived just as I  
am leaving for the West Coast.

It will be good to see you in  
September and to hear all the news at first-  
hand.

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

PSF Phillips

Rome, June 23, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

It is a relief to know that Congress has adjourned and that you are free from the grind of having it on your hands, especially in hot weather. I followed you in my thoughts and with keenest interest to Nahant, and noted with pleasure the enthusiastic reception given you by "cold roast Boston". The wedding made good reading and I certainly wish the young couple the utmost happiness. John is an unusually fine boy, as I soon discovered when he was in Rome a year ago.

What my diplomatic colleagues call a "détente" has come to Europe, and there is nothing, therefore, of outstanding importance to report. All progress awaits the outcome of the Spanish situation and the German-Czech negotiations. Here in Italy there is an increasing popular desire to pull out of Spain, and  
this

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

this is a good sign. Mussolini himself is eager to do so, but has not been able, apparently, to reach any real understanding with the French. Alfonso of Spain, whom I see occasionally, told me yesterday that General Franco would be glad to get rid of the Italians and Germans, but of course on condition that the Soviets, French, and Czechs, - the so-called "reds", - also are withdrawn. The French and Italian press have become bitter in their mutual denunciations, and the two Governments have recently passed through moments of crisis. It was not long ago that the French were considering seriously withdrawing their Chargé d'Affaires from Rome, which, while not an actual severance of diplomatic relations, would have amounted at least to their temporary cessation, - an ominous sign. Now, however, the London Non-Intervention Committee has again been successful in closing the French-Spanish frontier, and if the Italians are satisfied that it is closed, we may hope for progress through the London Non-Intervention Committee. The basic trouble is that Italy has no confidence in French assurances, nor have the French confidence in the Italians, - points of view which would seem to be thoroughly justified by facts.

Little

Little prominence is given here to the aerial bombardment of unfortified towns and civilian populations. The British attitude that ships flying the British flag found in Spanish ports near the war zone are there at their own risk, has been thoroughly approved by the Italian press. It does shock one, however, to hear it openly stated that, because war is so utterly horrible, every device should be used to end it quickly and so save the lives of unknown multitudes. This is their justification for their own actions, and when I say "they", I do not mean the Italian people but rather the higher-ups.

There are beginning to be signs of strain and it is well known, though not mentioned in the press, that recently there were bread riots in Bologna in protest against the reduced wheat allowance for bread. The result of this outburst and of the general dissatisfaction was the restoration of the former bread, and a decision to buy a certain amount of foreign wheat. Already the Soviets, Argentines, and I believe the Rumanians, are in the market, and as no decision has been arrived at, I have cabled the Department in the hope that through our Export-Import Bank we might be able to dispose of some of  
our

our excess to Italy. While the Soviet offer is far lower than anything which we could offer, the Italians not unnaturally do not welcome the thought of buying from their declared enemies.

I know very little about day by day developments in the fate of Czechoslovakia. I am satisfied that Chamberlain's prompt action in Berlin prevented a very dangerous situation and that the Italians can be counted upon to counsel moderation in both Berlin and Prague.

I note that you are planning an extensive trip across country and will have returned to the east by September, when I am hoping to spend a few weeks at home. Caroline and the children remain over here in the same place which I took for them last year, in the heart of the Italian Dolomites. I cannot begin to tell you how keenly I am looking forward to seeing you again, and hope you will give me this opportunity.

May I add that all reports from London - and I have received many - indicate that Joe Kennedy and Company are a brilliant success. It was a splendid appointment from every point of view, for he is just

the

the type of man to make a vivid impression on our  
British friends.

With every sort of good wish and kind remembrances,

Sincerely yours

*William Russell*

Excerpt from FDR's letter to Phillips,  
Sept. 15, 1938 published in William  
Phillips, Ventures in Diplomacy (Boston:  
The Beacon Press, 1952), pp. 219-220.

RJ

3/28/56

PSF  
BF  
(Phillips)  
J-2 - Foreign

En Route Washington,  
September 15, 1938.

Dear Bill:

Yours of September first has reached me just as the papers state you are again deferring your trip home. I think you are wise, because Chamberlain's visit to Hitler today may bring things to a head or may result in a temporary postponement of what looks to me like an inevitable conflict within the next five years.

Perhaps when it comes the United States will be in a position to pick up the pieces of European civilization and help them to save what remains of the wreck -- not a cheerful prospect.

The complete ignorance of American conditions and fundamental strength on the part of highly placed Italians, reminds me of Johnny's conversation with an Italian, I think the Minister of Finance, in Venice a year ago. The Minister suggested to Johnny that I should pay a visit to Mussolini. Johnny very properly suggested that Mussolini might well pay a visit to the President. The Minister could not comprehend the suggestion and Johnny told him with complete politeness that the United States had three times the population and ten times the resources of Italy, and that the whole of Italy would fit very comfortably into the State of Texas.

You are right in saying that we are an emotional people over here in the sense that we do not easily lose our heads, but if we get the idea that the future of our form of government is threatened by a coalition

of European dictators, we might wade in with everything we have to give.

If a war starts now the situation here will be very different from 1914. In that year, while the great majority of Americans were inclined to sympathize with the Allies, there was an honest effort, led by the President, to remain neutral in thought. And also there was a good deal of German sympathy. Today I think ninety per cent of our people are definitely anti-German and anti-Italian in sentiment -- and incidentally, I would not propose to ask them to be neutral in thought. I would strongly encourage their natural sympathy while at the same time avoiding any thought of sending troops to Europe.

What a plight the unfortunate Jews are in. It gives them little comfort to remind them that they have been "on the run" for about four thousand years.

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable William Phillips,  
The American Ambassador,  
Rome,  
Italy.

PSF Phillips

Rome, September 1, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

I was planning to sail today on the REX but in view of the present uncertainties in European affairs, I thought it best to postpone my trip in the belief that by September 15th, which is the next sailing, the skies will have cleared somewhat. I do not foresee a general European war over Czechoslovakia, for it is hard to visualize from this angle the French embarking on a war with Germany without British military support, and that appears to be doubtful.

I had a recent conversation with Count Ciano, which convinced me the more that the Italian Government was remaining out of the picture and was continuing to take the position that the Sudeten German problem is within the bailiwick of Germany and not in that of Italy. The substance of Ciano's views was that everything depended upon Benes and that if Benes would make "reasonable and practical concessions",

there

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

there was no danger of a German move. In spite of the fact that he assured me that "Italy stood squarely with Germany in this matter", I am certain that the Italian Government is greatly concerned over the present trend, even though they have no liking for Czechoslovakia. Ciano referred to it as "an impossible country which had been set up by the Treaty of Versailles solely as a pistol pointed at Germany". However, in order to maintain the beloved Rome-Berlin axis intact, they must, I assume, accept without protest Germany's attitude. Everyone here seems agreed that Germany does not want war and that the German military clique are not prepared for it, but all agree that there is the danger of "unfortunate incidents" on the border which might be the excuse for a German move. The Czech Military Attaché in Rome refers to such possible "incidents" as "German technique in order to create the classic German excuse for the necessity of calming conditions on the frontier".

Ciano asked me point-blank what would be the attitude of America in the event of a European war. Knowing his complete ignorance of American affairs and his inclination to believe that the United States is too far away to count  
and

and is probably going communistic anyway, I seized the opportunity to give it to him hot, and hope I made an impression. I pointed out that it was impossible to predict the part we would play in the event of a general European war but that he should not forget that we are probably the most emotional people in the world and easily stirred when our interests are affected, and for proof, he had only to think back to the years before our entry into the world war. Any European war, I thought, would be a long drawn out affair and the final victory would not lie with those nations with the greatest ability to strike, but with those that had the capacity of longest endurance. I added that, so far as I was concerned, I would look to him personally to do everything in his power to restrain the German Government in the event of the development of a real crisis, inasmuch as his Government had closer relations with Germany than any other. He took it all well but made little comment.

Certainly the Italian army is quiescent at present. There is no sign of mobilization or other particular activity, and the classes which have just finished their training are being allowed to go home on furlough.

Everything

Everything lends support to the feeling that Italy is sitting on the sidelines, though anxiously watching the play which is going on between Berlin and Prague.

While it is never safe to predict, I feel confident, therefore, that Italy will not follow Germany in any hostile move against Czechoslovakia, and should a more general conflict develop, that Italy will remain neutral until such time at least as she can pick the winner.

Until yesterday we thought that the Italian racial campaign was quieting down, and we had come to this opinion partly as a result of its unpopularity among the Italians, its outspoken condemnation by the Pope, and because of its bad reaction abroad. A friend in the Vatican told me that, in his opinion and in the opinion of others, the Duce had been induced to give his consent to it only through German diplomatic pressure and to appease some of his own Jew haters in high fascist circles. This informant seemed to think that because of its general unpopularity, the Duce's desire to keep it within control would be strengthened. However, yesterday afternoon, following a meeting of the Council of  
Ministers,

Ministers, a new decree was published relating to "Jewish foreigners". As of possible interest in this connection, I am enclosing a copy in translation of the decree. Already a number of American Jews who have been established here since 1919 have called at the Consulate for advice and guidance, for they suddenly find themselves in a terrible situation. It seems to me utterly incomprehensible that the Italian Government should take such drastic action when apparently there is no need for it whatsoever, and before the decree was one hour old, I had asked for an appointment to see Count Ciano. It appears, however, that I shall not be successful in being received by him as he is said to be "leaving town" today.

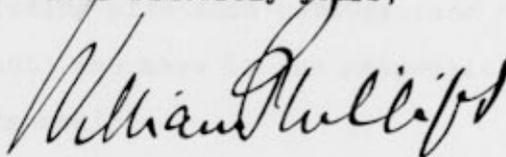
Accordingly, I have lost all confidence in this Government's conduct of foreign affairs, and I think we may include this anti-Jewish campaign in Italy's foreign relations. The Duce is apparently highly sensitive when he is challenged by the foreign press as being under the influence of Hitler, and yet everything he does has the appearance of being done under pressure from Berlin. There is no better example than

a sudden renewal of this "racialism".

The Spanish situation goes from bad to worse as far as this country is concerned, but that is a long story and my letter is already too long.

I see that you are still in Washington but I hope that you may have weeks of bracing autumn weather before returning to the winter's heavy tasks.

Ever sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

Enclosure.

The Council of Ministers approved at its meeting today the following decree pertaining to foreign Jews in Italy:

"On the proposal of the Duce and the Minister of the Interior, it is resolved to regulate in the following manner the status of foreigners of the Jewish race who have taken up residence in Italy, Libya, or in the Aegean Possessions subsequent to the Great War, namely, January 1, 1919, including also such persons (and their number is insignificant) who have in the meanwhile acquired Italian citizenship.

"Article I. From the date of publication of the present decree-law, foreign Jews are forbidden to fix their permanent residence in the Kingdom, in Libya, and in the Aegean Possessions.

"Article II. For the purposes of the present decree-law, any person, if he is born of parents both of whom are of the Jewish race, shall be considered a Jew even though he may profess a religion other than the Hebraic.

"Article III. The admission of foreign Jews to Italian citizenship subsequent to January 1, 1919, is to all intents and purposes considered revoked.

"Article IV.

"Article IV. Foreigners of the Jewish race who at the date of publication of the present decree-law are within the Kingdom, Libya, and the Aegean Possessions and who began their sojourn therein subsequent to January 1, 1919, must leave the territory of the Kingdom, Libya, and the Aegean Possessions within six months from the date of publication of the present decree-law.

"Those who shall have failed to conform to this obligation within the aforesaid period shall be expelled from the Kingdom in accordance with Article 150 of the codified text of the Public Security Laws after the application of penalties established by law."

September 1, 1938.

TELEGRAM

The White House  
Washington

65wumc 16 Cable 738p

Firenze, Sep. 26, 1938.

LC The President,

Washington, D.C.

Your message is splendid and comes at right moment. Congratulations.

William Phillips.

PSFT Phillips

J

D-2-7

PSF Phillips  
(Italy)

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, September 29, 1938.

Dear Mr. President:

Yesterday was the most astounding day that I have ever experienced. It began with complete and absolute pessimism. War seemed a certainty and Italy was admittedly on the point of mobilization and of readiness to join the Germans. On every side, even in military circles, there was utter despair, but a realization that Italy's role in the coming struggle had already been settled.

In telegrams which I sent last night reporting the delivery of your message to the Duce and a conversation with the British Ambassador, I attempted to give a picture of the sequence of the day's events. They were so fantastic and unbelievable that you may well have thought, in reading them, that

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

that I had gone "nuts." I shall not attempt to review them but only to give you a few additional sidelights.

The copy of your second message to Hitler was sent to the Foreign Office early in the morning and had been read by Mussolini and Ciano before my call in the afternoon. I took an extra copy with me in case one of the two men had not read it, but was informed by Ciano that both had seen it. While my appointment was fixed for 3:45 p.m., the Foreign Office knew, of course, in the morning that I was to deliver a message to the Duce from you.

Ciano took me in his car to Palazzo Venezia and we went immediately to Mussolini's vast hall-office which, because of the cloudy weather, seemed darker and grimmer than ever. I read your message very slowly as Mussolini is beginning to lose the English that he had acquired two years ago, and afterwards we spoke in French. He asked me to convey to you his thanks and appreciation and he then proceeded to tell me what he had just done. This was the first intimation that I had that the German army had been ordered to move into the Sudeten area at 2 p.m. Everyone thought that there were still three days before the expiration of Hitler's ultimatum. Mussolini referred to Perth's call at 10:30

and

and the shortness of time between then and two o'clock in which to accomplish his task in reaching the Fuehrer, secure his consent to a twenty-four-hour delay, to a four-power meeting, and also for the Fuehrer's orders to reach the whole German army and prevent the action contemplated at the appointed hour. He spoke quietly and calmly and at the end of our conversation indicated that in the event of general war, Italy would take her side with Germany.

This recital left me literally gasping for air. It was hard to believe that the casualness of Perth's call at 10:30 had been sufficient to prevent the loss of untold thousands of lives, because, and this is important to remember, Perth brought no new proposal from Chamberlain to the Duce. What he did was to make, on behalf of his Government, the same appeal which Chamberlain had made two days before to Grandi in London and to give the same guarantee of the execution of the proposed terms of settlement. He also stressed the probability that the French and probably the British armies would come to the support of Czechoslovakia in the event of hostilities. Why should Mussolini have remained silent on the receipt of Chamberlain's message (if it was received) through Grandi, and have acted

so promptly when it reached him through Perth? Perth himself cannot yet solve this mystery unless it was that the Duce was "sulking" because he had not been taken into consultation by either Chamberlain or Hitler during their conversations and exchanges, or unless Perth's forcible presentation of the actual situation for the first time thoroughly convinced the Duce and Ciano.

As I write, the four-power meeting is in full swing, and I cannot begin to describe the feelings of relief coming from every quarter here.

Yesterday, in referring to the forthcoming four-power meeting, Ciano very evidently attached the utmost importance to it, not only in connection with the immediate crisis but even in wider fields.

And this leads me to confess to a remark which I made to Ciano some days ago - on September 13, to be exact - when we were discussing Italian-American relations in general. Ciano was as usual complaining about the unfriendly attitude of American spokesmen and of our press. I replied that in my opinion the Duce alone had it in his power to change this attitude and that he could do so by championing the cause of limitation of armaments. I said that his efforts about a year and a half ago to throw the responsibility upon the President for such a conference was doomed to failure at the out-

set because he had given a "scoop" to one American correspondent (Simms) and without previous consultation with us, and also because his move was badly timed. The President might well hesitate, I said, to call any such conference until he is sure that it would be welcomed by the other powers concerned, but that if for example, Italy, Great Britain, France and Germany should ask him to make such a call in the interests of world peace, I thought there was a possibility that you might receive the idea with favor. In saying this, I emphasized again that this was my purely personal opinion. Ciano, however, was impressed and said that it was something to think of seriously and that proper timing of any such effort was highly important.

This morning a member of the Embassy had a conversation with the Director General of Foreign Exchange, an important personage who controls all import and export authority and transactions. This man said:

"Tell them at the Embassy how much, how very, very much we all appreciate the message from the President. Finally America has remembered us. We are very, very glad. We all hope and trust that his message will permit the re-opening of discussions which have been impossible for so long. We must be friends; political leanings should not alter our real sense of friendship for the United States."

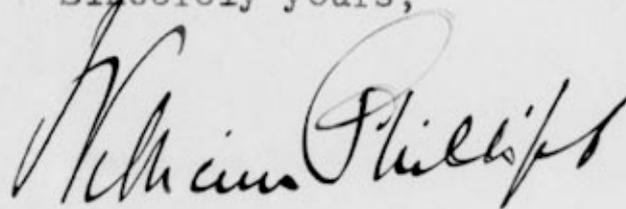
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While I have already telegraphed this message to the Department, I bring it to your attention because in my opinion it has a deep significance and is worthy of our very real consideration.

I am still hoping to be able to take a short trip home and, if all goes as well as now seems possible, perhaps I may have the pleasure of paying my respects to you in the not distant future.

With all good wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "William Phillips".

PSF Phillips

~~file~~  
~~private~~

EMBASSY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, October 6, 1938.

Dear Mr. President:

A curious and interesting sidelight with regard to your message to the Duce has just been brought to my knowledge by someone who is closely in touch with the Duce.

This person referred to something which has been causing us no little speculation, namely, the unusual length of time it took the message to reach the Embassy from Washington. He reminded us that the message came in a well-known cipher (Gray). He said that he knew positively that the translation was on the Duce's desk early on the morning of the 28th. This accounts for the impression that I received, when I presented it later in the day, that both Mussolini and Ciano were

The President,  
The White House,  
Washington.

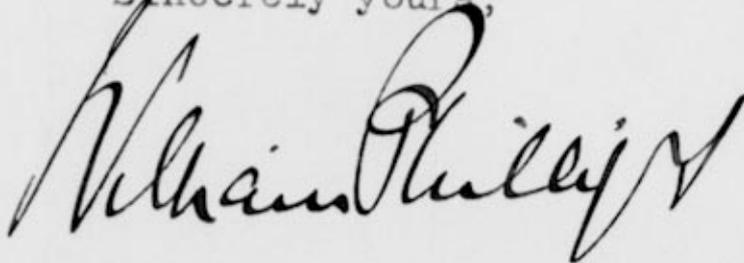
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were thoroughly aware of its contents.

I give you this revealing sidelight, not as offering any excuse for my own mistake, but as having nevertheless a bearing on the developments of the 28th.

With warm personal regards, I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

PSF Phillips

Hyde Park, N. Y.,  
October 17, 1938.

Dear Bill:-

Yours of September twenty-ninth and October first have just come and I want you to know that I am not a bit upset over the final result.

As a matter of fact, we began at noon on Tuesday, September twenty-seventh, to put on every pressure we possibly could because the Secretary and I had a definite feeling that Hitler would not wait until Saturday, October first, but would move his troops before that.

As a result we sent out the message to Mussolini in mid-afternoon, Washington time, and also the series of telegrams to other governments asking them to hasten appeals for continuation of negotiations.

I realized that our message to you for Mussolini would not reach you until around midnight that night and that you could not possibly get it to him until early Wednesday morning.

The fact that Ciano and Mussolini were apprized of its contents and purport at 9.45 A.M. on Wednesday (Rome time) actually means that we got in about an hour ahead of Perth.

Our difficulty here was that the Press thought we had "missed the boat", assuming that Mussolini knew nothing of it until after 4 P.M. (Rome time).

It has all been satisfactorily cleared up in the Press and is duly accepted except by cads like Arthur Krock and a few similar commentators.

I wired you the other day asking you to stay until the Cardinal reaches Rome, as I think that is very important. I hope you will come back here as soon as you can after that.

Love to Caroline,

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

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*file  
personal*  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

October 21, 1938.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I herewith return your  
Phillips letter of October 1. Thank  
you.

*Free*

PSF JPhilly's

Rome, October 1, 1938.

Dear Mr. President:

I have this morning received your message through the State Department and I accept your reprimand as fully deserved. It is only too true that I should not have left Rome, even though there were no indications here during that week-end that a serious crisis was imminent. In fact, the feeling of relief in Italy resulting from the acceptance by the Czechoslovak Government of the Sudeten proposals was so general that I had even hoped that the opportunity for home leave had at last arrived.

The Italian Government very clearly had been playing down the approaching crisis, and the series of speeches which Mussolini had been making in northern Italy were much in his usual vein, except  
for

The President,

The White House,

Washington.

for his statement that in the event of a general war "Italy had chosen her position." Precisely what that meant, no one knew, and certainly there did not appear to be any noticeable increase in nervousness on the part of the Italians until Tuesday afternoon, although there had been a noticeable increase of regret that Italy now was lined up more definitely with the Germans. Moreover, there was no outward sign of military measures on the part of the Italians, and as late as September 28 we were officially informed at the Ministry of Marine that they had taken no unusual precautions and still thought that any conflict would be localized.

Having received very little information from our other missions and almost none from London, Paris or Prague, I telegraphed on September 17 to Kennedy and Bullitt asking that this mission be kept better informed of developments as viewed by them, receiving in reply only one brief message from Bullitt and from London only a word to say that copies of certain cipher messages to the Department would be sent by courier. These despatches were two weeks on their way and reached me only today, and are only now being deciphered.

I had seriously thought of running up to Paris to find out the real situation and if conditions had proved favorable

favorable, to sail for home, but I abandoned that idea.

I mention these facts not as an excuse but only to show you the atmosphere in which I had been working. It was not until Chamberlain's speech on Tuesday evening, the 27th, that the full gravity of the situation was revealed and on the following morning I returned to Rome, having been advised by telephone just before leaving Florence of the receipt of your message to Mussolini.

During the three days in Florence, where I went to see Caroline who had not returned to Rome from her summer in northern Italy, I was in constant telephonic communication with the Embassy and at a distance of only a few hours from Rome, and until Tuesday had no reason to be more uneasy than I had been since early September.

However that may be, I realize now only too well that I should never have left Rome, and to have caused you this serious annoyance is causing me acute suffering.

I need not go into the details of the delivery of your message to Mussolini for they have been reported by cable. At 9:45 a.m. of the 28th, Mr. Reed, Counselor of Embassy, in asking the Foreign Office for my appointment, had at the same time unmistakably intimated the purport of the message, and that morning Ciano informed

me

me that he had of course been aware of the message at the time the appointment with the Duce had been requested.

In arranging for my reception, therefore, at which Ciano himself was to be present, we may presume, I feel certain, that Mussolini had also been informed.

There is nothing to add except once more to express my profound sorrow that I have failed you in this instant. It may well be that as a result you have lost confidence in me and, if so, do not hesitate to tell me and my resignation will follow immediately.

Ever/sincerely yours,

*William Phillips*

TELEGRAM

BF Phillips - 1938

The White House

2pome 63 Cable via Com'l. Washington

Roma, Nov.10,1938.

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

Your ambassador here a prince among men. He enjoys highest esteem with all classes worthily representing his country. Has carried out your wishes regarding my reception in most gratifying manner. Am most grateful to you for many proofs of your friendship. Stop to see you and report personally on my return.

Cardinal Mundelein.

530pm

Tsf Phillips

file  
personal

Rome, November 10, 1938.

Dear Mr. President,

As of possible interest in connection with the visit of Cardinal Mundelein, I am sending you enclosed a memorandum of the proceedings, a copy of which I have also sent to the Department for purposes of record.

I sincerely hope that we have done everything according to your wishes and that the impression which you wished to create has been accomplished. Certainly the visit here has made a very real impression, even though the Italian press has given it slight publicity. Cardinal Mundelein himself seems entirely satisfied, and I am certainly delighted to have had this opportunity of coming to know him and of doing what I can to further his mission. I am indeed very grateful to you for giving me this opportunity.

Looking

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

Looking forward to the pleasure of seeing  
you very soon and, as always, with warmest re-  
gards,

Very sincerely yours,

*William Phillips*

Enclosure.

Enclosure with despatch No. 1141 dated November 10, 1938, from  
the American Embassy in Rome.

PSF Phillips

M E M O R A N D U M

Having received instructions from the President to proceed to Naples to meet Cardinal Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago, on his arrival on the S.S. REX Saturday November fifth, I left Rome by train Friday evening, accompanied by Captain Thomson, Naval Attaché. Mr. Reed, Counselor of the Embassy, was to meet me in Naples.

The U.S.S. OMAHA, Rear-Admiral Lackey in command, had been ordered to Naples to assist in the Cardinal's reception. At nine-thirty Saturday morning, the Admiral and his Aide called upon me and we discussed the seating at the luncheon, which he had been directed to give on board the OMAHA in honor of His Eminence. The Cardinal was coming to Italy in his capacity of Cardinal Legate at the conclusion of his mission to the Eucharistic Congress in New Orleans, and, according to the protocol between the Italian Government and the Vatican, he was to be rendered the honors as a "Prince of the Blood". His Eminence had in his suite eight priests, three of whom were American bishops. The Pope had sent to Naples an Undersecretary to greet His Eminence, and the reception group included also representatives of the North American College and of Santa Maria del Lago, the Cardinal's own college in Rome.

The

The REX arrived shortly after noon. With the receiving party, I was taken to the grand saloon and in a few moments the Cardinal entered, followed by his suite. After an exchange of courtesies, I presented the Admiral and members of my staff, and then accompanied His Eminence to the pier, where we entered automobiles and drove to a nearby quai. The Admiral's barge carried the Cardinal, the Prefect of Naples and me to the U.S.S. OMAHA.

It had been arranged that I was to go on board first in order to receive the customary honors accorded an Ambassador. Guns had been dispensed with at my request, but the National Air, etc., was played. The Cardinal then followed. Luncheon was served at one-thirty for eighteen guests. The Admiral and I were joint hosts. Cardinal Mundelein was seated on the Admiral's right and the private secretary to the Pope on the Admiral's left. On my right and left respectively were the Undersecretary of State of the Vatican and the Prefect of Naples.

The city authorities had arranged for us to return to the REX after luncheon so that the Cardinal might receive the honors accorded by the Government to a returning Legate. I escorted His Eminence to the ship, but as I did not wish to take part in this particular ceremony, I awaited His Eminence at the entrance to the pier. The honors accorded comprised a detachment of troops, various officers in full dress uniform, and music. The Cardinal of Naples and representations from orphanages and convents were also present.

The two Cardinals and I then drove to the Marcellina  
station,

station, where the special train was awaiting to take the party to Rome. This train had been provided by the Government at my request, and not at the request of the Vatican. On the station platform, Cardinal Legate honors were again accorded.

The train left precisely at four o'clock and arrived in Rome at six-fifteen, where a large crowd was waiting, which included the principal Undersecretary of State of the Vatican, the Papal Nuncio, and members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Holy See, a large group of students from the North American College and the Cardinal's own college, Santa Maria del Lago. Here for the third time the honors due a Legate were accorded His Eminence by the Government.

It had been agreed with the Vatican that at this point in the proceedings, the Undersecretary of State of the Vatican would take charge of His Eminence, who would leave my auspices and come under those of the Vatican. While the President had asked me to conduct His Eminence to the "territory of the Vatican", the Vatican had requested me to carry out the President's desire in this way, since the city of Rome is regarded as the diocese of the Pope in his capacity as Bishop of Rome. I could not but accept this interpretation, and consequently bade His Eminence goodbye at the Undersecretary's waiting automobile, in which he was conducted by the Vatican official to his residence at the college of Santa Maria del Lago.

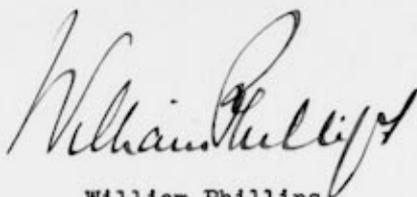
On Monday November seventh, Mrs. Phillips and I gave a reception in honor of His Eminence, which was attended by over four hundred guests and which afforded him an opportunity to meet members of the Diplomatic Corps accredited to the Quirinal and several of those accredited to the Holy see, delegations from religious organizations in Rome, and members of society in general.

On Wednesday November ninth, I gave a men's luncheon of twenty-eight in his honor at my residence, at which, in addition to His Eminence's suite, Admiral Lackey and members of the Embassy staff, there were present Count Ciano, Minister for Foreign Affairs; Signor Luigi Federzoni, President of the Senate; Monsignor Francesco Borgongini Duca, Papal Nuncio; Prince Ascanio Colonna, newly appointed Italian Ambassador to Washington; Dott. Giuseppe Bastianini, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs; Mr. William J.B. Macaulay, Irish Minister to the Vatican; Baron de Francisci, Rector of the University of Rome; Prof. Alberto Asquini, President of the Centro Italiano di Studi Americani; Comm. Emanuele Grazzi, Chief of the Transoceanic Division of the Foreign Office; and Don Eugenio Ruspoli.

I also attended a luncheon-banquet at the North American College in honor of Cardinal Mundelein and Cardinal Pacelli, Secretary of State of the Vatican, and on Thursday Mrs. Phillips and I attended a dinner at the residence of the Irish Minister to the Vatican, at which

both

both Cardinals were present.

  
William Phillips.

Rome, November 10, 1938.

WP/ajl

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

PSF Phillips  
file

November 21

[1938]

MISSY:

Following is the address of Ambassador  
William Phillips in case the President desires  
to get in touch with him while at Warm Springs:

Ambassador William Phillips  
c/o Peters Clark & Keating  
1 Federal Street  
Boston, Massachusetts

dj



DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

*file  
personal*

*PSF  
Phillips*

In reply refer to  
Eu 032 - Mundelein, Cardinal/14

December 1, 1938

My dear Mr. McIntyre:

I am enclosing as of possible interest to the President a copy of despatch no. 1141 of November 10, 1938 from the American Ambassador at Rome reporting the receptions in Naples and Rome in honor of Cardinal Mundelein.

Sincerely yours,

Enclosure:

From Embassy, Rome,  
no. 1141, November 10,  
1938 with enclosure

The Honorable

**Marvin H. McIntyre,**

Secretary to the President,

The White House

BY AIR MAIL REGISTERED  
TO NEW YORK LOCAL 70

**Department of State**

BUREAU | Eu  
DIVISION |

**ENCLOSURE**  
TO

Letter drafted.....

ADDRESSED TO

Honorable Marvin H.  
McIntyre.

Rome, November 10, 1938.

No. 1141

Subject: Visit of Cardinal Mundelein, Archbishop of  
Chicago.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,  
Washington, D.C.

Sir:

I have the honor to enclose herewith a memorandum reporting the reception in Naples and Rome of His Eminence Cardinal Mundelein, Archbishop of Chicago, and also the entertainments I gave in his honor. In view of the President's interest in the visit, it occurred to me that it might be desirable to have on record a detailed account of the proceedings.

Respectfully yours,

William Phillips

Enclosure:  
Memorandum.

030.  
WF/ajl

Enclosure with despatch No. 1141 dated November 10, 1938, from  
the American Embassy in Rome.

M E M O R A N D U M

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both

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William Phillips.

Rome, November 10, 1938.

WP/ajl

both Cardinals were present.

William Phillips.

Rome, November 10, 1936.

WP/ajl

WSP Phillips

--1939

1-3-39  
1-5-39

January 26, 1939

Dear Bill:

I have read with a great deal of interest your letter of January 5 and the accompanying memorandum of your conversation with Mussolini concerning the Jewish refugee situation.

Although I was naturally disappointed that the Duce was not receptive to my suggestion concerning the settlement of refugees on the East African plateau, I am gratified that he at least appreciates the desirability of finding a real solution of the refugee problem and that he indicated a willingness to be helpful in this connection. I have taken note of his expressed willingness to give sympathetic consideration to a specific plan.

It was a real pleasure to have had the opportunity to talk with you at such length when you were here.

With warmest regards, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

The Honorable  
William Phillips,  
American Ambassador,  
Rome.

2.9.14  
PPS 52

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3176  
228  
PPS 764

PSF Phillips

Rome, January 5, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I am sending you a memorandum of my conversation with Mussolini, which I trust will meet with your approval. As I reported in my cable despatch, I am disappointed that I could make no progress with your suggestion regarding the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia, Kenya, and adjoining territory. On the other hand, if Mussolini will live up to his expressions of genuine willingness to help in solving the international problem, we may have accomplished something. At any rate, thanks to your letter I was able to explain to him in no uncertain terms the magnitude of the problem which he and the Germans together were forcing upon the United States and the rest of the world.

Mussolini had returned to Rome that afternoon from his two weeks' absence and was still in skiing costume  
when

The President,

The White House,  
Washington.

when he received me. As usual, he looked the picture of health and vitality and I can vouch for the fact that the rumors current about his failing health and mental debility are utterly without foundation. He received me courteously and gave me ample time to talk to him and seemed in no haste to have me leave. Ciano was present throughout the interview and, dressed in his new civilian uniform (livery), standing for the most part in respectful attitude without moving and without venturing a word during the entire time, gave me the impression of a thoroughly well disciplined footman.

Since my return I am impressed by the growing popular sentiment here against the party leaders. Mussolini himself has not, I think, lost prestige with the masses, though among the intellectuals he is outspokenly criticized for his pro-German leanings and for permitting the development of the anti-Semitic campaign. But the three or four principal party leaders who are thought to have assumed too much control of domestic and foreign policies, are coming in for such outspoken condemnation as has not previously been noticeable. If I am not mistaken, there is a cleavage beginning in the Fascist Party ranks, but it is of course too soon

soon to predict the extent to which it may develop. The Italians are not cruel people, quite the reverse. They are a happy, cheerful lot and they do not approve of the measures which are being taken against the Jews, who, as you know so well, have never been regarded as a problem in Italy. The pro-German policy is becoming more unpopular day by day as Hitler extends his domain and his influence in eastern Europe.

It is a highly interesting situation to watch. My French colleague is fearful of the result of Chamberlain's visit, thinking that the latter unintentionally may give the impression to the Italian Government of weakness and that the Italians, always quick on the trigger, may decide to take advantage, in their relations with the French, of this assumed weakness. Perth is not disturbed in this connection and reminds me that Chamberlain can be a tough customer to deal with. My own impression is that Chamberlain's visit is a good move, - his coming is a compliment to the Italians and they love above all things compliments. He will be received with genuine enthusiasm by the Italian people,  
who

who are most anxious for a restoration of former friendly relations with the British. No one takes seriously any territorial demand on Tunisia. The Italians, however, feel that they have a grievance with regard to the treatment of Italian nationals in Tunisia and I gather that, should this subject come up in the Chamberlain-Mussolini conversations, Chamberlain might not be unwilling to act as the medium, although not the mediator, in communicating the Italian complaints to the French.

May I say once more how keenly I appreciated our conversations in Washington and in Warm Springs? It was a great privilege to see so much of you, and our talks have been most helpful to me in every way and have given me probably a new prestige, which I needed over here in my dealings with the Italian authorities.

I cannot close without telling you how delighted I am with your reference to dictatorships in your speech before Congress yesterday. I have sent the full text, as received by us in our nightly bulletin, to a Catholic friend in the Vatican, hoping that parts of it at least may find their way into the Catholic organ "Osservatore Romano". This paper, as you know, has a considerable  
circulation

circulation in Italy and is the only one which is not controlled by the Italian Government.

With every good wish for the New Year,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Enclosure.

state Dept. copy

1-3-39

Published in

Foreign Relations of the United States

Vol. II

1939 General, The British Commonwealth,  
and Europe

pages 57-60.

PSF Phillips

MEMORANDUM

In accordance with instructions, I arrived at the Palazzo Venezia at six-fifty, ten minutes before the appointed hour for my reception by the Duce. While I was waiting in the ante-room, Ciano and Alfieri (Minister of Popular Culture) passed me and were cloistered with the Duce for fifteen or twenty minutes. Ciano asked me for a copy of the President's letter, which I gave him and which he took with him to the Duce. It was quite evident, therefore, that the Duce spent this intervening time studying with his two advisers the copy of the President's message in advance of the delivery of the original.

When I entered the Duce's office, Alfieri had already left. Ciano was present, however, throughout the entire conversation although he contributed nothing to it. After expressing my pleasure in having this occasion to see His Excellency, I handed him the President's letter, which he went through the form of reading carefully. When he had finished, I read to him slowly the memorandum which I had been instructed to present with the letter. Having concluded that part of the memorandum dealing with the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia and Kenya, the Duce interrupted by saying that this suggestion was impracticable, - that this particular region in Ethiopia was inhabited by a people who were wholly unsympathetic to the Jews, and that he had already offered a far better region northeast of Addis Ababa, a proposal which, however, the Jews themselves had not received favorably. Thereupon, he

opened

opened a map of Ethiopia, examined the suggested Plateau region, and showed me somewhat vaguely the area which he had already suggested for Jewish colonization.

When I had concluded the memorandum, I said that, with his permission, I would like to express certain personal views, and I hoped that he would not misunderstand if I spoke with frankness. Mussolini asked me to proceed. He was aware, I said, of the strained relations between the United States and Germany. This unfortunate situation was largely the result of the methods (and I emphasized "methods") which had been and were continuing to be employed by the German Government in forcing certain elements of the population to leave the country. These methods had greatly shocked public sentiment in America. The Duce interrupted me by recounting the iniquities of the German Jews and of Jews in general, their lack of loyalty to the country of their residence, their intrigues, and the fact that they never could assimilate with any other race. He admitted that this lack of assimilation was a strong point in their favor and showed their remarkable racial strength. He told me of the financial frauds which were being practiced by the Jews and showed me a little book in German containing photographs of counterfeit bills for huge amounts of German marks. I was impressed by his apparently genuine antagonism to the Jews. He went on to say that, in his opinion, there would not be one Jew left in Germany, and that other European countries - and he mentioned in particular

Rumania

Rumania and Hungary - were confronted with the same problem and were finding it necessary to rid themselves of their Jewish elements. There was no room for Jews in Europe, and eventually, he thought, they would all have to go. I reminded him that this forced emigration from Europe had created an international problem and one with which we in the United States were vitally concerned. It was not a question solely for those states from which the emigrants departed, but it had become a serious world problem. Mussolini mentioned Russia as the natural continent which had ample spare room for Jews, although he admitted that Jews did not appear to be anxious to go there. No one, he said, seemed to have thought seriously of Russia in this connection. He mentioned the vast tracts of unoccupied lands in North America and compared this with the congested areas in Europe. I replied that we Americans seemed already to be doing our part in that we had already a large Jewish population and that Jewish emigrants from Germany were free to come to the United States within our quota. I told him of the work of the London Committee and that certain progress had been made, largely through the efforts of the State Department, in ascertaining what other countries were willing to do with regard to admission of these refugees, but I gave him no particulars concerning the numbers of Jews which individual countries might be willing to absorb.

Mussolini felt that the present program of finding refugees for these emigrants in various countries was more in the nature of a palliative than a solution. He expressed  
the

the opinion that the Jews should have a state of their own which need not be necessarily a large or important one but at least a territory where there could be a Jewish capital and government. In this way, he said, the Jews in other parts of the world would occupy a position similar to other foreigners living abroad and could be handled accordingly. He admitted that it would be difficult to find a suitable place on the globe for a bona fide Jewish state but he seemed convinced that that was the only answer to the problem.

I found it necessary to bring him back several times to the original inquiry as to whether he would join with other leaders and states in trying to find a solution. Finally he agreed to do so and said that I could assure the President that he and the Italian Government would gladly cooperate with the President and with other states in this international endeavor. I reminded him of the importance of the forthcoming meeting in London between the representatives of the London Committee and the German Government, and I asked him whether he could do anything to be of assistance in this connection. He replied that he would do so but he did not elaborate as to how far he would be willing to go in this direction. He said that the continual public condemnation of Germany's actions had immensely stiffened the German attitude and actually had increased the determination to deal drastically with the situation. He thought that probably very little could  
be

be done with the German authorities unless there was a cessation of these attacks. I interjected that, in view of the widespread public opinion in America against Germany because of the methods employed by the German Government, it would be next to impossible to suppress the attitude of Americans in general. I expressed appreciation of his offer to help and said that I would convey it to Washington and that I was sure the President would be also highly appreciative. I ventured to express the hope that he would find some occasion on which he could publicly ally himself with the movement, and he seemed to think that this might be done.

During this entire discussion, Count Ciano remained standing and offered no comment or suggestion.

Although I was disappointed by the Duce's rejection of the President's suggestion regarding the use of the Plateau region in southern Ethiopia and Kenya, I left with the feeling that something had been accomplished in enlisting his appreciation of the magnitude of the international problem. That he was willing to help in solving it seemed to me something gained.



William Phillips.

Rome, January 3, 1939.

WP/ajl

PSF: Phillips

February 4, 1939

*Private*

Dear Bill:

It was good to have yours of January twentieth. Since then, the charming Italian press which was "spitting upon" the French, has apparently substituted me as the target. Isn't it curious that while the veneer in Italy is so highly polished, it peels off at the first opportunity? By the way, my Italian is somewhat rusty. Is there a word for "gentleman" in that language?

As we used to say in our school days, "keep your eyes peeled" and remember that you are "from Missouri". I fear you are right about the prospects. Perhaps the events in Washington during the past four or five days may have caused the Fascists and Nazis to "Stop, Look and Listen".

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,  
American Embassy,  
Rome,  
Italy.

fdr/tmb

PSF Phillips

Rome, January 20, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

Messrs. Chamberlain and Halifax have come and gone and have left a most favorable impression. While there were no new commitments and nothing very definite accomplished, the result has been a pleasanter atmosphere, a pleasanter Italo-British press, and a feeling of thankfulness on the part of the public that they are once more apparently on good terms with the British. Before they left, Halifax sent for me and gave me a resumé of the conversations, which I cabled at once to the Department. Perhaps the only points worth noting are the renewed pledges of peaceful intentions, renewed promises to carry out to the letter the British-Italian agreements of April last, and the rather comforting thought that Mussolini did not mention Tunisia,

the

The President,

The White House,  
Washington, D.C.

the Suez, and Jibuti, and indicated also that he would not press France for a settlement of Franco-Italian questions until a more favorable atmosphere; in other words, not until a settlement of the Spanish problem. But what will happen then I do not know for I have learned not to trust the gracious words of Italian statesmen. They may readily say that the assurances given yesterday are not appropriate to the developments of today, and in this manner they can easily justify to themselves a "change of policy".

Ciano refers to the Spanish situation as the one stumbling block to the resumption of good relations with the French, but I am not so sure. He feels that Franco is making such rapid progress towards Barcelona that Catalonia may fall very shortly and that then the war in its international aspect will end. The Italians will be withdrawn and Franco will be able to transfer his 250,000 men now on the Catalonian front to the Madrid section. This sounds hopeful for Europe, but nevertheless we are worried by the intensity and violence of the Italian press against the French, which has broken out again on the departure of Chamberlain from Rome. It is,

is, of course, connected directly with the Catalonian campaign. The Italians are fearful that the French will, at this critical moment, send such additional reinforcements as will prevent the fall of Barcelona, and they imagine that anti-French sentiment raised to a point of intense animosity will cause the French to pause. The Italian press goes so far as to admit that the French should be "spit upon" by each of the forty-four million Italians, which naturally only irritates the French more profoundly.

It is still too early to predict with any certainty the effect of your letter to Mussolini. With regard to the treatment of American Jews in Italy, I have the word of one American Jew who was informed by a member of the Commission appointed to deal with the general problem within Italy, that Americans would be exempt from the operation of the decrees affecting foreign Jews. This sounds good but we must wait a bit before accepting such assurances at their face value.

I am sorry to have to report that I have become less and less confident of the friendly assurances and words of the Government to which you have honored me

by

by accrediting me, and I am not alone in this respect. I fear that when the Spanish campaign ends there may be a continuance of Franco-Italian dissensions in the hope, on the part of Italy, that she will get something, whether in Tunis or in Jibuti, to prove to the Italian public the advantages in a Rome-Berlin axis.

Naturally I am following with intense interest your efforts of defensive rearmament, which, I am thankful to say, has even begun to get under the skin of these people.

With cordial remembrances,

Very sincerely yours,

*William Phillips*

Excerpt published in William  
Phillips, Ventures in Diplomacy,  
(Boston: The Beacon Press, 1952),  
p. 227.

RJ  
3/29/56

PSF Phillips

RF

Rome, February 10, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

These are interesting days in Rome, and there are many questions that will soon have to be solved one way or the other; the election of the new Pope, the presentation of the Italian demands on France, the general attitude of European countries towards the new Franco Spain, and the proposed Berlin-Rome-Tokyo alliance, are a few of them.

But my object in writing you today is not to enumerate our problems but to assure you (what you undoubtedly know already) that your armament program is exercising a steadying influence as seen from this angle. For the first time in many months, the United States has come within the Italian vision of world affairs, whereas formerly there were daily evidences that we were not given any consideration

whatsoever

The President,

The White House,  
Washington.

whatsoever as a possible force to be reckoned with. Our building program has suddenly focused attention on our general attitude. The press has been vocal in denouncing us and the personal attacks upon you have been so vicious that I have brought them to the attention of the Foreign Office. They ceased after twenty-four hours. While they were beyond measure disgusting, we must not forget that the Italian character is chameleon and can change over night. Italians can easily hate one day and love the next, so that we should not regard this vitriolic press as an indication of the Government's attitude towards us in the future. It is rather the Italian method of expressing concern and the realization that there has been a new check, perhaps, to the ambitions of the Fascist regime. In a sense, therefore, I rather welcome the attention which the Italian press has been bestowing upon us because it is a clear indication of the Government's realization of your position and of the power behind it.

With regard to the proposed three-cornered "alliance", it is of interest to feel that there is a divergence of views between Tokyo and Rome. The information which I  
received

received yesterday from my Soviet colleague and which, curiously enough, is just confirmed in a press telegram from Tokyo to the London TIMES, to the effect that the Japanese Government hesitate to proceed with the alliance in view of the Italian European ambitions, is worthy of note.

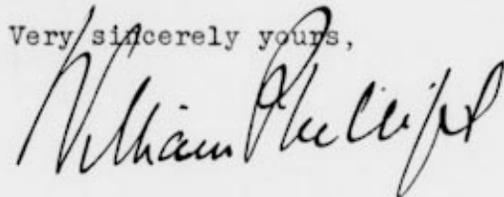
Again it is interesting to note the delay on the part of Italy in presenting her claims against France. This the Italian Government surely would have done before now, had there been any certainty of German military support. Von Wiegand, who has just come here from Berlin, tells a very interesting story with regard to conditions in Germany. His impressions seemed to me so important that I offered to carry to you, through our cipher, any message which he might desire to send, but he has not taken advantage of my invitation, in the belief, I assume, that Gilbert is fully reporting the same picture. In brief, Von Wiegand sees an astonishing change taking place in Germany which is far from favorable to Hitler and the Nazi regime. He referred to the popular aversion towards war, and he believes, too, that this change has come about largely through  
the

the new position which the United States has assumed because of the new defense program.

I note with interest Senator King's efforts with regard to an arms limitation conference. Although the moment does not yet seem ripe, it might well be possible to start something along these lines informally at first, perhaps through the medium of diplomacy, during the present year.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed phrase "Very sincerely yours,".

FDR Memo, 4/3/39 and FDR holograph  
notes

Published in Elliott Roosevelt, FDR,  
His Personal Letters, 1927-45, pages  
875-876.

rlj 2/15/61

*Study*

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Warm Springs, Ga.,  
April 3, 1939.

This is memorandum I prepared  
for talk with Ambassador Prince  
Colonna when he presented his  
credentials on March 19, 1939.

F. D. R.

PSF Phillips

[4-3-39]

Winn. holds key to France.

Hitler - had shape - was no way out.  
Has to have Staly. Then cast his side.

1. Neutrality act amended
2. World opinion reshaped  
    Eternal loss of war
3. Staly int. with west. Europe
4. To plus - with France
5. Dit would take a week it said
6. Got nothing in road by arms.
7. Save peace - once down. of  
    Europe by Germany

PSF Phillips

JR  
A portion of this tele-  
gram must be closely  
paraphrased before being  
communicated to anyone. (br)

Rome

Dated March 22, 1939

Rec'd 7:34 a.m.

Secretary of State,  
Washington.

97, March 22, 10 a.m.

The Fascist Grand Council at first session of its  
regular March meeting last night adopted the following  
resolution. (GRAY)

"The Grand Council of Fascism in view of the  
threatened constitution of a 'United front of the  
democracies associated with Bolshevism' against the  
authoritarian states--a united front which presages not  
peace but war--declares that what has happened in Central  
Europe originated **in the first place** with the Treaty of  
Versailles and reaffirms, especially at the moment, its  
full adherence to the policy of the Rome-Berlin axis".  
(END GRAY)

Appropriate opportunities to explain just what the  
Italian Government conceives the policy of the Rome-Berlin  
axis to be in the light of recent developments will be  
afforded at the inauguration of the new Fascist Chamber  
tomorrow when there will be a speech from the throne  
and on Sunday morning when the Duce is scheduled to  
broadcast

-2- #97, March 22, 10 a.m., from Rome.

broadcast at the celebration of the 20th anniversary  
celebration of the foundation of the Fasci.

PHILLIPS

RR:VWC

*Rome*

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE  
WASHINGTON

April 5, 1939

*file  
personal*

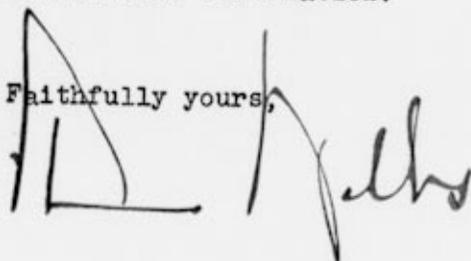
My dear Mr. President:

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

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

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enclosure.

The President,  
The White House.

Rome, March 17, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

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

Since

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

Since my last letter, I have no reason to change my views with regard to Mussolini's political intentions. When the time comes for his negotiations with France, the tension between the two countries, which is still acute, will increase in an effort to get all he can in Tunisia, Djibouti, and the Suez Canal. No one here believes that he is prepared to strike in a military sense in order to achieve his goal, for it is a well known fact that Italy is not prepared for war. Moreover, the Italian people are strongly against being drawn into any war, and while they might obey a peremptory order to fight, everyone believes that this would be the beginning of the end of the regime and that public opinion would not support a war of any duration. Moreover, today, with Germany's reported absorption of Czechoslovakia, it would seem that the German Government is sufficiently occupied in an easterly direction to exclude any possibility that it will lend its support to Italy's ambitions in the Mediterranean. With what amazing speed developments take place in this part of the world!

I called this morning upon Ciano to ask for a statement with regard to the attitude of Italy on the Czecho-Slovak situation. I impressed upon him that we in America were profoundly shocked by the brutal methods which Hitler had used in taking possession of Bohemia and Moravia by an overwhelming armed force, when as a matter of fact the entire country was already within his grasp. Ciano seemed interested in my reference to the attitude of the American public, and I gave it to him as strongly as I could, although of course explaining that I had no instructions to give any message to him in this respect. When it came to pinning him down for a statement with regard to Italy's position, however, he became distinctly confused, gave me none, and finally said "there are no adjectives which can be used". He was so evidently upset and so little prepared to give me something for transmission to Washington that I did not have the heart to press him further, but I left his office naturally in the belief that the use of armed force by Hitler came as a disagreeable surprise to the Italian Government.

I was very much annoyed with Mussolini in his re-

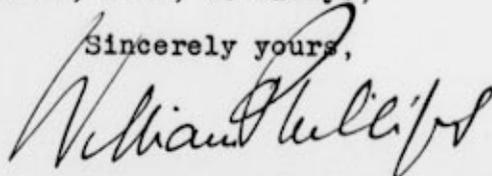
fusal

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

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

With all good wishes, I am, as always,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "William Phillips". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name "Sincerely yours,".

PSF Phillips  
File  
Russett

Rome, April 14, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

We have been passing through very strange and unpleasant days and they are not yet over. The atmosphere has been charged with rumors of every description and it would still be easy to drift into a state of "jitters". The report which has caused me the most concern is to the effect that there are German troops in Italy and Libya, that German troop trains have been passing through Rome on their way south during the night, and that German troops have been proceeding through northern Italy to the Italo-French frontier. However, we cannot confirm any of these rumors, nor can my British and French colleagues. And yesterday the Assistant Chief of Staff categorically denied to the British Military Attaché that there were any German troops in either Italy or Libya. On the other hand, the reports persist that considerable numbers of "German specialists" are continuing to arrive.

There

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

There is no enthusiasm anywhere except in the press over the Albanian campaign and the "offer" of the Albanian crown to the King of Italy. The point is made, of course, that there has really been no change in the situation, because Italy's special relations to Albania have existed for a long time, that King Zog had become an impossibility, that his government was utterly corrupt (which may be true), and that Italian interests were accordingly in jeopardy. Moreover, a great deal is made in the press about the enthusiasm of the Albanian people for the unity of the two crowns. This point of view is somewhat amusing in view of the necessity of keeping an army of one hundred thousand men in Albania for the purpose of pacifying the country!

But Albania is not alone the disturbing part of the situation, as I see it. Rather it is the reports, which are probably correct, that Italy has been reinforcing all of her outposts - Rhodes, Libya, possibly Spanish Morocco, and the French and Yugoslav frontiers. It would seem to be, therefore, that Albania is merely one of a number of strategic points which have been reinforced of late. The problem remains, therefore, unsolved, because we cannot

see

see why all of this military preparation can assist Italy in her negotiations with France. Some observers believe that the Italian Government at heart is not anxious to open negotiations with the French Government. There would seem to be some foundation for this belief, inasmuch as the Government is insisting upon French initiative in opening the negotiations, whereas if they were sincerely anxious to effect a settlement of outstanding problems, they could easily say so, which is all that is necessary in order to enable the French Government to respond. But no, the Duce refuses to take any initiative in the matter, and so does Daladier.

I wish I could give you an intelligent forecast of future events and explain to you precisely why the Italians are acting in this way, but I have yet to find any of my colleagues or anyone else who can give me any real explanation of the present trend of affairs. The nearest that I can come to it at the present moment is that Germany and Italy together are preparing to create a situation so strained and so menacing that Great Britain and France will agree to a second Munich Conference, and in this way the appetites of Germany and Italy will be satisfied.

I remain, as previously, convinced that Italy is not  
planning

planning on any offensive warfare, but nevertheless we all admit that Mussolini is playing an exceedingly dangerous game.

My personal relations with the Foreign Office, while always pleasant, have become unsatisfactory from my point of view because I have no longer any confidence in the assurances which I receive in that quarter. It is not that there is any deliberate intention to deceive (although this may happen sometimes), but rather that the Government is conducted on a day by day program and that, therefore, even Ciano cannot predict the course which the Chief of the Government will take on the following day.

Since beginning this letter, the pouch has brought a letter from Sumner Welles containing a memorandum of your conversation with Colonna at the conclusion of the presentation of his letters of credence. I am more than delighted that you took this occasion to talk to him so frankly and I only wish that I could be sure that he will be able to report it as well as it is summarized in the memorandum. So strongly do I feel this that I am going to ask by cable for permission to hand very informally to Ciano a copy of the memorandum, for the way the matter  
has

has been presented, that is the language which you  
have used, is something which Colonna cannot possibly  
interpret.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

*William Phillips*

*file  
personal.*

Rome, April 20, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

Your message to Hitler and Mussolini has certainly stirred things up in this part of the world, exactly as I assume it was meant to do. Such an outburst of rage and vituperation against us has not appeared in the Italian press since I have been here. It has made me boil with indignation, but I felt that it was wiser to let the paroxysm pass without seeming to take it seriously. The Italians might have felt complimented by official notice. I have kept away from the Foreign Office but on every occasion I have tried to impress the fact that the whole country is behind you in this message, which represents the voice of America as a whole. Here, of course, the press has sought to create the impression that it was a personal

message

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

message from you and did not really represent the attitude of the American people.

Yesterday I was told by an Italian in the Foreign Office, who happened to be lunching with me, that what hurt most was the fact that the message was addressed simultaneously to Hitler and to Mussolini. There is something to my mind pathetic in this, because the Italians still like to fool themselves into thinking that their position is independent of Germany. In the circumstances, it is especially important for them to feel that we, on the other side of the Atlantic, regard the axis partners as one and indivisible machine. If this hurts, it nevertheless is a healthful influence.

I do not know yet whether Mussolini's speech today at the Campidoglio, the substance of which I have just telegraphed to the Department, is to be his final answer to your message, but whatever he may consider it, it is a great improvement on his previous public statements, and for him is almost a peace speech.

Public opinion in Italy against war is rising steadily and making itself felt more and more in all circles, and I am rapidly reaching the point when I do not believe that the Government here would be able to push Italy into war

along

along side of Germany, even though Hitler might demand Italian military support for some particular adventure.

I am trying to keep the Department informed of all developments, and as I assume that you see the more important cables, I shall not burden you today by a lengthy letter.

Always with the kindest remembrances,

Sincerely yours

William Phillips

There is no doubt in my mind, but that your message is having a far-reaching and sobering effect!