

● PSF

Italy: Phillips June 1939-41

Excerpts from both letters published
in William Phillips Ventures in
Diplomacy (Boston: The Beacon Press,
1952), pp. 229-230.

RJ 3/29/56

PSF Phillips

June 7, 1939.

Dear Bill:

Many thanks for your grand letter of May twenty-sixth. You are right about telephones. The transatlantic service is probably listened in not only by London, Paris, Berlin and Rome but probably also by at least four or five other European capitals. That seems to be clearly established.

I hope and pray, every day, that the influence of Mussolini will be definitely against war. But on the other hand, I am worried by the fact that both Germany and Italy are maintaining such an enormous number of men under arms and continuing to spend such vast sums. It seems to me that if Germany visualizes a peaceful working out of the political and economic problems, common sense would require the starting of conversations as soon as possible in order to avoid an even worse financial situation.

I fear, too, that both dictators think their present methods are succeeding because of the gains they have made in Albania, Hungary and Yugoslavia.

The King and Queen arrive tomorrow and we look for a strenuous four days. I devoutly hope everything will go through without any upset. We hope to see Caroline this summer. Take care of yourself.

As ever yours,

Honorable William Phillips,
United States Embassy,
Rome, Italy.

FDR/dj

PSF Phillips

Rome, May 26, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I wish it were possible to talk to you occasionally by telephone, but unfortunately that is impossible. The other day a member of my staff put in a telephone call to an American in Venice, who, on hearing the voice of the Embassy Secretary, responded by saying "What is it? Is it war?" Instantly the telephonic communication was cut. And some time ago I had a telegram from Bill Bullitt saying that our telephones were listened to by both the Italian and German police, which we had guessed long ago, but where he got his information I do not know. So I regret that I cannot enliven your days by giving you the gossip of Rome over the telephone.

It remains to be seen, of course, whether the Rome-Berlin alliance is going to make matters better or worse, for no one can possibly foresee how the dictators will interpret the articles dealing with continuous "consultation".

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

tion". Personally, I believe that Mussolini is so anxious to avoid war that we may hope for his calming influence on Hitler, exercised through the permanent commissions for consultation. But whether his influence will have the desired effect upon Hitler at any critical moment is something which no one can guess. My latest information is to the effect that Von Ribbentrop told Ciano at the Milan meeting on May seventh that German troops were ready to occupy Danzig within forty-eight hours, that Mussolini was able to call this off, and the alliance, with its consultation requirements, followed in short order.

Larry Lehrbas, whom you may remember in Washington as an A.P. correspondent, has been transferred to Rome, and accompanied Mussolini on his recent speaking tour through northern Italy. Lehrbas tells me that the masses everywhere were loyal and enthusiastic. He himself went two or three hours in advance of Mussolini, and so was able to gauge the attitude of the people before the Duce's arrival at a given place, and he was impressed by the genuineness of the enthusiasm in that part of Italy where Mussolini was supposed to have less of a following. While we must accept

Mussolini's

Mussolini's popular following as a fact, he himself must realize that he would be in danger of losing his leadership and his Empire if he dragged Italy into a European war. He will, however, continue to bluster and to keep the people stirred up in the belief that their wrongs must be righted, and he will do this for the purpose of preserving his leadership and in the hope of gaining something for Italy somewhere, and from someone.

He is not in a pleasant state of mind with regard to America. At a dinner the other evening at the Palace in honor of Prince Paul of Yugoslavia, he opened the conversation by asking why we "interfered" in European affairs when we knew so little about them, although he admitted at the same time that Italians knew very little about American affairs. I gave him the best answers that I could with regard to our hundred and one ties with Europe, and your wish and that of the country to see European problems settled by peaceful negotiation. He annoyed me by remarking that the United States was run by Jews, and I gave it back to him straight that he was entirely mistaken in this respect and that it was a very unfortunate mistake to make.

On the same occasion I had a few minutes' talk with
Prince

Prince Paul. He is a man of considerable charm, but I gather is not up to handling effectively the exceedingly difficult internal situation developing from the struggle between the Serbs and Croates, and he gave me the impression of being a sorely perplexed and bewildered man. When I was presented, he was standing in a corner close to Mussolini and Ciano and a group of other men. He remarked to me that he found the marble floor very slippery, and did I not think that it would be safer for us to stand upon the rug near the center of the room? When we were out of hearing, he asked anxiously what I thought of the situation, etc., etc.

Your famous message to Hitler and Mussolini is still the subject of a great deal of comment here. They do not like it but there is no doubt that it has been the means of bringing forcibly to their attention our concern in the European mess. Soft language has no effect on these men, and your message, though it hurt, had without doubt a healthful influence.

I am taking every opportunity, and I did so again today, to impress upon Ciano his responsibility under

the

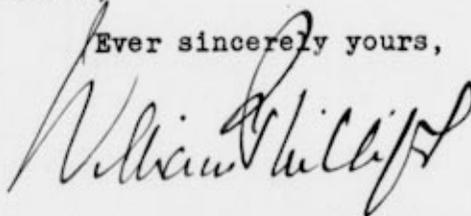
the consultative pact in the new German-Italian alliance. I said that I had little confidence in Hitler, but that I had confidence in Mussolini and that he would apply the brakes on Hitler in emergency cases. Ciano laughed and said that he would not attempt to reply beyond taking note of my remarks, but he went on to emphasize his opinion with regard to the importance of this aspect of the alliance.

I shall follow with intense interest and considerable concern the royal visit to Washington and to New York, and shall heave a sigh of relief when they are safely back in Canada, and I feel sure that you and Eleanor will do the same.

Caroline and my youngest daughter are sailing for home next week for the summer.

With all good wishes,

Ever 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 "Ever sincerely yours,".

RF Phillips

file
personal

Rome, June 23, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I have just returned from a helpful ten days' trip to Budapest and Belgrade and am delighted to find awaiting me your good letter of June seventh. I, too, am worried by the huge armaments of Germany and Italy. I fear that neither of the dictators have confidence in a peaceful working out of their political problems, and that Mussolini, at any rate, regards his economic problems as of secondary importance. It is for this reason that we are having such difficulties in our own trade relations with this country.

In Budapest I met a number of well informed Hungarians whose prayer is that Hungary may remain neutral in any eventuality and so be in a better position in the future to achieve a revision of the boundaries. The signs of popular mourning for the "lost provinces" are pathetic and in evidence everywhere. In order to maintain Hungary's neutrality, they appreciate the necessity of acquiescing

to

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

to the German demands, but the country, taken as a whole, remains intensely nationalistic and anti-German. The Regent is admittedly all-powerful and strongly anti-German, and I heard it said that he may be forced eventually to assume a dictatorship in order to hold down the Nazi influence, which gained enormously at the last election.

Montgomery was most cordial and helpful, and is doing a fine job. He is on the best of terms with the Regent.

In Belgrade I stayed with Lane, and lunched one day with Prince Regent Paul, whom I had met here and in Florence. He received me most cordially and led me through the rooms on the ground floor of his villa, pointing out some of his well known pictures and works of art. I asked particularly for the famous El Greco, whereupon he told me in confidence, which he begged me not to repeat, that the El Greco and some of his other finest paintings had been sent to London recently for safekeeping! After lunch we had a long private talk. I told him of Ciano's recent remark to me that "we are in for a long period of peace", and the Prince remarked that these were precisely the words that had been used to him during his recent visit to Berlin. It was evident that the man is sorely perplexed, for he is harassed on every side, externally and internally. He condemned in outspoken terms

terms the clique of Serbian politicians who are now in power and described them as the lowest group that he had ever come across, - old men who cling to power for their own material benefit and without any sense of responsibility to the nation, - and when I asked him where the youth of the country was, he said that Serbia was still oriental and that there remained a popular veneration for "elder statesmen", just as in the old days of China "gray beards" had been able to continue in office indefinitely. He mentioned his own sympathy for our democratic form of government, but remarked that the people of Yugoslavia could not possibly function under any such system at present. The two days' motor drive from Belgrade to the Adriatic confirmed what he said in this respect, for although the country is immensely rich agriculturally, the people remain in the same primitive condition that they were in hundreds of years ago. This, it is said, is the result of Turkish influence in the past, which deliberately kept the people in their primitive state, and that it will take another generation before these conditions will disappear. While in Turkey veiled women no longer are seen, in Sarajevo, where I spent the night, they were in evidence everywhere.

Both

Both Hungary and Yugoslavia, at least those parts through which I passed, seemed to be vast wheat and corn granaries, with mixed crops less important, and in spite of the primitive methods employed in cultivation, the grain appeared to be in marvellous condition.

Since my return to Rome there are signs that all is not entirely well between General Franco and Mussolini. From a reliable source I learn that Franco did not wish to have Barcelona taken by assault and had planned to encircle the city, thus forcing it to capitulate to starvation. However, Mussolini did not relish the loss of time necessitated by such a campaign, and accordingly the Italian general led the assault on Barcelona and so forced the Spanish leader's hand. During the operations that succeeded, the Italians destroyed several villages by artillery fire, and Franco, in the settling of accounts between Italy and Spain which is now supposed to be under way, has insisted that the Italians deduct from their bill a sum equivalent to restoration of the villages destroyed. Franco has even demurred, so they say, from paying the salaries of the Italian legionaries, on the ground that they were "volunteers".

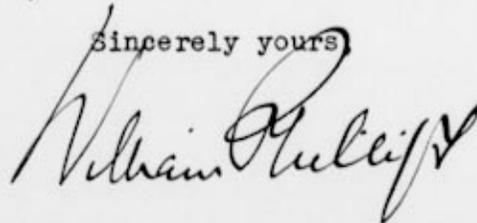
Another

Another indication that all is not well between the two leaders touches upon Ciano's prospective visit to Madrid. Ten days ago he told me definitely that he would leave Rome on an official visit to Franco on or about the twentieth or twenty-first of June; and yet on my return I find him still here, and the gossip is that the visit has been postponed until some date in July. I mention these details only because they seem to show the direction of the wind, for it has been extremely difficult in the past for us to gauge the actual relation between the Spanish and Italian Governments.

I have naturally followed with intense interest the royal visit to Washington, New York, and Hyde Park, and congratulate you heartily on the way in which it has been carried out and the triumphant success achieved. The Italian press barely alluded to the visit, which is probably an indication of the importance which the higher-ups attach to it.

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".

file
journal

PSF Phillips
Rome -
1

Rome, July 14, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I am distressed about the adverse neutrality vote, - distressed from every point of view, - but I know that you are doing everything that humanly can be done to remedy the situation at this session. An erroneous report in the Italian press that at a press conference you had singled out Italy and Germany as happy over the result, evidently brought uneasiness into the hearts of these people, for since then there has been no editorial comment and merely inconspicuous presentation of facts.

I am in full sympathy with you and the Secretary in this terrific battle against ignorance.

An intriguing situation has developed over here during the last few days with its center in the Province of Bolzano. All foreigners temporarily sojourning in that region have been given forty-eight hours to leave, although

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

although those owning property have been given a little longer to wind up their affairs. This action is the more inexplicable coming just at the beginning of the tourist season, which means so much to that part of the world.

The official order affects also the native population of Austrian blood who have dwelt there for over a thousand years.

I called at once upon the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs (Ciano is now celebrating in Spain) to request a delay in the expulsion order of two American ladies, and this was promptly granted. The Acting Minister referred to the order as "politico-military", but the word "military" certainly makes no sense.

It appears possible that Hitler and Mussolini agreed to the repatriation of the ten thousand German citizens living in the province. Hitler had publicly guaranteed the "sacredness" of the Brenner frontier, and it was inconvenient to have recurring hostile "incidents" between Germans and Italians. Furthermore, he wanted them back for his own purposes, while Mussolini, on his part, was glad to get rid of what had proved to be a troublesome element. However, when the repatriation began,

began, it seems probable that Hitler may have insisted that all foreigners should leave at the same time in order that there might not appear to be any discrimination against the Germans. The order affecting foreigners was certainly hastily issued for the Foreign Office knew nothing about it until my Dutch colleague called on behalf of a number of his compatriots who had been told to get out.

I was informed by the Acting Minister that the object of the order is to Italianize the province and that only the well known trouble-makers within the native population will be affected and given the choice of going to Germany or to southern Italy, and to southern Italy only if they declare themselves loyal Italians. But I have my fingers crossed! I am not certain whether this repatriation movement will stop there, for other sources of information indicate that it is the intention of the Government to move a substantial part of this former Austrian element to southern Italy. Only the future will give us the actual results.

The European crisis continues on its accustomed way, - nervous periods followed by calm periods, and we are in a calm period now, - and through it all there is
genuine

genuine disapproval by all classes of the Government's pro-German policy. So bitter has this become that one cannot but wonder whether Mussolini and the little group around him who run the show, fully appreciate it.

While the Italo-German military alliance made boastful assertions making it appear that Italian armed forces were ready to support Hitler's every whim, there is throughout Italy no activity in sight which would give the impression of intensive preparation for war. Our Military Attaché, who has just returned from an inspection tour in the north, reports that the principal steel works, the Ansaldo and Breda and the Galileo optical company, are on a peace-time basis, - forty to fortyeight hours a week, - that the first two are concerned largely with the manufacture of railroad cars, rails and civilian requirements, although Ansaldo is constructing also some commercial and naval vessels but always on a peace-time operating basis.

The reports of the Naval and Air Attachés are not dissimilar in substance, and all of them believe that there is no new increase in warlike preparations.

The Government's financial situation is of course
appalling

appalling and less and less foreign exchange is available for the needed purchases outside of Italy.

However, we must not forget that in the event of a European war, Italy, without actually engaging in it, can contribute many "nuisance values". She could mobilize her army on the French frontier and so hold a section of the French army. She could do the same on the Tunisian frontier, for already in Libya she has an army of approximately seventy or eighty thousand men. And her air force and submarines could threaten the British and French fleets in the Mediterranean and so keep important parts of the British and French fleets on the "qui vive" in that area. Italy, therefore, has all these "nuisance values" without necessarily taking part at the outset in any act of aggression committed by Germany. Mussolini, it seems to me, might be able to create his "nuisance values" without launching Italy into a European war on the side of Germany, and if he limits his activities to this extent he might be able to get away with it with the Italian people.

But the situation today may change tomorrow, and predictions are apt to be unsafe and even unwise.

One

One meets, of course, Italians who express themselves freely and who believe that the only way out of Italy's present impasse is through internal revolution or external warfare. But in my opinion it will take the Italians a long time to get up steam enough to revolt against the present regime, certainly while Mussolini lasts, for he still dominates the masses. The possibility of joining his military forces with those of Germany to attack the democracies is always present, but to me it seems unlikely that he would take such a step at the outbreak of any such war. What may develop after war begins, must always be on the "lap of the gods".

With all good wishes, and sympathy with you in your daily battles,

Ever yours sincerely,

William Phillips

P.S. I see that Ray Hooley has put it in print among others, in his Saturday Evening Post articles, and I'm not really surprised.

B.F. Phillips

file
personal

Rome, August 18, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

We are passing through a very mysterious moment here and underlying the deadness of mid-August in Rome there is a feeling of general alarm. It is impossible to keep you advised of the true situation because there is not a person in Italy, outside of Mussolini himself, who knows which way the Italian ship of state is sailing. As I have reported in my telegrams, Ciano told me on the eve of his departure for his meeting with Hitler and von Ribbentrop at Salzburg, that he was optimistic and would in all likelihood on his return to Rome have a reassuring message which I could pass on to you. He has returned a "pessimist". And moreover, in spite of constant efforts on my part for an appointment, five days have passed and I have not been able to see him. Whatever information

The President,

The White House,
Washington, D.C.

tion I have secured with regard to the Salzburg meeting has been through a young and friendly Soviet Chargé d'Affaires, who is a personal friend of Ciano of long standing and whom Ciano met casually on the beach the other day.

However, I feel certain that Ciano did his utmost with Hitler to "put on the brakes". Italians now believe, and probably believe correctly, that in the event of war Italy will be immediately attacked by the combined British and French forces, which will seek naturally to destroy the weakest link in Germany's armament. And so I believe that Ciano's pessimism and his hesitancy to discuss the situation with Chiefs of Mission reveals the failure of his efforts in Salzburg. Everywhere throughout Italy there is outspoken condemnation of the policy of the military alliance with Germany, and nothing that Mussolini could do would be more unpopular than to drag Italy into the maelstrom on the side of Germany, and particularly at this moment when Danzig is the objective. Even now there are no signs of unusual military activities here, although there are reports now and then of the recall to duty of officers who are now on leave.

François-

François-Poncet, my French colleague, feels that the most dangerous moment has already passed, and that while the situation is still full of dangerous possibilities, Hitler has probably decided not to strike at Danzig. He desired to strike, Poncet believes, about ten days ago, and was held back by his advisers.

The Pope is said to be seriously alarmed, far more than during the Czechoslovak crisis a year ago, when he was confident that no country would do anything to start a European conflagration.

To turn to more agreeable subjects, I have to report that your distinguished Postmaster General, accompanied by his two daughters and Ed Roddan, are my guests for several days and will be leaving for Paris next Sunday. I have done my best to amuse them and to keep them busy, but I am not able to cope with Tony Biddle in the matter of social entertainment, for Rome is completely deserted by Romans as well as by Americans at this deadest of all seasons of the year. I advised Ciano of Farley's arrival and that he would be glad to pay his respects

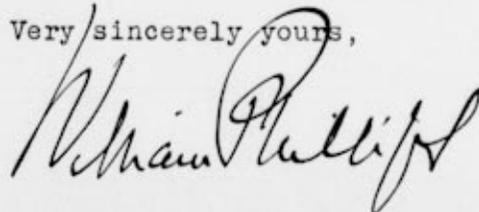
respects to Mussolini if this was entirely convenient, and have received a reply that Mussolini "regrets exceedingly" that he has not been able to arrange an audience in view of the shortness of time and his many engagements, etc., etc. It seemed to me important for Jim not to appear to avoid all contact with Italian officials, and accordingly, so far as he is concerned, he has done the courteous thing. An audience with the Pope has been arranged for tomorrow, and this, after all, is what the Farley family naturally care most about.

Needless to add, Jim is a most delightful guest and companion, and I have much enjoyed him. His stories are wonderful and unending, and I am having, perhaps for the first time in my life, an intimate glimpse of our own political world and its wondrous ways.

I like to think of you now as thoroughly enjoying your cruise along the Maine coast.

With kindest remembrances,

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 name.

PSF Phillips

file
personal

Rome, September 6, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

Last week we passed through several days of great tension and uncertainty when it was impossible to predict the line which the Italian Government would follow. Troops everywhere were on the move, cities were blackened at night, and all sorts of war regulations went into effect. Some of them are still in effect, in spite of the declared intention of the Government to keep out of the war. For instance, no private automobiles except those of officials and doctors can move anywhere in Italy, all cafés and restaurants have to close early, and precautionary military movements continue. But there is intense relief manifest everywhere and the popular impression seems to be that Italy can and will remain neutral.

Mussolini is again the "hero" who has saved Italy
from

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

from becoming involved in the war, and his efforts in Berlin, London, and Paris to prevent the tragedy have been prominently displayed everywhere. Ciano, too, I imagine, will share some of the hero worship, and the words of praise and adulation bestowed on him by the press for negotiating the Italo-German military alliance will not be referred to.

Recently I asked Ciano whether Italy would adopt "neutrality". He said "No", and that any declaration to that effect was unnecessary in view of what had already been announced. He added that all that Italy wanted was "to be left alone". I did not press him further but murmured something to the effect that I understood the embarrassing position that he was in, to which he made no comment.

It may be that he has seen a new light and is now less hypnotized by the Germans. Certainly both he and Mussolini have been roughly treated by their German friends and little consideration has been given to their appeals in behalf of peace. They find themselves in a

delicate

delicate position, and especially so in view of the outspoken public opinion against taking part in a war in cooperation with Germany. I fear, therefore, that we can expect little stability in policy here. Even though the Government seemed to be veering towards a better understanding with the British and French, and for two or three days the press displayed a balanced opinion between the opposing forces, it has veered back again with its pro-German point of view.

If Germany continues to sweep all before her, the official controlled Italian press will, in my opinion, remain Germany's political supporter. Should Hitler call upon Mussolini to perform under the terms of the alliance, views here are divided as to the nature of the response. Some undoubtedly expect him to carry out his pledges, but there is a large section of public opinion which would expect him to find a way out of his contractual relations and would not in the least mind broken pledges. At such a moment, Mussolini alone will decide where his prestige and that of the Fascist regime lies best.

While Italy remains neutral in fact, the British and French policy will presumably be to leave her alone.

Freedom

Freedom of movement in the Mediterranean is a great asset to the allied governments, and they naturally hope to preserve it and not to endanger the loss of the present Italian goodwill by the unpopularity of a blockade. And then again, while Italy remains out of the conflict, the Balkan States can do likewise, which is again of great importance to the allies.

The fact that Italian passenger ships are again back on their regular sailings is reassuring, as indicating that the Government is satisfied that its position will be respected by all belligerents and accordingly is not looking for any immediate trouble. It is certainly a relief to me, for we have in Italy about two thousand Americans awaiting transportation.

This is only the briefest résumé of the situation as I see it today, but it is a situation that can change in a few hours.

In closing, let me express my admiration of the radio broadcast which you made on the evening of the third.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

William Phillips

MEMORANDUM

MRS. ROOSEVELT
TO READ AND RETURN

F. D. R.

*file
personal*

Mrs. Roosevelt has read

L. D.
TO NEW YORK AND BELMONT
NEW YORK
ROOSEVELT

Oct. 8th 1939



HIGHOVER
NORTH BEVERLY, MASS.

PSF
Phillips

Dear Franklin

I did not wish to add to your
bothers by offering to go to Hedington
or Hyde Park to see you before I said
it was only in case you wished to send
any message to Bill by word of
mouth. I should have greatly en-
-joyed seeing you & Eleanor again
but I know how full your time is.
I thank you for the very nice telegram

from Hyde Park yesterday. I wish
you every success in your neutrality
legislation, in this hot Republican
part of the world everyone I have
seen is keen for a repeal of the present
law & a cash & carry export of arms to
what a horrid mess the world is
in. I hope that your Pleasure will
get as many Sundays in the country
as you can. It is grand having you
both at the helm in these stormy
 seas. I think only the best critic

any individual can make is to remain
as normal as possible. We shall
do our best in Rome.

Did you hear what they say in
England?

Chamberlain takes his head
and in the country and Hitler
takes a country every week end.

Best of luck & God bless you.

Caroline Phillips

PSF
Phillips

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 10, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE

For various reasons I think it would be a good idea for you to telegraph something along the following line to Phillips:

Will you at your convenience intimate to the Papal Secretary of State that the President has been made very happy by the impartial printing of American news, and also by the Address by Bishop Sheil which had been prepared after consultation with His Eminence, Cardinal Mundelein, just before the untimely death of that great leader and humanitarian?

*in the Observator
Romano*

F. D. R.

MEMORANDUM

*file
personal*

Ps F Phillips

October 17, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Copies of two despatches, Nos. 1566 and 1568, from Rome, are respectfully submitted as of possible interest to the President.

PSE Phillips

Rome, September 27, 1939.

No. 1566

Subject: Italian Criticism of OSSERVATORE ROMANO's
Reporting of American News.

The Honorable

The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

With reference to the Embassy's telegram of September 25, 4:00 p.m., regarding the full and objective reporting by the OSSERVATORE ROMANO of the President's message to Congress on the Neutrality Act and the increased public interest in this paper as evidenced by its gains in circulation, I have the honor to report the following incidents which indicate that the attitude of the OSSERVATORE ROMANO has not wholly escaped the
notice

notice of the Fascist authorities.

Last week the Embassy learned that Signor Guido Gonella, a Fascist Party member and a staff writer on the OSSERVATORE ROMANO was arrested and detained for four days. Upon his release following the intervention of the Vatican Secretariat of State, he was cautioned that as a "Fascist and Italian" he should guard against the pro-democratic tone previously shown in his articles on international events. Subsequent to this indirect warning, Count della Torre, the editor of the OSSERVATORE ROMANO, who resides in the Vatican City, is said to have stated at a staff meeting that the policy of the paper, for which he alone assumed responsibility, would remain unchanged, and he invited any member of the staff reluctant to continue this policy to resign forthwith.

A more direct warning may be read into the following article appearing in the REGIME FASCISTA of September 26, entitled "Christian Morality:"

"The OSSERVATORE ROMANO is concerned with Roosevelt's views to which it dedicates a great deal of space and noisy headlines.

"Everything is explained: the sympathies of the Vatican organ are directed to the man who in the name of christianity invokes peace and wants to prevent war from destroying America's best youth. And the United States is hailed when they declare that American neutrality shall be strict and most impartial.

"Today, news which comes from the Star Republic is completely different. We learn that the purpose for which Roosevelt wants to remove the embargo on arms is to give work to the hundreds and hundreds of millions of unemployed. The OSSERVATORE ROMANO reports in its entirety the declaration of that President without being in the least scandalized; in fact, framing it in a language of sympathy.

"The

"The christian morality of Count della Torre jumps forth in its purest form. Peace is good, but better the slaughter in the field opposite him. Hence, the more cannons that are sent to the front and the more men that fall on the other side, the greater will be his joy.

"Once, during our racial campaign, that newspaper maintained that we all descend from a single stem and that we are all children of God. Today, no! The children of God are above all the Jews that have unleashed the actual storm; the others are sons of the devil and should be destroyed.

"But what will history say? We shall wait to tell him."

According to the American Editor of the OSSERVATORE ROMANO, Count della Torre considers the front page of his paper for September 27, on which is printed a long article on American press comment regarding the President's message as well as an editorial on the Secretary's Pan-American Day address (reference the Embassy's despatch no. 1562 of September 27) as the OSSERVATORE ROMANO's answer to the REGIME FASCISTA.

Respectfully yours,

William Phillips

Rome, September 28, 1939.

No. 1568

Subject: OSSERVATORE ROMANO Editorial on
Secretary's Pan-American Day Address.

The Honorable
The Secretary of State,
Washington.

Sir:

With reference to the Embassy's despatch no. 1566 of September 27, 1939, regarding the attitude of the OSSERVATORE ROMANO in reporting American news and the apparent repercussions of this attitude in Italy, I have the honor to transmit herewith the text and translation of a most favorable editorial on the Secretary's Pan-American Day Address which appeared in the OSSERVATORE ROMANO of September 27, over the initials of Count della Torre, the editor.

After referring to the premises stated by the
Secretary

Secretary, which he termed a "brief code of civilized living," and to the President's appeal to religion in his message to Congress, the writer called attention to the identity between the fundamental points set forth by the statesmen of one of the most powerful and "modernly positive" nations of the world and the principles enunciated by the Pope in his Easter message and more recent addresses.

Inasmuch as this is the first indication of unqualified approval of American statements to appear in the OSSERVATORE ROMANO since shortly before the death of Pius XI, the editorial attains added significance as a reflection of the Vatican's position in the present international situation.

Respectfully yours,

William Phillips

Enclosures:

- 1 and 2 - Text and translation
of editorial in the
OSSERVATORE ROMANO
of September 27, 1939.

Enclosure no. 2 to despatch no. 1568 of September 28, 1939
from the Embassy in Rome.

Translation

Truth and Experience

The American Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in celebrating "Pan-American Day", took as the theme of his speech that characteristic of the new world which the painful hour of the old world renders more evident and significant: that is, the peaceful concert of its people. The goal had been achieved, he said, by those international principles which had inspired those republics since their founding and by the lesson which they had learned alike from the great war, in which twelve of them took part. Thus, more effectively during these past twenty years since the war, the "system" of "Pan-American Peace" was progressively and soundly organized in mutual agreement, in conference periods from Montevideo to Buenos Aires, from Lima to Panama.

Cordell Hull summarized the basic premises thereof: every country, large or small, rich or poor, is recognized in the "family of nations" of America in full equality of rights, consideration, relations; discipline for all; individual liberty; the sovereignty of the state; international law; civilization based on justice, reciprocal respect, collaboration, inviolability of signed pacts, their revision and reform permitted only through peaceful understanding.

This brief code of civilized living, which President
Roosevelt

Roosevelt in his message to Congress supplemented by a noble appeal to religion, this "vade mecum" of peaceful relationship expressed in that simple and unadorned manner of practical people, who seem to be afraid of appearing to theorize or of giving abstractions more importance than facts, cannot but recall another word, bearing all the weight of the eternal authority whence it came as instruction and guidance in practice and fact. One cannot but recall, that is, the word of the Pope: his latest statement which, faithfully echoing a word spoken two thousand years ago, rang out more strongly and splendidly amidst the preparation and onrush of events fearfully awaited.

Pius XII, in his Easter Speech, in that to the Sacred College and to the Venetian Pilgrims, in his message of August 24, and in his reply to the Belgian Ambassador, set forth as the basis of individual as well as of collective and international order the sacred rights of human dignity and liberty of all men; respect and defense of religion; cooperation among individuals, classes, peoples, in appropriate distribution of property and riches which God has showered upon the world and in mutual comprehension among nations along the common path of civilized progress; the defense of the honor and liberty of peoples; the observance of pacts; politics inspired by morality; justice rendered to the weakest as well as to the strongest; justice which is affirmed by the force of reason and not by recourse to arms.

It is impossible not to perceive almost literally the identity of the essential points listed by the statesmen

men

men of one of the most powerful and more - how can one put it - modernly positive nations of the world and the principles set forth by the highest religious Teacher and spiritual authority on earth. For the Supreme Pontiff, the lesson springs from revealed truths; for the statesmen, from concrete experience.

In the midst of spiritual and material destruction, of bloody conflicts, the blossoming - it is the American Secretary of State who vouches for it - the maturing of civil conquests: a constructive, peaceful existence among republics which, nevertheless, differ in military force, wealth, industrial and financial organization, and population; a feeling of reciprocal esteem and trust; reinforced cultural relations; decisive steps towards the abolition of customs barriers.

Politics has food for reflection as in a great experimental cage: principle, proof, cross-check; that which comes down from the Gospel, that which comes up from life in the concrete documents of peace and in the negative documents of war in which lies heedlessness of divine wisdom and human sagacity. Politics has food for thought as regards its alleged right, its alleged need to be bound by no established principle, considering religion and morality a guide for the life beyond but not for earthly paths, where they would be an obstacle in overcoming impediments. At decisive hours and at turning points of not merely history but of the preservation of civilization and humanity, life, experience and practice reflect in their cry the accent of the Lord and His admonishment.

The

The fact is that the Church of Christ in its magistracy--as the Pope said--"is the inexhaustible source of life for the soul" and, moreover, "the outstanding benefactress of civilized society."

"Human morality"; effect merely of "human morality", Stalin will perhaps think, as when in his speech of March 10 to the Soviet Congress, he invoked it to stigmatize "the stronger who attacks the weaker."

But he did not think then that only one morality, and not that of man but of God, could never change and contradict itself.

PSF Phillips

file
personal

EMBASSY OF THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, October 18, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

These are very quiet and even dull days here, in spite of our nearness to tragic events. After the first two weeks of the war, the Italians settled back into their customary habits, except for certain unpleasant reminders that all was not well elsewhere, such as the disappearance of private automobiles and of coffee. The nation was keyed up to a high pitch at the beginning of September, not knowing in which direction they were being led. The public saw only hasty evacuation of towns near the French frontier, the frequent blackouts, and the call to arms, etc., etc. It now seems more probable that Mussolini was planning to defend himself if possible from attack rather than to join up with Hitler, for it was well known that British military circles at that time favored a swift attack on Italy as the quickest method of getting at Germany. The moment it became evident that

no

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

no such attack was to be feared, the tension ceased and thousands of recruits who had been called to the colors have been permitted to return to their homes "on leave".

But this is all of the past. Italy's future is now that which is of interest to us. In my opinion, a complete change of policy has occurred, which day by day is beginning to manifest itself in various ways. For weeks there has been no mention in the press of the Rome-Berlin axis or alliance; a recent visit of Himmler to Rome has been carefully kept secret, whereas formerly every appearance of important Germans was widely publicized; the openly expressed dislike of the Berlin-Moscow deal, its dangerous consequences to the Balkans; and in particular Ciano's changed attitude towards the Germans.

While the Government is not ready to declare its neutrality and the officially inspired press still maintains its pro-German tendencies in order not to incur German hostility, I believe that Italy will avoid at all cost any trouble with the Allies. Already a French-Italian commission has been organized to deal with economic matters between Italy and France, and I learn confidentially that the British Government, with Italian approval, has decided
to

to do likewise and to leave all questions of trade control and blockade to be worked out by this joint undertaking.

The French are said to have placed large orders in Italy for manufactured articles from supplies of colonial raw materials. Undoubtedly Italy hopes to benefit from the new trade and exchange of which she is sadly in need, and so to improve her own crippled financial position. Mussolini is feeling his way inch by inch. He must realize that the popularity of his regime has fallen, that should the allies succeed in overthrowing Nazism, Fascism is endangered; that should Germany win the war, Italy would become a vassal state; and that should Communism enter the Balkans, there would be difficulty in keeping it out of Italy. He is, in fact, surrounded by dangers and may be assumed to be "sitting uncomfortable". Perhaps this explains his refusal to receive all foreigners, including our one and only Grover Whalen, who has just left us for Switzerland and northern countries. While here he has been thoroughly and expensively entertained in Italian circles, but even with the help of Ciano and the Rome 1942 Exposition authorities, I could not secure an audience for him with the

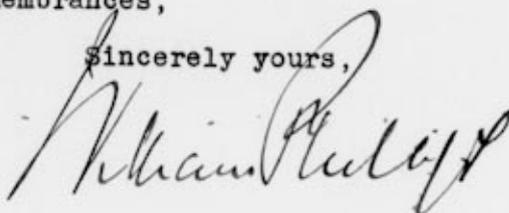
the Duce.

The Senate debates over neutrality make very dull reading now, and I am praying that the end of this week will see their finish and the triumphant passage of the Bill.

Caroline arrives next week and I am hoping that she managed to get to Washington before leaving and will bring me all the latest news from the Capitol.

With kindest remembrances,

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 "Sincerely yours,".

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

October 23, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

TO READ AND RETURN

F. D. R.



LEGRAM

The President would like this message given back to him when the Secretary of State returns it.

The White House

Washington

The White House
October 21 1939

PSF
Phillips

FOR ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ INFORMATION OF THE PRESIDENT

ROME, October 21, received 8:45 a.m.

476, October 21, noon.

My 456, October 9, noon.

Minister of Public Instruction Rodd who left for London ten days ago is expected to return tomorrow. It is proposed to establish a joint Anglo-Italian Commission to handle questions of rationing and control.

Two . The British and French have been inclined to be lenient in allowing merchandise to reach Italy, they find, however, that they will have to tighten their control measures because of the intensification of exports from Italy to Germany. German agents in Italy are offering to pay gold for lubricating oil and other essentials. The consul at Trieste reports that 1500 tons of copper and 2500 tons frozen meats on board NEPTUNIA which arrived September 25 from South America were immediately despatched to Germany.

Three. Gotlieb is endeavoring to verify a report from good sources that the Italians intend to utilize Trieste as a center of supply to Germany but that they will operate from secret headquarters in Gorizia and headquarters where all administrative and clerical work will be centered.

Four. Some time ago the French embassy expressed concern to me that German tankers now in Mediterranean ports might be able to slip into the Black sea for use between Batum and Constanza. Gotlieb now hears that there is unusual activity in shipping circles at Piraeus with a view to chartering tankers for transporting 150,000 tons of gasoline from Batum, Trieste for reshipment to Germany.

Phillips.

515pm/d

*File
Confidential*

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

THE SECRETARY

October 23, 1939.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

Attached is a letter from
Ambassador Phillips which I
thought you might be interested
in reading.

CT

PSF
Phillips

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, October 3, 1939.

To the French President
civilian population and was

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
It may be that the
that the army was not ready for

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Today I have some very confidential information which I hesitate to put in an official despatch but I think you and Sumner and possibly even the President may be interested in it.

You will recollect the message which Hitler sent to Mussolini on September 1. I quote it again because its text now becomes of a special interest.

"Duce,

I thank you most cordially for the diplomatic and political assistance you have recently given Germany and Germany's rights. I am convinced that the task assigned us can be fulfilled with the military forces of Germany. I therefore think that under these circumstances I do not need Italian military assistance. I thank you, Duce, also for all you will do in future for the common cause of Fascism and National Socialism.

Adolph Hitler."

It was sent on the same day on which Mussolini announced to the Italian people through an official communiqué that "Italy will not take any initiative in military operations, etc. etc."

It now appears that this message was written by Mussolini himself and all that Hitler did was to sign it. If this were mere rumor, I would not trouble to report it, but I am satisfied as to its accuracy.

The message therefore becomes highly self-revealing. It indicates that the Duce feels his obligations to Hitler but that he is not prepared or willing to throw in his lot with Germany at this early stage of the war. During the last few days of August, we know now that Mussolini was on the brink of joining forces with Hitler. There were many signs of hasty preparation. Many towns in Northern Italy adjacent

The Honorable
Cordell Hull,
Secretary of State,
Washington.

to

to the French frontier were suddenly evacuated of their civilian population and even in Rome civilians were advised to move elsewhere. It may be that the King had some influence, it may be that the Duce was made suddenly aware that the army was not ready for any formidable conflict, and it may be that Mussolini realized the strength of anti-German sentiment throughout the country. More probably, it was all three together that caused him on September 1 to "sit on the fence" for a while. But on September 1 when he prepared this telegram to himself, Mussolini gave expression to his willingness to cooperate in the future "for the common cause of Fascism and National Socialism." That is important.

It is impossible today to give any accurate idea of the course which the Italian Government intends to pursue in the immediate future. There are some who are certain that Mussolini made his decision on September 1st and is now trying to work gradually to a condition of strict neutrality. But there are others who feel that Mussolini is first of all a Fascist leader rather than a national leader, and that he will always be inclined, if it is practicable to do so, to join up with his opposite number in the Nazi camp in the belief that the two Regimes must live or die together.

I am guessing that he will adopt the first course.

Ciano returns this evening from his conversations with Hitler, presumably over the latter's peace proposals, and although I doubt whether he will reveal much to me, I hope to be able to pick up some bits of information which will be useful to you.

I am following with intense interest the renewed battle for neutrality, and pray for a quick and successful outcome.

With kindest remembrances,

Very sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS.

PSE Phillips

*file
personal*

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, December 24, 1939.

Dear Mr. President,

I have not troubled you recently with a letter since there has been nothing of particular importance to tell you, and I naturally hesitate to add anything to the mountain of correspondence with which you always have to deal.

But this morning comes the text of your Christmas message to the Pope, and this is an event of the highest importance. I am deeply impressed by it and delighted with the appointment. It is too soon to give you any Italian reactions, but I shall of course watch for them closely and will keep the Department informed. To have the cooperation of Myron Taylor is for me personally an ideal arrangement, and together we ought to be in a good position to keep you more fully in touch with European developments.

Italy

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

Italy continues to pursue a remarkably steady course and is holding her position of undeclared neutrality in a way which seems to satisfy all concerned, including the allies and Germany.

Ciano's two hour speech the other day in Parliament gave official sanction to what had hitherto been regarded as rumor: that at the time of the signing of the alliance it was understood by both Italian and German Governments that Italy would require three years to complete her military preparation, and Germany a period of four or five years for similar preparation. Coming from Ciano, this was an interesting statement and might well have been considered by the Germans as military information for the enemy, but outwardly at least the Germans here showed no concern. Throughout the speech Ciano maintained his balanced position, which confirms our picture that Italy is still sitting rather securely on the fence with a leg on either side, awaiting events.

Since the Berlin-Moscow deal, Ciano himself and the more important members of the present Government are clearly sympathetic to the allied cause, but I am still of the opinion that Mussolini's leanings are towards Nazism, although not necessarily towards Hitler.

There

There is, by the way, a great deal of mystery surrounding Mussolini's physical condition. Certainly he is not the man he was a year ago, but what precisely ails him is anybody's guess. My best information is to the effect that his "pep" has gone and that he is a tired man, but that his vigor can be artificially restored for public occasions. However, he appears in public very seldom now. Meanwhile, Ciano's star is in the ascendant. The "change of guard", as the new Government is called, is composed largely of Ciano men. And in my dealings with him I now come away with the impression that he has grown up and is no longer the boy that he was before the death of his father several months ago.

Since the Axis is no longer referred to in the Italian press, and the anti-Jewish policy is in abeyance, it is only natural that the American press should be less critical of this Government. This lack of American criticism is noted here with appreciation and with the result that we have now a more favorable Italian press. But however welcome this may be, we cannot look for really good relations with Italy until we have recognized the sovereign in his "Emperor" capacity.

There

There was an amusing incident the other day in connection with the arrival of the new Soviet Ambassador. He had made his first call upon Ciano and had left with him copies of his credentials, but while awaiting the audience with the sovereign, there occurred a number of public demonstrations largely conducted by students, naturally with the approval of their superiors, against the Soviets and in favor of Finland. The Soviet Embassy was conspicuously and unnecessarily surrounded by large bodies of troops, in order to emphasize the impression that Italian public opinion was intensely aroused. A day or two after these incidents, and actually on the day before his audience with the King, the Ambassador suddenly left town for Moscow, with wife and bag and baggage, and that seems to be the end for the present of any Soviet colleague.

I have the impression that the Government here feels that they have gone perhaps too far in openly displaying their dislike of the Soviets at a time when most of the other countries are keeping rather quiet on this subject. At any rate, the press has suddenly quieted down in this respect, and that is the usual sign of the way

way the higher-ups are thinking.

We are having the usual troubles with regard to British control at Gibraltar and the long delays which have occurred to our shipping. I am in constant touch with the British Embassy on this subject and am convinced that they are doing everything in their power to urge the authorities in London to decentralize the control and so give Rome and Gibraltar the powers necessary for a more prompt release of neutral ships.

Once more I must congratulate you on the step which you have taken with the Vatican, and for the way in which it was done. It was perfectly timed and staged!

With very cordial regards for the New Year.

Yours sincerely and cordially

William Phillips

PSF: Phillips

File
Personal
Confidential

Rome, March 1, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

I am glad that you have been able to get away from Washington for a few days of rest and recreation, and I have been following with great sympathy your cruise to Panama, which I trust has been thoroughly enjoyable. Everyone, and especially the President of the United States, should be "braced" for spring developments whatever they may be, and they will be upon us soon.

Sumner Welles has come and gone, and I am particularly happy that he is returning to Rome before his departure from Naples.

His visit here passed off exceedingly well. He was received at Naples with every courtesy on the part of the Italian authorities: Ciano sent a member of his personal "cabinet" to greet him; the Prefect of Naples was

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

was on hand, and there was the usual army of photographers and movie cameras actively on the job. Government cars met the party and after an hour's drive around town we arrived at the station, which we found elaborately decorated with flowers, red carpets, etc., etc., and were conducted to Ciano's private car. The arrival in Rome was equally cordial and a large crowd had assembled outside the station, roped off at a respectful distance. The Italians certainly know how to receive distinguished guests and their ingenious methods of subtle flattery are disarming.

The first conversation was with Ciano, who went out of his way to be cordial and communicative, and I think Sumner was favorably impressed with this young Foreign Minister.

The conversation with the Duce followed later in the day and was held in the latter's vast hall-office. As we entered, Mussolini came forward to greet us and conducted us to the far corner, and to the only signs of furniture in the room. Mussolini sat on his side of the desk and, facing him, Ciano, Sumner and me. As Sumner speaks excellent French, and also Mussolini, I had hoped that the

conversation

conversation could be conducted in that language, but Mussolini indicated his preference to speak in Italian and to use Ciano as his interpreter, - a means, I assume, to give himself a chance to compose his next thought. Sumner has already reported by cable a substantial part of the conversation, omitting, however, certain points for his personal report to you.

When Mussolini came to the last paragraph of your autographed letter, he smiled broadly and indicated laughingly that he hoped some time to have the pleasure of meeting you, whether on the high seas or elsewhere.

Frankly I was shocked by Mussolini's appearance. I had not seen him near to for many months and found him considerably changed. Naturally he has reached the age when we all begin to show our age, but there was also a drooping of his eyes and an expression of fatigue when his face was in repose. There was, however, no sign of a partially paralyzed arm, which has been a current rumor, nor any real sign of physical weakness. After the conference he turned to me in French and mentioned with pride that he had been playing tennis and had beaten his "pro." six to two. He asked me whether I played tennis, to which

I replied that I was far too old to indulge in such activities, but that he was in every way a young man and naturally indulged in all sports. This produced a laugh and he proudly admitted that he still rode horseback and swam.

I was glad to hear him say that he would like to see Sumner on his return, because it may well be that he will have some message to convey to you which was not forthcoming during the first conversation.

The Government continued their courtesies to Sumner by sending him in a private car to the Swiss frontier, and of course paid the railroad transportation of his party from Naples to the north.

I want to add just one word to say that Sumner conducted his part of the program exceedingly well. His instinctive courtesy and well chosen words of appreciation, which are so necessary from the Italian point of view, struck a pleasant note at the outset, and during the conversations with Ciano and Mussolini he phrased his inquiries always very agreeably. I greatly admired the way he handled his approach to the Duce. I believe that his contacts here have served a useful purpose in emphasizing our desire for cordial relations with Italy, and closer collaboration.

collaboration. Moreover, coming as your personal messenger and bearing a personal letter from you, the Italians have been suitably flattered, and Italians must be flattered.

I have not mentioned Myron Taylor, but his presence here at this time has also struck an exceedingly responsive note in Italian circles generally. I gave a large dinner for him two nights ago and he made a very splendid impression. Without a doubt his mission has started off exactly as you would have wished it to do. And as for me, I am perfectly delighted to have him as a colleague and fellow worker and am keenly looking forward to close cooperation with him.

With all good wishes,

Ever yours devotedly,

William Phillips

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

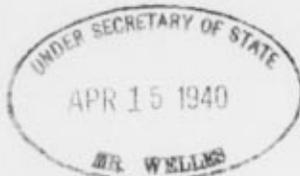
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file
April 13, 1940.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

TO READ AND RETURN

F. D. R.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

April 13, 1940.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

TO READ AND RETURN

F. D. R.

Letter from Ambassador Phillips,
Rome, dated April 1, 1940.

PSF:Phillips

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, April 1, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

It is a pleasure to have your letter of March 13th, and I am more than grateful to you for your help in connection with the Rome '42 Exposition. Already the publicity here in connection with the bill has received conspicuous attention and has made the best of impressions.

During the last few days we have been passing through a curious phase in Italian internal and external affairs. Many people were becoming jittery that, as a result of the Brenner meeting, Mussolini had been pepped up to adopt a more pro-German attitude, and there were indications that he was prepared to do so. The Vatican became rather unnecessarily excited, I thought, which you may have noted from Myron Taylor's telegrams to you, and I was rather astonished at the Pope's suggestion that you take a hand in the affair by a secret communication to Mussolini. However, in view of the Pope's suggestion, I feel the increased responsibilities of my
own

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

own reports.

We must always reckon with Mussolini's pro-German attitude. I doubt that he will ever change his views in this respect. Ciano's power in the Government, however, is exceedingly difficult to evaluate, for one never knows precisely the conditions within the family circle. Last week it was current gossip that Ciano was to be relieved of his post and sent to Libya, and when in conversation with me he laughingly referred to these rumors, he did not by any means say that they were without foundation.

Should Ciano be relieved of office and should the Duce take the administration of foreign affairs again exclusively into his own hands, then indeed there might be a crisis in the relations of Italy with the allies. While Ciano remains, we may accept it as a fact that Mussolini wishes to keep the doors wide open into the allied camp and accordingly to preserve a balanced position between the belligerents.

Mussolini undoubtedly is sensitive to German pressure and, in the words of Ciano, feels his responsibility in carrying out the agreements and understandings reached with Berlin at the time of the signature of the alliance.

We

We must continue to expect, therefore, a pro-German press and a pro-German tinge to coming phases, but in my opinion that does not mean that Mussolini will swing Italy completely into the German orbit. Any such policy would make no sense, and I believe that though the man himself is living in a sort of concentration camp with little contact with the outside world, he is still sane enough at the present time to avoid anything so utterly foolish.

I feel that my telegrams must seem to you very contradictory and in many ways unsatisfactory, but I assure you that there is no one in this town, Italian or foreigner, who dares to predict with certainty the future course of Italy, for so much depends upon events upon the battlefield.

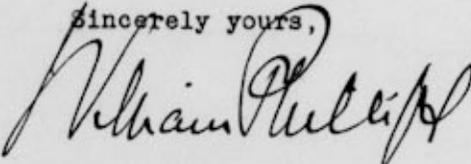
When I had those few words with you over the telephone, you were kind enough to suggest that I call you on the 'phone more frequently. I shall certainly do so whenever I have anything that seems to me worth while to report to you in this way, but unless I have something of importance I very much hesitate to bother you unnecessarily. On the other hand, those few words from you the other day set me up for a week.

In

In my letters to you I say nothing about home politics, but you may be assured that my thoughts are with you constantly and, if I may be permitted to add, my sympathy in view of the great decision that lies before you.

With many affectionate messages,

Sincerely yours,

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

BSF Phillips

*file
Confidential*



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, April 19, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

The pouch is leaving in a few moments, but I cannot let it go without sending you a word of deep appreciation of the statement which you made with regard to the invasion of Denmark and Norway. And then two days later came your Pan-American address, which was superb. I only wish that both the statement and the address had received greater publicity in the Italian press. There has been no editorial comment on either, but you may rest assured that they have not passed unnoticed.

These are very curious days in Rome, and it is more difficult than ever to sift the rumors that are pouring in from all directions. Ciano is ill with influenza, and as there is no one else in the Foreign Office who will speak with any frankness to me or to any

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

any of us, that source of information is for the moment not available. I realize, however, that these days are critical for Italy, and I only hope that Mussolini will have sense enough to hold his own against what we assume is German pressure.

Caroline is sailing on Saturday for home and hopes to drop down to Washington for a few days, and to have a glimpse if possible of you and Eleanor. It will be hard sledding without her here.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

William Phillips

PSF Phillips

file
Mussolini

Rome, May 2, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

I congratulate you on the wording of your message to Mussolini. It was couched in such friendly terms that he could not take exception to it whatsoever, and yet it conveyed to him something which was of the highest importance that he should know and know it from you. As I have already reported, Ciano asked me to return to the Foreign Office after the interview, in order that he might examine more carefully the text of the message. He picked out immediately the important paragraph and took pencilled notes of it, which I was very glad to have him do. Mussolini and Ciano have both been far too sanguine about the lack of interest of the American Government and people in this situation, and it seems to me of the highest importance that every opportunity should be taken to impress upon
them

The President,

The White House,
Washington, D.C.

them the contrary. Now that you have spoken so definitely, I can of course follow up the points which you have made whenever I see Ciano, which I am doing as often as practicable.

Myron Taylor, who has just returned to Rome for a very short visit, was much pleased with your message and will find an occasion this afternoon, I believe, to notify the Vatican in accordance with the instructions which he has just received.

I am inclined to think the Vatican authorities become rather over-alarmed with regard to actual conditions here, and I feel that my colleagues in the British and French Embassies have the same impression. In any event, it appears that the British and French representatives to the Vatican have been sending very alarming reports to their respective Governments about Italy's immediate prospects, which are not altogether in line with the reports emanating from their Embassies to the Quirinal. If we bear this in mind, it is of course a great help to be in touch with the Vatican, even though they may be at times unnecessarily alarmed.

Unfortunately my reports have to deal only with the present. I cannot at this stage predict with any degree

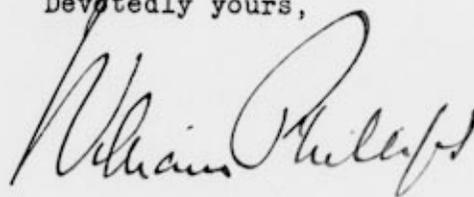
of

of certainty future events.

And may I again thank you for the step which you have just taken, which, in addition to its own high importance, has made possible once more my personal contact with Mussolini.

With all good wishes, as ever

Devotedly yours,

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

PSF: Phillips

file
personal

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Rome, May 31, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

I have just returned from the Foreign Office, where I communicated orally to Ciano your message to Mussolini received this morning. As the pouch closes in a few hours, and presumably before I receive Mussolini's answer, I am sending you a few personal words in addition to the cable which I have just despatched to the State Department.

Ciano looked nervous and strained, but he seemed to have no doubt of the nature of the reply. He was positive that every point which you had raised in the message had been carefully considered and that there was nothing more to be done about it, as the decision to enter the war had already been reached. He reminded me that he had always spoken to me with frankness in conveying good news and bad news, and then he proceeded to tell me that the time that remained before hostilities was

"very

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

"very short - a matter of only a few days". I tried to impress upon him the highly unfortunate reaction in America which would follow Italy's entry into the war, but he merely said that this, too, had been taken into consideration before the decision had been reached.

It is, indeed, an appalling situation; and when one considers that as early as August 25th last, the French had expressed their willingness to settle amicably their problems with the Italians, and had repeated this desire at least twice; and when one considers that the British, in spite of all the mistakes that they have made, have at long last declared their willingness to relieve the strain of the blockade by new control measures, and when the rest of the world including the Balkans desire only to remain on good terms with the Italians, the picture presented by this country - out for what they can get anywhere and against anyone - is horrible to contemplate. The regime here seems to be territory mad. Mussolini undoubtedly has the Caesar complex of adding to the Empire by hook or by crook, and he has not the slightest consideration for anyone in reaching this end. The German Ambassador, Von Mackensen, is reported to have been saying

recently

recently that Germany was bringing no pressure to bear upon Italy to enter the war, which seems to me not unnatural from the German point of view, in view of the fact that everything is going Germany's way without Italy's assistance. His statement, however, is contrary to Ciano's assurances to me to the effect that Mussolini was determined to carry out his obligations under the treaty of alliance with Germany. We live in a maze of rumors in regard to the point which Mussolini will strike first. The streets of Rome, and I presume elsewhere in Italy, are covered with new highly colored posters showing a pistol in French colors pointed from Biserta at Sicily, intending to indicate to the gullible public that Italian Sicily is seriously threatened by French Tunis. We hear that large numbers of troops have been sent during the last day or two to Libya; that Egypt is becoming alarmed; and that for the moment Yugoslavia seems less so. And there are all sorts of reports that the Italians have their eyes on Savoia and Corsica. I will have to admit that this Government has diabolic cleverness in being able to keep even the best informed Italians completely in ignorance as to where Mussolini will strike. Ciano has

at

at least been franker with me than with any other of the colleagues, in letting me know the shortness of time left before the zero hour.

I am, of course, in close touch with my colleagues whose interests I shall have to take over, and am in the process of setting up an organization for that purpose.

One thing is certain, and that is that you have done everything humanly possible to dissuade Mussolini from aggressive action. Unfortunately we are dealing with an Italian peasant who has all the good and bad qualities of a son of Italy, and who cannot possibly grasp the significance of the United States and of what it stands for, and what it can mean in the future to Italy. He is too much of a "realist" and has not the imagination to see beyond the overwhelming power of German armaments. And therefore your appeals to him have, I fear, not sunk very deep into his soul.

I only hope that the time will come, and come soon, when the steps that you have taken to dissuade him from his course will be known to the entire world.

I need not assure you that these approaching tragic events have dissipated any hope that I had of returning

home

home this summer. There is of course nothing to do now but to stick to the job and do the best I can under the saddest of circumstances.

It is not difficult to imagine your despair and discouragement at the way the world is moving, and I need not assure you of the immense sympathy which I feel for you in these days of stress and turmoil. May you have the strength and courage to cope with it all!

Devotedly yours,

William Phillips

13F Phillips

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 3, 1940.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE P. S.

Tell Caroline Phillips
that you gave me the card
and that the real problem is
that the article mentioned
might fall into the hands of
the enemy and help them more
than our friends.

F. D. R.

Forgive my impertinence dear
Franklin, but is there respos-
-ibility of giving the Allies our

~~Mrs. W. P.~~ MRS. WILLIAM PHILLIPS

secret bombing right? I think
the country is realising more
or more how necessary
their victory is for us. HIGHOVER
NORTH BEVERLY
Mass

May 3/25 [40]

MRS. WILLIAM PHILLIPS
HIGHOVER
NORTH BEVERLY
MASSACHUSETTS

Dear Miss Leland

Could you give the President the
enclosed card from me, it won't take
him long to read!

Very sincerely yours

Caroline Phillips

COPY

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, May 31, 1940

Dear Sumner:

I am taking advantage of Alexander Kirk's departure by air to send you a few lines of greeting. I am glad for his sake that you have called him home, for he is in a very nervous condition and needs, in my opinion, a complete rest. However, he is a very difficult person to manage in this respect because he has no interest in his physical condition, and in fact no interest in prolonging life.

He sees only the need of our entering the war immediately on the side of the allies, and nothing that I can say in explanation of this impossibility, at least at the present time, has any effect. And so I welcome his home-going.

I have this morning presented to Mussolini through Ciano the President's last appeal, which carries with it its unconcealed threat. After reading the message, Ciano said enough to indicate very clearly what the reply would be, and it does not surprise me. It has been clear to us all for several days that the decision has been made to enter

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

the war, and once Musso makes up his mind, nothing apparently can stop him. But the President has a splendid record to fall back upon and I sincerely hope that the various steps he has taken to dissuade Mussolini from aggressive action will be given publicity at the appropriate time. It is a horrible picture to contemplate, - this lust after new territory regardless of the other fellow or whoever appears to step in the way. Mussolini is evidently bewitched by the accomplishments of Germany by brute force and sees an easy and cheap victory ahead for himself and a means to his own aggrandisement. Whatever one may think of his course, and it is a most dastardly one in my opinion, you must hand it to him for the way in which he conceals his methods. For even now, a few days before the zero hour, there does not seem to be a person, even among the highly placed fascists, who have the slightest idea where Mussolini will strike first.

I am busy preparing our organization to care for foreign interests. Hooper, our Assistant Commercial Attaché, who is a very live wire, is to head the group in charge of British interests, while Williamson will head the group in charge of the interests of France. We do not know as yet what will happen to Belgian interests and whether the Belgian Ambassador will remain. And the same situation seems to rest for the moment with the Egyptian Minister. Chester Aldrich, of the American Academy, and one or two other

Americans resident in Rome, have offered to join the organization, which we shall probably house for the moment in the British Embassy, although perhaps later we can move it to the premises of the Belgian Embassy, which is quite close to our own offices.

In a way I shall be thankful when the period of waiting is over, for uncertainty is sometimes more wearing to the spirit than facing facts no matter how disagreeable.

Caroline writes me that she was in Washington for a day or two. It was kind of you and Mathilde to think of her in this connection, but I gather from her letter that she was very much limited in her time and could not, therefore, accept your kind invitation.

Hoping you yourself are bearing up under the strain, and with kindest remembrances, as always,

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

PSF:Phillips

file
personal

Rome, June 20, 1940.

Dear Mr. President,

There are so many things that I should like to talk to you about that a brief letter is merely a waste of your time. But first of all I want you to know how distressed I am about Myron Taylor, whose condition I fear is beyond the hope of recovery. The doctors are hoping that the end may not come until after the arrival of Mrs. Taylor, whom we were eagerly awaiting in Rome this evening. To my keen disappointment I have just received a telegram from Bertie Pell saying that she cannot reach here for another two days, and giving no explanation why she has not come on today's plane. Myron has not yet been told that she has reached Lisbon, as the doctors feel that even this might be too much of a shock for him. The present plan is to prepare him for seeing her only after her

arrival

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

arrival in Rome and only a few hours before she can be in Florence.

I went to Florence last Sunday to see him, and I may go back there tomorrow if the doctor feels that my presence there is of any comfort to him. It is really pitiable to see him now, and I am deeply distressed.

There is nothing that I could tell you about war conditions that you do not already know. The French appear to have crumpled up without offering much of any resistance near the end, and it may be that there is truth in the assertion that there was no fighting spirit left in France even before the war began. My call at the Foreign Office yesterday produced nothing in the way of information about the terms which were to be offered France, but with the absence of Ciano there is really no one left here with authority to talk. Anfuso, who is acting in Ciano's place, is a smart and canny fascist, but out of his element when acting at the head of the Foreign Office. Ciano spends most of his time on military duty out of Rome, and I shall hereafter have few contacts with him. Last week saw the departure of

of all the allied missions, six in number, whose interests I have taken over. Pressure from Americans has to a great extent ceased, although there are said to be some two hundred who would be glad to get home if they had the opportunity to do so.

We have had only two "visitations" from the air, accompanied by the appearance of leaflets in place of bombs, causing, as you can imagine, the greatest consternation and indeed fright among the Italians. The anti-aircraft defense performance, however, gave them wonderful opportunities to display their love of noise, and ugly splinters from their guns were found all over the streets of Rome the following morning. I hear that the visitors were French, but I cannot confirm this.

Today, the all-absorbing topic concerns the French fleet, which, if lost to the British, will certainly change the entire situation in the Mediterranean and give the Italians more or less freedom to take what they want of the "cake". Most of my Italian friends are mortified and ashamed of their Government, and there is no evidence anywhere of enthusiasm for the war. It is no uncommon sight to see companies of soldiers marching towards the station
loaded

loaded down by their kit, cheerful enough apparently, but receiving no response nor sign of attention from the street crowds. This is "Caesar's" war, to add to the map of Italy, and to glorify Caesar himself, while the people seem unconcerned and even indifferent to what is going on around them.

The Democratic Convention will soon be upon us and I am full of anxiety as to what will happen. Since the entry of Italy into the war, we have been completely cut off from home newspapers as well as from the British and French press, and are even deprived of that miserable little sheet the Paris "Herald Tribune". Nothing but the State Department radio bulletin and an occasional letter by air mail are left to us, and you can appreciate, therefore, how completely cut off I feel from you and everyone at the present time.

This is not a happy life, but at the same time it is an amazingly interesting experience and I am always grateful to you for giving it to me.

*Very devotedly yours
William Phillips*

File
personal
confidential

PSF: Italy Folder
Phillips

Rome, January 27, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

You will recollect that the last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, you expressed certain views which you asked me to communicate to the Vatican on my return to Rome. The matter has been presented to one of the principal members of the Secretariat, not as a request from you but as an indication of your views and therefore of interest to the Vatican.

In reply I was informed that they had the highest regard for the Bishop in question, that the matter would be taken up at once with the Cardinal Secretary of State, and that it might be possible to give an answer in the near future. My informant seemed to remember that Myron Taylor had spoken directly to the Pope on a similar matter, if not the same subject, last year, but he did not recollect the nature of the decision which had been arrived at at that time.

I am sorry that I am not able to give you any more
precise

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

precise information today, but I am confident that the step which I have taken will receive the most considerate attention.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

William Phillips

PSF: *Italy*
Phillips

~~100-711~~

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

February 18, 1941

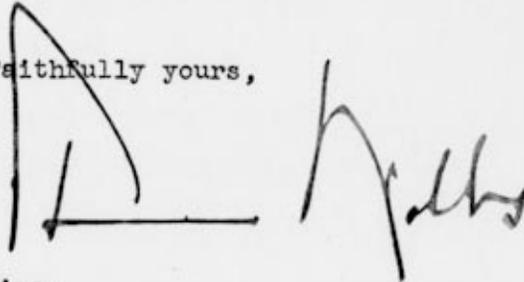
File
Personal
Confidential

My dear Mr. President:

I am sending you a copy of a letter which Bill Phillips has written to me under date of January 28. I believe you will find it interesting.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enc.
From William Phillips,
January 28, 1941.

The President,
The White House.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
Rome, January 28, 1941

Dear Sumner,

The situation here has completely changed since August and is of absorbing interest. It is no longer difficult to find out what people are thinking and talking about, since they are far more outspoken than formerly. Everywhere one hears bitter criticism of the regime, even in Fascist circles. Ciano is said to have remarked to someone at the beginning of the campaign "This is my war", and for this and other reasons, has been made the "scape-goat" for the disaster.

This is not quite fair to Ciano, because of course Mussolini himself is responsible, but public opinion has only begun to reach the point of condemning openly the latter's mistakes. It sounds better and is much safer to condemn his subordinates. Then again, it is said that Ciano has been making far too much money and buying up too much land, and as Italians are feeling poor themselves, this new and young Croesus does not appeal to them. He has just left for the south of Italy on military duty and

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

will be absent from the Foreign Office, so he told me, for several weeks. Unreliable gossip adds that he will probably not come back to the Foreign Office and that Grandi may take his portfolio. However that may be, the movement against him is undoubtedly gaining headway, and one of these days Mussolini's hand may be forced. The Germans also are supposed to desire his exit.

Germans are in our midst in great numbers, and two new divisions are believed to have crossed the Brenner during the last few days. We know that they are building powerful air bases in Sicily, especially near Catania, and are bringing all the material for their purpose from Germany. Whereas formerly one rarely saw German officers in uniform in the streets of Rome, now they are often seen sauntering about in small groups.

But the most astonishing change that has taken place during my absence is in Mussolini himself. Although he is still nominally at the head of things, he is not in the picture as formerly. He seems never to be with his armies and only occasionally the press speaks of his visit to the wounded. He did, of course, go to Germany recently to talk with Hitler, but it is said that he spends a good deal of his time with his two mistresses, "Mme. de Pompadour

and her sister", in the villa on the outskirts of Rome with which he has provided them and their parents. Gossip adds that he has recently had a boy by one of them and is immensely proud of this fact.

This kind of gossip cannot be put in written despatches and certainly not in cables, for we have reason to believe that the Government has all our ciphers.

The general discontent is increased by a rapid rise in prices and further restrictions on various items of foodstuffs.

There is also a dangerous shortage of charcoal, especially in the cities, which has come about from a lack of proper distribution and by the fact that, for various reasons, less of it has been produced this year. The city working classes do not use coal or wood, charcoal is essential to them for cooking purposes, and they are already suffering from a lack of it and are, generally speaking, in a bad fix.

However, the press and propaganda continue to announce daily victories on land and sea and in the air, but the wounded are coming back in ever increasing numbers and their pitiful condition is gradually becoming known, even though they are permitted to see no one except occasional visits from their parents and then only in the presence

of Fascist officers.

And yet, in spite of general discontent, there is no organized or incipient movement apparent against the regime. There is no one in sight to head a revolt or who could become the center of a movement to even oust the present Government leaving Mussolini to continue as Duce. A change in the personnel of the Ministers is what many people want. They say that if only Ciano and his gang could be thrown out and a new and cleaner cabinet formed, things generally might go better. If the army should come to share that opinion, things may happen here and happen suddenly. But it is hard to see how Mussolini can be forced to disappear with Germans in control of key positions within the Government, German armed forces actually within Italy, and the German air force operating with bases in Italy. Hitler must want Mussolini to remain on the job and will do his best to keep him there, for Mussolini has sold himself body and soul to Hitler.

I hear there are some junior members of the Foreign Office who hope the day will come when it will be possible for Italy to make a separate peace. They maintain that this might be done if, and only if, the United States becomes so powerful in a military sense that Italy will

have nothing to fear from Germany. There is no doubt that many Italians are looking to the United States now to get them out of the mess in which they find themselves, and I have been approached recently by two rather well-known Italians, one of whom is a member of the Ministry of Popular Culture (press and propaganda), with inquiries as to why the President cannot now offer mediation and so bring about an armistice and peace. I may add that when they left me their spirits were drooping.

I have not mentioned the King until now because he appears to be completely out of the present picture and for all intents and purposes may be said to be in hiding. Occasionally, and very occasionally, he visits a hospital, but that seems to be the extent of his activities. The Prince is more in evidence, but shows no signs of any independence of thought or action. And yet the Crown, in the eyes of the Italian people, is something solid and reliable, and if the army is willing, the Crown may some day play an important role in a new military form of Government, - which, I may add, is pure conjecture.

All is well here in the Embassy and we are a very happy family.

-6-

With kindest remembrances to you and the Secretary.

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS



*file
journal*

PS = Phillips

**EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Rome, February 24, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

I think I am right in saying that a gradual change is beginning to be apparent in Italian public opinion. It has not yet reached any striking proportions but there are signs of it in various parts of Italy. It seems to come from a growing conviction that the war will be over by September next with a complete German victory. Dr. Clodius, who is here in Rome, informed a group of Italian business men three days ago that this was a certainty and that he was giving them this assurance on the word of Hitler. Mussolini, in his speech yesterday before the fascist hierarchy, repeated the certainty, and did so in his usual striking and dramatic way. But words are of less importance than facts, and the Italians are now aware that Germany is sending heavy reinforcements to them, and already, I think, Sicily may be regarded as a German fortress. We know of the great numbers of planes, tanks, and war equipment which are being concentrated there and at other points in Southern Italy, and that Taormina is the German headquarters. We know, too, that train loads of gasoline tank cars are arriving in Sicily direct from Germany. It seems to be in the air that at a given moment, not far distant, there is to be a great German drive on all fronts and that Sicily is being prepared for a Libyan or a Greek campaign, or both. From here we have no information of the attitude of the Free French forces in Africa, but it is almost certain that the Italians and Germans have their eyes cast towards Tunisia, whenever the moment seems appropriate to launch an effort in that direction.

In brief, it is my impression that the Germans are taking hold of the situation here with their usual cleverness, and that the Italians, rather than resenting their presence, are beginning to be grateful to them for helping them out of a bad situation. For example, I hear that all the German officers now proceeding to Sicily are from former Austria rather than from Prussia, and that they are mingling pleasantly with the gentry of Sicily and are making a good impression.

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

So



- 2 -

So far I have met only with kindness and courtesy, although the movements of all foreign diplomats and Consuls are being closely watched and limited.

I hear that the condition of the wounded in the various hospitals is utterly pathetic. Vast numbers have lost their hands or feet or both from the freezing conditions in Albania. The head of the Hospital of the Knights of Malta told me today that in spite of the intensity of their suffering and the loss of their limbs, the soldiers in his hospital are tranquil and resigned, satisfied that they have given their utmost to the needs of the nation, and he added that there is no evidence of rebellion or even indignation against the futility of the war upon Greece. It is this spirit of resignation and fatalistic attitude that makes one fear that it may be a long time before the Italians will throw off their present yoke.

It is painful to watch from here the long and dreary debates on the Lease-Land Bill, and I can well imagine what the period of delay means to you.

Ever sincerely yours,

William Phillips



*file
confidential*

*ASF: Italy Folder
1-41
Phillips*

**EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Rome, March 10, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

I have been giving careful thought to the suggestion contained in your letter of February 12th and am glad to give you my impressions for what they may be worth.

The appointment of Myron Taylor as your personal representative could not have been improved upon. He has precisely the qualities which are most appreciated at the Vatican, even the spiritual quality which endeared him personally to the Pope. He loved the Vatican ceremonial and even the long and, to me, very dreary church ceremonies. It was particularly fortunate that he had his residence in Florence, where, as you know, he spent most of his time, coming to Rome for two or three days once a fortnight for conversations with the Cardinal Secretary of State and sometimes with the Pope. He preferred this arrangement because he found that after making his first contacts, there was really nothing for him to do except to report to you his occasional conversations.

I hope he will be able to return here, but of this I am very doubtful.

If

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

If he cannot return, I fully appreciate your desire to appoint a successor, and certainly there is no one better qualified than Owen Young. But it seems to me that there are certain reasons why it might be better to postpone his coming.

In the present state of international affairs, the Pope can do nothing. His great role will presumably come later when peace is in sight and when the bitterness of war must give way to finding the means to an honorable and just peace. At that moment the Vatican should and could exercise a helpful influence and the Pope should be reinforced by the presence of an American representative of high standing. At present the Vatican is a little island in the midst of a turbulent sea. It is cut off from many of its former contacts and is not the source of political information which it was in more normal times. D'Arcy Osborne, the British "prisoner in the Vatican", tells me that he gets little information now from Vatican sources, and Tittmann has found that his Vatican contacts are pathetically eager for any political news that he can give to them.

Naturally the Pope would like to have the representative of the President near him now as well as in the future,
for

for his presence at the Vatican adds to the Papal prestige, which has fallen rather low, even in Catholic circles. And in moments of discouragement the Pope would undoubtedly find comfort in the presence of your personal representative. But actually there would be little for him to do under present conditions.

Now, as to Owen Young himself: - I cannot imagine that he would be happy or contented here. Not having an establishment of his own outside of Rome like the Taylors', he would presumably live in Rome, where he would naturally try to find a real occupation. He would be persona grata within the Vatican circle, but, generally speaking, Americans are no longer in favor in Italy, and we all have to be careful not to harm our old Italian friends by openly associating with them. And furthermore, the American colony has shrunk to a fraction of its former size. Living conditions, therefore, are not what they used to be, and if I am not mistaken, Owen Young would find it exceedingly dull here and would not stand it for long.

Personally, I think that for the present at least Tittmann can preserve the contacts as well as anyone, for he has a wide acquaintance in the Vatican world and is the type of man that they all respect and admire. While it is
true

true that he would not normally have access to the Pope, he could see Cardinal Maglione, the Secretary of State, at any time and convey through him your messages or receive from him any message which the Pope might wish to send to you. And on exceptional occasions the Pope would undoubtedly receive him.

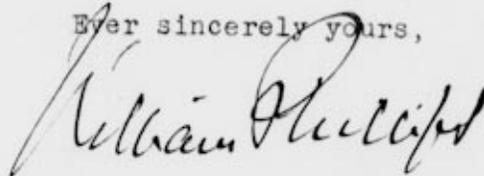
Would not this be a satisfactory arrangement until the moment comes, and it will come, when your personal representative, whether he be Myron Taylor or Owen Young, or someone of equal status, should be here to take part in the work of peace and reconstruction? Then there will be a man's job to be done and we shall need someone of Owen Young's stature to strengthen the Pope's hand and to help him to work with you in the solution of these world-wide problems. Would it not be better to reserve him for such a task, rather than to send him over now when, I am sure, he would soon be discouraged by the little information which he can gather on your behalf, and from the lack of any constructive work which he would find to do.

And then there is one further thought, which perhaps should not be mentioned. If, by any chance, we should become involved in the war, Owen Young would somewhat ignominiously have to abandon the job, or become a "prisoner in the Vatican", where, I feel sure, he would shortly lose his mind!

I rejoice with you that the lease-lend bill has finally passed and tomorrow is said to be the day on which you will sign it. It has been a long and dreary debate and I am thankful for all concerned that it is ended at last, and ended so satisfactorily.

With all good wishes,

Ever 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 "Ever sincerely yours,".

Italian folder
1-41

PSF: Italy
Phillips

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

March 17, 1941

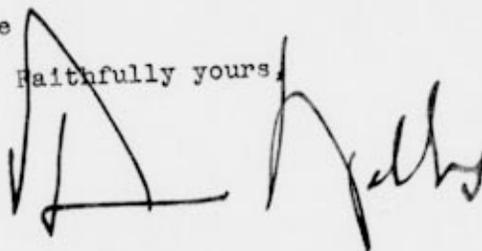
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Confidential

My dear Mr. President:

I am returning herewith the letters sent to you by Bill Phillips and enclosed with your memorandum of March 10 to the Secretary. We have both read these letters with much interest.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enclosures.

The President,
The White House.

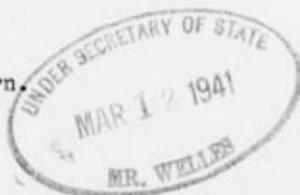
THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 10. 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE
UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE:

To read and return.

F.D.R.



Thomas -
CH



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, February 18, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

Referring again to the matter which you asked me to take up with the Vatican, I know that it has again been mentioned to the Pope and to the Secretary of State. My informant tells me, however, that the "competent Congregation", which is the body that has the appointing power, has not yet reached a decision. My informant goes on to say that there may be some difficulty because, although the person mentioned is regarded as one possessing the highest qualities, there are those who are in doubt that he is the one best fitted for the position in question. At the same time I am assured that the matter is being studied and that it will be given every consideration. I am only sorry that I have been unable as yet to secure more prompt action.

Sincerely yours

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "William Phillips".

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



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, February 17, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

Since my last letter to you, there has been no dramatic change in the situation here but rather a gradual tightening of German control all along the line. For some reason or other, Mussolini has decided that all the members of the Government should go to the front. The "talk" seems to be fairly widespread that he discovered a secret meeting had been held by members of his Government to decide upon a triumvirate to rule the country in certain eventualities. There may well be truth in this report, but I cannot vouch for it.

Having summoned Grandi, who is Minister of Justice and President of the Chamber, he ordered him to leave for Albania within twenty-four hours. When Grandi asked who would carry on the work of the Ministry, he was informed that an airplane would be sent to him every day with papers to sign. It happens that Grandi holds two military ranks - a captaincy in the regular army and a generalship in the militia - and when he asked in which capacity he was to go, Mussolini replied that he could take his choice. The Minister of Finance has escaped only temporarily on account of an operation which he is now undergoing. You can imagine the confusion that is resulting from this exit of the Ministers, especially in this government where everything is pyramided through them to the Duce, the subordinates within the Government having no authority whatsoever. The situation is of interest and indeed of importance because, in the absence of the Ministers, the doors to German control of the Government are thrown open even wider. As usual, the Germans are moving with their usual cleverness and the public is largely unaware of what is taking place. And meanwhile an anesthetic is being administered to the people in the daily war bulletins extolling the glorious achievements of the Italian army, navy and air forces.

On February ninth there occurred at Genoa the first heavy naval bombardment on continental Italy. An American eye-witness told me that it began at nine a.m. and lasted for fifty minutes, during which most of the shells fell in the center of the town, causing little destruction to the port but considerable loss of life and damage to houses and

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

apartments

apartments. We have not yet a full report of the damage to the Ansaldo works and the other important manufacturing plants which lie outside of the city proper and along the water front. But what is of especial interest is the total lack of Italian response. My informant tells me that it was not until three in the afternoon that the first Italian air squadrons appeared on the scene, passing over Genoa in search of the British fleet, which had withdrawn. Nor was there any anti-aircraft action against the British planes, which directed the firing from above the city. Only the shore batteries were in action, and they apparently were ineffective. Again, according to several accounts which I have received, the Genoese people showed the utmost indignation, not, as one might suppose against the British, but against their own Government for leaving them so entirely unprotected. Hopes were expressed that the British would repeat the process and give Rome another proof of the inefficiency of the present regime. A fairly reliable report states that, shortly after the bombardment, three Italian bombers left Rome to try and make contact with the British squadron. They sighted the Italian heavy cruiser "Pola", operating just outside La Spezia, which lies south of Genoa, and attacked her by mistake. One bomb hit the cruiser in the stern, doing very heavy damage.

Italians everywhere appear to be aware that they are in a hopeless position, but so far they are doing nothing about it but talk. One hears that a military government is needed but that German pressure and influence prevent anything of this nature. The King is regarded as an old man afraid to do anything because of the possibility of bringing about a civil war. There are no outstanding personalities among the military leaders except Badoglio, who has been deprived of his command and who is said to be playing a waiting game. He alone, with the King and army behind him, might cause a change in the Government, but with the German army across the Brenner and powerful German air bases in southern Italy, the Germans could probably nip in the bud any prospective coup d'état. For it is to be remembered that, while Hitler probably holds Mussolini and his Government in contempt, he will wish to keep him in power for the present.

An interesting indication of the extent of German airfields in southern Italy comes to me through an anti-Nazi Dane, who manages a small orchestra. He speaks German like a native and is often mistaken for one. He and his orchestra have been hired by the Italian Ministry of Aeronautics to make a tour of all German airfields in Italy and Sicily for the purpose of entertaining the German officers. An itinerary for the concerts has been made out for him and he leaves Rome this week, returning the latter part of February. His list

of stops includes Naples, Foggia, Bari, Brindisi, Reggio Calabria, Catania, Syracuse, Comiso and Palermo.

Reports come to us from time to time which have to do with purely military matters, and the authorities would be furious if they had any idea that these reports were being forwarded to Washington. For instance, I hear, on what appears to be good authority, that the Germans are planning to use a new type of sleeping gas, which does not come within the interpretation of the Geneva Convention against the use of poisonous gases, and that the required glass containers are being manufactured for the Germans here in great quantities. I have information, too, that there are evidences of an incipient disaffection appearing among the young officers and men in the army, who are known to have said that at the first opportunity they would go over to the British. Certainly popular sentiment against Mussolini is increasing steadily. To what extent we can safely use our ciphers in keeping you and the Departments fully advised of such matters, is a problem that is always with us.

The other day a student demonstration was planned against your Embassy. About eleven a.m. I was surprised to find the offices heavily guarded and a troop of two hundred soldiers in readiness for "protection" purposes. A large and noisy crowd of students gathered in another section of the city and marched in our direction; but unfortunately for them, something went wrong in the high command, for the rioters were sent to a near-by building known as the former Queen Mother's Palace, where they proceeded to demonstrate in full. This particular building now holds a branch of the Italian Government, which must have been surprised to find themselves surrounded by a noisy crowd. Eventually the police sent the students back to their colleges, where they were severely reprimanded for having gone to the wrong address. This little performance, so illustrative of Italian "efficiency", has given me the best laugh which I have had since my return to Rome!

Speaking of students, I have just learned an interesting fact. There are twenty thousand students registered in all departments of the University of Rome. Up till now they have been free from military duty. Recently the fascist organization invited them to volunteer for military service. The result was only forty-four volunteers out of the total of twenty thousand! This poor showing has so

upset

upset the regime that the non-military privileges which have been accorded the student body have now been withdrawn, and they are all now liable to call within their respective classes. I regard this as very significant, when one considers that it is an expression of opinion among young Italians who are living at the seat of Government.

An instance of increasing German police control is the restrictions which have just been applied to all foreign Embassy and Consular staffs. The provinces of Naples, Salerno and Littoria and the whole of Sicily have been declared war zones, and we are now in the process of closing our Consulates in those districts. Our Military and Naval Attachés cannot leave Rome without special permission from the Ministry of War, and even I am requested to give notice to the Foreign Office whenever I leave Rome. In answer to my inquiries at the Foreign Office as to the precise meaning of "giving notice", the reply is merely that it is for my convenience and protection!

I hope I have not bored you too much with this lengthy letter. I am merely responding with pleasure to the instructions contained in your letter to me of January third, saying "Write me soon!"

With all good wishes,

Devotedly yours

William Phillips



*file
personal*

*PSF: Phillips Folder
1-41*

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, March 25, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

The only noticeable change that has occurred here of late in local circles is the increasing fear of Italians of contacts with the Embassy, for everyone is aware that for an Italian to be seen with any of us is not to his or her advantage. The Italian police, which is now directed by the Germans, has, as you would expect, entirely changed its character into one of strict surveillance. As an illustration of what I mean, I may mention an incident which occurred a few days ago to a young Italian pilot and his girl friend, with whom he was having a drink in the bar of a well-known hotel here. It has now been ordered that during the broadcasts of official communiqués all persons who are seated must stand. This little couple happened to be seated in a far corner of the restaurant bar and did not notice that the daily war communiqué was being broadcasted. At the end of the broadcast, however, a superior officer came up to the couple and denounced them for their failure to conform; and furthermore promptly informed the secret police.

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

police. Thereupon they were arrested, and the girl, who was well known in social circles here, was held for twenty-four hours and then released. The pilot was released only after he had been forbidden to order a meal or a drink in any restaurant in Rome during his period of leave. Considering that the young man was a pilot on active service, you will understand how fearful Italians in civil life are with regard to their own individual situations. I must say that, with few exceptions, however, all the old friends of mine have been most kind, and it is noticeable that the Foreign Office group are being particularly courteous, not only in their official contacts with us but are going out of their way to be socially attentive.

Public apathy, and almost complete indifference to the war, continues. But, at the same time, something has occurred in this connection which seems to me of importance. The first organized anti-fascist group which has become known to the Italian authorities has been rounded up and captured. It appears that a short while ago the police authorities learned of the existence of this organization, which was suspected of furnishing information to the enemy. The trail led to persons living disguised as
peasants

peasants in the hills outside of Rome, and a small group of carabinieri was sent out to investigate. As they approached a certain cave, they were fired upon. Three were killed and a number wounded; whereupon Rome surrounded the entire area with troops and eventually rounded up about one hundred persons with their stores of arms, machine guns, rifles, and ammunition. Apparently it is not known whether these unfortunates were members of a large opposition movement or a mere isolated organization. But as this incident is the first sign of organized activity, it is not without interest and importance.

In spite of repeated failures in his offensives against the Greeks, Mussolini seems determined upon another try, and for this purpose he is sending more and more troops to Albania. The reports are that the Germans on the Bulgarian side of the Greek frontier have become very impatient and are giving the Italians only this one more opportunity to defeat the Greeks before the German entry into Greece proper. Our Military Attaché, who has been in touch with a number of Italians recently returned from Albania, is of the opinion that the forthcoming Italian offensive will fail as the last have done, and will be an even greater disaster. And so it doesn't appear as if Mussolini, in spite of all his efforts, can hope to re-
establish

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establish his prestige from Albania. In my opinion, his prestige has sunk so low that even though he should have some victories over the Greeks, he cannot hope to reestablish himself in popular estimation here, for there has been too much suffering among the soldiers and it is too well known that the army was wholly unprepared for this campaign.

I assume that the American papers have reported the sinking of the Italian hospital ship "Po" off the coast of Albania and that the ship, which was lying at anchor, was not illuminated. Ciano's wife, Edda Mussolini, happened to be one of the nurses on board and saved herself only by a swim. Several others were drowned. Fortunately there were few persons on board, as the wounded were to be brought on on the following day. The apparent reason for the sinking of this ship (presumably by the British) was that Mussolini himself was on board, but this proved not to be the fact.

Speaking of the Duce, you may be amused to hear that recently he made an official visit to Taranto to inspect the raising of some of the ships which had been sunk by the British. When he came on board the "Cavour", which

was

was one of the crack Italian cruisers, he was accompanied by his "girl", much to the disgust of the officers present. It is only of interest as an indication of the change that has occurred in the man himself.

I am glad to think that you are having a few days of well earned rest and sincerely hope that the fishing is sufficiently good to take your mind for a few moments off the affairs of this miserable world. How you manage to continue to stand the pace of the Presidency under present conditions is a source of wonder to all your old friends.

Ever sincerely yours,

William Phillips

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

April 14, 1941

PSF - Phillips folder
1-41
file
personal (copy)

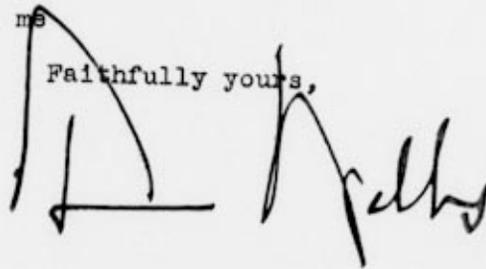
[3-21-41]

My dear Mr. President:

I am enclosing herewith in the belief
that it will be of interest to you, a copy
of a letter I have received today under
date of March 21 from Bill Phillips.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



The President,

The White House.

COPY

PSF: Phillips

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, March 21, 1941

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Dear Sumner,

I have some interesting information which I have not dared to cable in view of the possibility that our ciphers are being read, and the best that I can do in the circumstances is to send it to you by airmail pouch.

You will recollect that all our reports to date have indicated an attitude of apathy among the Italian people so pronounced that it seemed scarcely possible to anticipate any red-blooded and organized resistance to the present regime. Today, however, comes a bit of news which is of importance in this connection, and from a source whose information is beyond question. It is to the effect that the first armed organized anti-fascist group known to the Italian authorities has been located and captured.

Some time ago the police learned of the existence of an organization known to be carrying on anti-fascist propaganda and suspected of furnishing information to the enemy, whose members included university graduates, professional men and a number of priests. The trail led to persons living as peasants in the hills near Rome, and

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

twelve Carabinieri were sent out to investigate. Coming upon a group in a cave not far from Tivoli, the Carabinieri were met with a volley of machine-gun fire, three being killed and six wounded. The surviving carabinieri immediately reported to their headquarters in Rome and troops were sent out to surround the area. In the man hunt, two groups, one of more than 70 persons and another of more than 30, were rounded up, and stores of side arms, machine guns, rifles and ammunition were found hidden in caves.

It is not known whether these groups are units of a nation-wide opposition movement, or merely an isolated organization. In either case, their importance cannot be overlooked. While any articulate or organized opposition on the part of the people as a whole seems highly improbable, it seems reasonable to expect that persons in opposition to the regime will band together in groups similar to the "Carbonari" of earlier days. I hear that the Tivoli incident is already becoming known to the ordinary people.

Stories of this nature are likely to spread the opposition movement among independent and venturesome persons, and thus perhaps eventually provide leaders for any future uprising should the temper of the populace afford a favorable opportunity.

With regard to the Albanian campaign, the split between Mussolini and General Cavallero was very serious.

Cavallero, in addition to making the points previously reported, to the effect that the Italian army was not ready to launch an offensive, pointed out to the Duce that at least fifteen days' sunshine was needed to dry out equipment and the terrain and to improve the morale of the soldiers, who had suffered from the severe winter weather. He added that neither the Italians nor the Germans were ready for a sustained move against Greece at that time.

When Mussolini opposed his views, Cavallero offered his resignation, but it was refused, although Mussolini subsequently offered General Geloso the command. The latter begged off but apparently some agreement was reached, as Geloso later turned out to be No. 2 to Mussolini, who personally directed the offensive which began about ten days ago.

The move was started on the first sunny day, and the results are those already reported. Figures on losses are mounting, however, and Anfuso, of the Foreign Office, is reported to have said two days ago that the dead and wounded totaled thirty thousand.

Persons who have been on the Albanian front say there is no danger of the Italian army crumbling, despite the utter failure of the counter-offensive, as the Italians now hold good positions which it is believed can be maintained against any attack which the Greeks may make.

You may recollect that some days ago the Italian hospital ship "Po" was torpedoed and sunk while lying at anchor during the night off the coast of Albania and that the ship was not illuminated at that time. It has been announced that among a few nurses spending the night on board was Countess Ciano, who saved herself by swimming to a nearby boat, although some of the other nurses were drowned. It now seems pretty well established that the reason for the torpedoing of the ship was the supposition that Mussolini himself was spending the night on it, but this proved not to be the fact, fortunately for him.

With regard to the general situation here, there is very little to add to what I have already telegraphed. It is no exaggeration to say that, with the absence of Ciano, the Foreign Office scarcely functions. Ciano kept everything in his own hands to such an extent that the works seem to have stopped in his absence. Moreover, Anfuso has not the slightest influence over the other Ministries. For our own sake, I wish Ciano would come back, but he appears to be so highly unpopular in black-shirt and army circles that he probably prefers to remain in the air as much as possible. At any rate, I understand from Del Drago that he has been very active in his bombing squadron. You will agree, I know, that he has a lot of good points, but he has been making far too much money in cornering the

market on this and that; and in addition, he is popularly condemned for having been instrumental in launching the Greek campaign.

Here is an incident with regard to the Duce which, while highly entertaining, is revealing of the present condition of the man himself. The occasion was an official inspection of certain ships which had been sunk by the British at Taranto and which had been raised and were being repaired. When Mussolini appeared on board the "Cavour", which was one of their crack cruisers, he was accompanied by his girl friend, much to the astonishment and disgust of the ship's officers. The above information comes to me through our Naval Attaché, who had it from naval circles.

As an illustration of the activities of the police here, I may mention the following incident which occurred only a day or two ago. A young Italian pilot on active service who was on leave in Rome for three or four days, was sitting at the bar of the Taverna restaurant with a girl friend during the noon hour. It has been ordered that during the broadcasts of the official communiqué all those who are seated should stand. This particular young officer was seated in a far distant corner of the restaurant and was so absorbed in his conversation that he did not notice the broadcast and therefore did not rise when the

bulletin was read. Immediately thereafter a superior officer who happened to be in the restaurant, went up to him and upbraided him for his failure to conform, and immediately informed the secret police. The young man and his lady friend were promptly arrested and the girl, who is well known here in Rome, was not released for twenty-four hours. The young man was eventually released but informed that he could not order a meal or a drink in any first-class restaurant during his leave. When one considers that this is penalizing a fine Italian junior officer on active service, it is no wonder the Italians are in a state of almost abject fear with regard to their own particular situations.

We expect renewed activities in Albania and in Cirenaica in the near future, and it makes one fairly ill to think of even more slaughter of the Italians on the Greek front, and all because of the efforts of one man to reestablish his own personal prestige.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS

PSF: Phillips Filder



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, April 14, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

These are not very cheerful days for us in Rome, as the helplessness of the British in this part of the world becomes more and more self-evident.

No one can explain their handling of the Libyan situation, - the efforts to capture Cirenaica and then the hasty retreat as soon as they came in contact with German forces. For months the British must have been aware of the steady stream of supplies from Germany to Sicily and from Sicily to Tripoli, supplies which are still continuing to pass through Italy unmolested. Sicily, with its powerful air bases, now dominates the middle Mediterranean, and the Italians have apparently sufficient shipping to transport whatever Germany desires across the narrow waist-line of that sea. At any rate, with the exception of the sinking of a few Italian transports, the movement across to Tripoli has gone on unchecked.

I heard the other day the account of an Italian officer who witnessed the arrival in Tripoli of one of these transports

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

ports filled with seven or eight hundred German troops and a large supply of war material. From the moment the ship docked, it took only one hour to empty her of men and material, and during that hour not one order was given by word of mouth! Occasionally a whistle would be blown, but that was all. The Italian observer was so astonished that he asked a German officer how such a thing was possible. The reply was that the Germans had been practising embarking and disembarking in the Baltic and that the machine was so perfected that no orders were now necessary.

You will recollect that the Italian main railway line from Rome to Sicily touches the coast at various points and surely could have been kept interrupted by air or sea attack, and yet except for one little attempt by parachutes to destroy a bridge, the British have permitted this steady stream of German reinforcements into Sicily and North Africa. The remarks which an official of the Foreign Office recently made to one of my Secretaries reveal the Foreign Office's astonishment. He said that, with the British capture of Bengasi, the Italians were about to crack up, and had the British continued on to Tripoli, they would have joined up with the French in Tunisia, which in itself would have created an entirely new situation, and at the same time

they

they would have prevented the Germans from further landing at Tripoli. Instead, they decided for political reasons, which the Foreign Office believe originated with Eden, to bolster Greece and Yugoslavia, and in so doing committed the unpardonable sin of dividing their forces. We in the Embassy feel very much the same way, but of course there may be some good reason which justified the British action. After all, Ethiopia and Eritrea were doomed to collapse anyway, and one cannot help thinking that the immediate capture of Cirenaica and Tripolitania was of greater importance at this critical moment.

This same Foreign Office official, in referring to the German bombing of Belgrade, held the view that, while Belgrade may have been an open city, nevertheless from a military viewpoint it was of importance to destroy it in order to create confusion. He said that in a little country where everything is centered in the capital and all orders come from the capital, the destruction of the various Ministries and all means of communication was a paramount necessity. What a cheerful outlook for all little countries!

Since the collapse of Yugoslavia, the Italians have begun to feel greater confidence and of course are not permitted to be aware how little their own forces have

done

done in this connection. Mussolini's views can be summed up in a remark he is said to have made the other day: "They (the Italians) may not be pleased with me now, but let them wait a while and they will change their attitude."

I have tried to keep you and the Secretary fully informed about the Italian press campaign against us. At times it reaches almost unbearable heights and then subsides a bit. Not unnaturally it has begun to have an effect on the attitude towards Americans in general.

Another indication of the way the wind blows occurred recently, when I asked at the Foreign Office whether some of the officials would be able to come to a luncheon which I was giving for the new Argentine Foreign Minister before his departure for the United States. The reply was that they would have to ask permission, which meant of course permission from Mussolini, and the following day I was informed that none of them could accept. At the same time, Foreign Office officials are most courteous, and Caroline has been showered with flowers and Easter greetings from Italians, many of whom dare not come to the Embassy.

"Wishful thinking " is a dangerous form of entertainment these days and often leads to bitter disappointment. There is a great deal of it here in official circles, which
are

are convinced of an ultimate Italian-German victory. Bets are now being made that the war will be over in August. They are not disturbed about the loss of Italian East Africa, because when the war is won, they are confident that the Italian Empire will be reformed to their satisfaction. This I would say represents the attitude in fascist circles. In other circles, where I find my friends, Italians are hanging their heads in shame at the course of their Government and at the unhappy situation in which the country finds itself.

I have heard it said in fascist circles that the struggle is between professionals and amateurs, and that just as a college team cannot win over a professional team, so the British have no chance of an ultimate victory over the Axis. Would that we could teach them the lesson that they so painfully deserve, and I am sure that we will do so in the course of time!

With all good wishes,

Devotedly yours,

William Phillips

Italy Folder
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 15, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR PREPARATION OF REPLY
FOR MY SIGNATURE.

F. D. R.

Letter to the President
from Ambassador Phillips dated
Rome, April 28, 1941.

*Original of President's letter sent to Sumner Welles
for delivery of 26/41
PWF: Phillips Folder*

May 24, 1941

[4-28-41]

Dear Bill:

I have received your letter of April 28, 1941, with its suggestions regarding a trend of possible relations between this country and Italy and the possibility of distinguishing by public utterance between the German and Italian role in the war. Should events so develop as to make some definite pronouncement regarding the position of this country and its relation to the peoples of both Italy and Germany it would not only be possible but probably desirable to make a distinction between the National Socialist-Fascist Governments and their peoples, with whose development after the war this Government would have a sympathetic understanding; but at the present time when there appears to be little possibility that the Italian people are willing to do more than passively accept the ignominious position which their alliance with Germany has forced upon them, there would be little support in this country for a declaration of this sort.

I fully appreciate the difficulties of your own position and the impossibility of accomplishing such as an American Ambassador in Italy at this time. Your reports, however, from Rome have been, and continue to be, of great use to us and I still believe that there is a certain importance of maintaining at least this one link with Rome.

Its

Cl. Secretary
Levi's office
I mean
Dear Will:

Its severance moreover just now would clearly
be misunderstood, not only in Italy but by
the bulk of public opinion here.

With all good wishes,

Very sincerely yours,

"F. D. R."

The Honorable
William Phillips,
American Ambassador,
Rome.



*acked
5/24/41*

PSF: Phillips

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, April 28, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

It is a curious and unsatisfactory life that we lead in Rome just now. The days themselves pass quickly enough, the weeks less quickly, and the months seem never-ending. My contacts with officials are almost nil, for with Ciano still in Bari with his bomber squadron, there is no one in the Foreign Office who desires to express an opinion, or possesses the authority to decide any even moderately important matter of policy.

It may be that Ciano will return to Rome, now that the Greeks and Yugoslavs are finished, but during his absence the Foreign Office has almost ceased to function except in routine administrative matters. The remaining officials are rarely at their desks before ten a.m., and the day's work ends at two p.m., when a number of them adjourn to the Golf Club for lunch and an afternoon on the course. I have the impression that they have no work to do and that whatever there is of importance is done by Mussolini at his office in the Palazzo Venezia.

You will recollect that Mussolini was in Albania not long

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

long ago directing the highly unsuccessful counter-attacks against the Greeks. He had at his service three identical armored cars, all of which were put into use whenever he went towards the front. The three cars moved simultaneously in three different directions, and in this manner his movements were concealed. But one day one of the unoccupied cars returned with forty-five bullet holes!

Rome is swarming with police of every description. The picturesque and good-looking carabinieri, with their three-cornered hats, saunter lazily in twos through the streets, reminding one of happier days. But the other police organizations, the metropolitani, the pompieri, the regulars with their rifles, the plain-clothes men, are there for business if they should be required. Our Embassy is closely guarded by police and plain-clothes men, who watch everyone entering or leaving the gates, but just what good this does to them or to us, I have yet to discover. We know of several recent instances when visitors have been questioned after leaving the premises.

The continued anti-American propaganda, and in particular the seizure of Italian ships in our ports, the true reason for which has never been explained to the general public, have undoubtedly had an effect on the general attitude towards us. Ciano referred to our action once. When

I explained to him our laws defining as criminal any destruction of American or foreign shipping in our waters, he replied "Yes, you have your laws, but these are our ships." Explanations seem to have had no effect, for Italians suffer from the not uncommon complaint of inability to see the other fellow's point of view.

I often wonder whether my presence here is of any use to you during these days of titanic military struggle, and I question whether any diplomat could accomplish anything under such conditions. On the other hand, the more liberal-minded Italians seem to attach importance to preserving the Ambassadorial tie, and what remains of the American community is even more insistent. But in view of the limited contacts which I now have in extreme fascist circles, and the increasing caution with which friends and anti-fascists are forced to regard the Embassy, I often feel that I am not earning my salary. Perhaps with Ciano's return to the Foreign Office and the renewed contact with the regime which his presence gives me, I shall be less isolated and more able to give you the information which you naturally look for from Rome.

It is very difficult for me to guess with any certainty the future of our relations with Germany. However, events seem to be bringing us close to "the brink" and if a break is almost upon us, we must, I assume, consider the probability
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of a simultaneous break with Italy. I am convinced that war with the United States would be intensely unpopular among the Italians, and yet in this pathetic country, so dominated by German influence, the people would have little to say in the matter. And yet we have learned one thing from the Greek campaign. The fascist Government may declare war, but the Italian forces may not necessarily show any fight if their hearts are not in the cause.

Should, therefore, the moment come when a break with Germany seems unavoidable, would you think it advisable to put clearly before this Government not only our own purposes and aims in entering the war against Germany, but something to the effect that the Italian people may count upon our sympathetic understanding of their problems after the war is ended? History will record that before the outbreak of the war, i.e., on August 25, 1939, Francois-Poncet informed this Government that the problems remaining for adjustment between the two countries could readily be disposed of to the satisfaction of both. But bent on war and to his eternal shame, Mussolini's reply was that the French offer came too late, or something to that effect.

Would it seem to you wise to let me tell the Italian Government at the right moment that we are not the enemies of the Italian people and that it is only their bondage to Hitler that separates us for the time being? If only for purposes

purposes of record, I should like to have something to indicate that we have in mind the approach to Italy's problems after the war in a spirit of fair-mindedness and justice. For the Italian people are no longer enthusiastic fascists, and the right moment to speak might come before any break with us could occur.

There is a good deal happening these days under the surface which it is hard to evaluate. For instance, I hear there is a sort of boycott against the press, which extends from Rome northwards and which is in the form of a refusal by the public to buy newspapers on Thursdays of each week. This is intended as a remonstrance not only against the attitude of the papers, but against the regime itself, and already many papers are suffering substantial losses. I hear there is bitter indignation in high fascist circles against the movement, but so far the Government has failed to discover the authors.

I am told that your great speech of March fifteenth, only brief extracts of which appeared in the press here, was widely circulated in an underground manner. It did not pass through the mails but from hand to hand, and many copies were placed surreptitiously in private mail boxes. It appears that Churchill's speech of yesterday will be given the same mysterious circulation.

All

All this goes to show that, while the Italians remain outwardly apathetic, a reaction is setting in which may some day come to fruition. But when this will happen depends not only upon a renewed confidence in the ultimate victory of the allied cause, which is now at a low ebb, but upon a widening of the cleavage between the fascists and non-fascists. Might we not assist in widening this cleavage by making the gesture which I have suggested at the appropriate moment?

With all good wishes,

Ever sincerely yours
William Phillips

H. A. Hoehling

FDZ - and

the coming of the war

1941

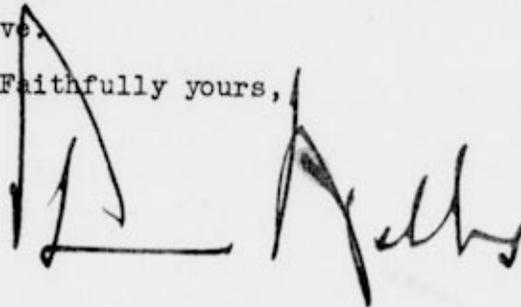
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

May 24, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I am returning herewith the letter to you from Ambassador Phillips, dated April 28, 1941, concerning this country's relations with Italy, together with a suggested reply for your signature, if you approve.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'W. Phillips', written over the typed name 'Faithfully yours,'.

Enclosure:
Letter from the
Honorable William
Phillips of April
28, 1941.

The President,
The White House.

Italy Folder

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

June 4, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR PREPARATION OF REPLY
FOR MY SIGNATURE.

F. D. R.

Letter to the President
from Ambassador William Phillips,
Rome, dated May 17, 1941.

*PST
Italy*

Original of this letter sent to Hon. Stephen
Wells, 6/12/41 for delivery by parcel
him PSF Phillips-Fulke

June 11, 1941

[5-17-41]

My dear Bill:

Your letter of May 17, 1941, with its analysis of public opinion in Italy is of particular interest at this time when it seems more clearly established that the German willingness to permit further acquisition of territory by Italy in the Balkan area may be intended to offset the German refusal to permit Italian expansion at France's expense and thus enable the Germans to continue playing with Darlan for further collaboration on the part of Vichy. For whatever purpose this expansion is permitted, it can, however, only have served to bolster up Italian morale.

As I wrote you earlier, I fully appreciate the importance of making a distinction between the German and Italian position in the event that a conflict should arise between us and their Governments. On the other hand, the situation in this country is so developing as regards the activities of German and Italian agents in such that it would be very difficult for this Government to separate one from the other. In fact, our information is to the effect that the diplomatic and consular representatives of both countries are required to consult continually regarding their position and attitude vis-a-vis ourselves. The continued presence in the United States

States of the Italian diplomatic and consular staffs should we have severed relations with Germany would seem undesirable. In any event, the extent of Italian participation in possible hostilities would probably be determined by orders from Berlin and our attitude governed accordingly.

Very sincerely yours,

(Signed) Franklin D. Roosevelt

The Honorable
William Phillips,
American Ambassador,
Rome.



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

achd
6/11/41

Rome, May 17, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

Since my last letter, it appears that public opinion in Italy is becoming even more certain of an Axis victory. The general morale had slumped to a new low with the defeat of the Italian forces in Albania and in Libya, and in many parts of Italy, notably in the north, there was a growing hope of British victory that would deliver Italy from her present unhappy bondage with Germany. With the active participation of German troops in the Balkans and in Libya, there has been a decided change in the public morale, a change which of course has been fostered by the press and propaganda to such an extent that Italians may well believe that they are coming out on top after all. I hear that the Duce is no longer downcast and is again in good spirits, confident of the final outcome.

The acceptance of the crown of Croatia by King Victor Emmanuel, or rather by the Duke of Spoleto, carries with it an enlargement of the Croatian state to include a considerable part of the Dalmatian coast, and this is being widely

dramatized

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

dramatized as a great achievement. Pavelic, the Croatian leader, had persuaded Mussolini that he (Pavelic) could not maintain his political hold on Croatia unless he could add to the state a good part of the Dalmatian coast, which, as you recollect, Mussolini has always had his eye upon. A way out of the difficulty was discovered by including the coastal territory within the new state and by offering the crown to an Italian prince, a rather neat way for the Italians to acquire what they want without saying so. The boundaries of Albania will undoubtedly be extended into Greece and eastwards into Yugoslavia, and so, together with the acquisition of the Greek islands, the Italian regime is already feeling rather set up. It is true they have lost Ethiopia, but Ethiopia was never very popular and there is the feeling that it will come back to them in the final peace settlement. I would guess that the prestige of the Italian crown has risen considerably. During the last week or so, the King has been making an extended trip to various points in Albania, which has been reported conspicuously from day to day in the press. And now that Croatia has come within the aegis of the crown, the importance of the crown in the Government of Italy is being emphasized.

There is, however, one heavy cloud in sight, which is
causing

causing deep concern except perhaps among a limited fascist group, namely the danger of a conflict with the United States. The Italians feel that there is every reason why Italy should not go to war with the United States and that, therefore, the conflict should be avoided. They are thinking of the vast numbers of Italians in America and of the numberless ties which these people have with the home country. They feel that they have never done anything against us to justify a war and that whatever unfriendly acts have been committed, have been done against them and not by them. It is true that the Italian press and radio succeeded in creating a great deal of bitterness against us following the seizure of the Italian ships in our ports and the penalties imposed upon the officers and crews, but already the bitterness is passing and I feel that fundamentally the hope of almost everyone is that in a war between the United States and Germany, Italy may somehow be permitted to keep aloof. I have heard it said that there is a precedent for Italy in this connection, since Germany remained at peace with Greece during the first terrible weeks of Italian-Greek struggle, and therefore Germany could not rightly demand from Italy a state of belligerency against the United States. There is also the thought that possibly the German Government might prefer that

that Italy remain in a state of non-belligerency with the United States and so preserve contacts with the United States through Italian diplomatic and consular staffs in the United States. But perhaps the more general impression is that Italy and Germany are so closely tied together in a military sense that this Government must respond to any orders emanating from Berlin.

In my letter of April 28th, I put the question as to whether, in your opinion, we might do something along these lines. Could we at the same time make it clear that we have nothing against any form of Government which the Italians, in their judgment, desire for their country, but rather that it is the spirit of aggression against other states to which we are fundamentally opposed? I do not think it does any good to denounce Mussolini, as Churchill does from time to time. The better way, it seems to me, would be to put on record our purposes in entering the war against Germany and that Italy's problems will have our sympathetic consideration at the end of the war, and then see what happens.

I would give a great deal to know what is in your mind with regard to our future relations with Italy, but I appreciate that in these uncertain times I have no justification

fication in asking such a question.

I realize of course that should we come to blows with Germany, the military demands become predominant and that Italy is the weak link in Germany's armor. But personally I would hate to see us in war with the Italian people, who are so unutterably opposed to Germany and to the growing German influence in their country. For the moment they are living in the confident hope that the war is nearing its end, and yet they are fearful of what the future has in store for Italy under German domination of Europe.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours

William Staley

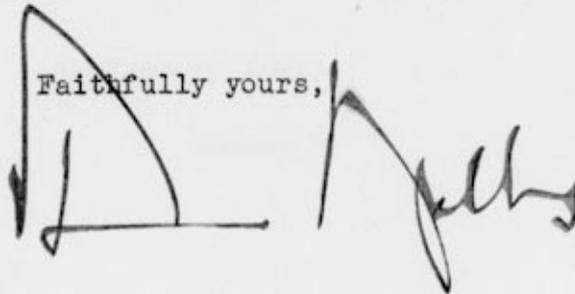
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON

June 11. 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I am returning herewith the letter to you from Ambassador Phillips, dated May 17, 1941, concerning the Italian situation, together with a suggested reply for your signature, if you approve.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'W. Phillips', written over the typed name 'William Phillips'.

Enclosure:
Letter from the
Honorable William
Phillips of May 17,
1941.

The President,
The White House.

*File
Confidential*

PSF Phillips Folder

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

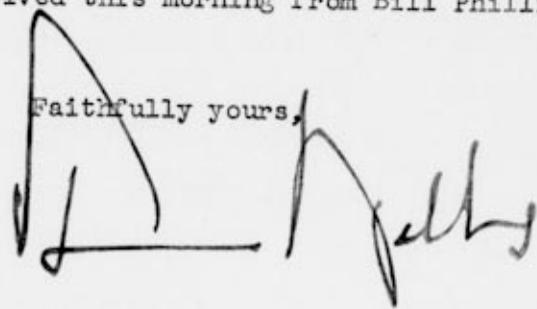
June 10, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

In the belief that it will be of interest to you,
I am enclosing herewith a copy of a letter dated May 26
which I have received this morning from Bill Phillips.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,



Enc.

The President,
The White House.

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, May 26, 1941

Dear Sumner,

I had a two hour walk in the country yesterday with an Italian officer whom I had previously known rather well and who has just returned from Albania. He told me a great deal about the tragedy of the campaign against Greece and confirmed many of the reports of the total lack of preparedness of the Italian army. The suffering of the men was indescribable. For instance, in the advance positions, they slept for weeks on the snow in trenches only three feet deep, without any hot food or hot drink, with the result that thousands have lost hands or feet or both from freezing. The hospitals in Rome and elsewhere are filled with cases of amputation.

All of this is having an important bearing upon the attitude towards the Government, for the returning officers, who feel keenly their responsibilities towards their men, are in a state of fury against the regime and against Mussolini himself. To be compelled to drive their men against friendly Greeks and under such awful conditions,

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

has been more than they could bear and great numbers are now in a rebellious state of mind.

My informant, who is a rather well known liberal, and who may be of course doing some "wishful thinking", believes that, in view of this state of mind within the army, something is bound to happen here before very long. He talked about the probability even of a coup d'état and the setting up of a military government under the direction of one of the older marshals, perhaps Badoglio or Caviglio, following the precedent of Pétain. However, the actual government would be in the hands of the younger generals, who are exceedingly intelligent men and thoroughly fed up with the present regime. He seemed to feel that the King counted for nothing in any such movement, and that his influence either for or against, would be negligible.

In reply to my inquiry as to what the Germans would do at such a moment, he thought that undoubtedly their armies would come down into Italy, but that the Italians would go through the form of resisting, not in the belief that they could defeat them, but "in order to make a better showing at the final peace conference".

My informant also confirmed an ugly report which I had heard that before the returning Italian armies left

Albanian soil, they were obliged to give up their guns, which has made them bitterer than ever. This is of interest, however, as showing that the regime appreciates the state of mind in which the soldiers are returning and is taking precautions accordingly.

I repeat that my friend is an Italian liberal and feels intensely the disgraceful position in which Italy now finds itself. We must not, therefore, accept his views too literally. His views are nonetheless of interest, because he is the finest type of Italian and undoubtedly is closely in touch with many of the high ranking Italian officers who share his opinions.

With all good wishes,

Sincerely yours,

WILLIAM PHILLIPS



*File
Personal*

*RF Philip Fisher
1-41*

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, June 25, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

This is just a line to express my appreciation of your letter of May 24th just received. I understand perfectly the difficulty involved in making any pronouncement with regard to our relations with Italy in view of the passive attitude of the Italian people in accepting the ignominious position which their alliance with Germany has forced upon them. It is unfortunately only too true that the capacity of the people to act or react seems to have been crushed out, leaving little except a pronounced ability to complain and criticize bitterly the Government and its subservience to the Nazi regime.

However, I was glad to see that we did in fact differentiate between the German and Italian Consulates in the United States, and I assure you this was noted and appreciated here in spite of the fact that the Italian press, with the exception of one provincial paper, made no mention of it. When in a recent conversation with Ciano I referred to the difference in our treatment of the two consular establishments, he left me in no doubt that the initiative taken by this Government in withdrawing the Italian Consuls had been forced

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

forced upon them. He did not express this in so many words, but said rather that he felt certain that I at least understood and appreciated the position in which Italy was placed in this connection.

I am grateful to you for your words of commendation with regard to my reports. Unfortunately the movements of the entire personnel of the Embassy are so restricted and so closely under observation that our few remaining contacts have shrunk to zero and we now have practically no sources of information on which to build reports. It is very unsatisfactory from my point of view and must be even more so from your viewpoint.

Italians are by nature courteous and kindly and I believe that none of us has experienced any discourtesy from official or unofficial circles. Almost no Italians will come to our houses and it is only occasionally that we can meet them at the houses of neutrals, but when we do so, their proverbial courtesy relieves the situation of any embarrassment. They are certainly a very lovable people who are subjected to the most infamous form of Government and who for the most part thoroughly appreciate, and with humility, their own inability

ability to change it.

I dare to hope that I shall be seeing you before
long!

Devotedly yours,

William Phillips



Y. J. Phillips

PSF: July Folder
Phillips
1-41

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, July 1, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

I hope you do not think that your interest in connection with Bishop Sheil has been forgotten. I have asked Tittmann to keep the matter alive at the Vatican whenever he had an opportunity, and he has done so. It seems that one of the chief difficulties is that it might establish a precedent upon which future Presidents could base requests of a similar nature, and thus a way might be opened for the Church to become involved in national politics, something which they say they wish to avoid "under any circumstances".

Although it may be that Bishop Sheil's nomination may be excluded, Tittmann, acting on an informal intimation from someone in the Vatican, worked out a formula to achieve the same end, namely, to have someone nominated Archbishop in Washington who would be sympathetic to you personally and to whom you could talk freely. The formula would be to have the Vatican raise the Mission in Washington to a separate and independent Archbishopric, which would be simply an ecclesiastical act, and then, without consult-

ing

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

ing you directly, to have a person known to "speak the same language as yourself" appointed Archbishop.

Entirely on his own responsibility, Tittmann broached this idea to the Pope at his first audience, which took place on May 5th. The Holy Father, who seemed extremely anxious to do something to comply with your wishes, was receptive and said that he would have the possibility looked into. Tittmann was pleased, therefore, when, in a private meeting he had with the Pope on June 19th, the Holy Father brought up the subject of his own accord and assured Tittmann that studies were well under way, although some little time would still be necessary because there were technical questions that had to be settled, such as the rearranging of the ecclesiastical provinces, etc.

I sincerely hope, therefore, that your wishes will be fulfilled, although perhaps not precisely in the manner which you desired.

Devotedly yours

William Phillips



file personal

PSF Phillips Folder 1-41

EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, July 8, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

I am highly appreciative of your letter of June 11th, which gives me clearly your thoughts in connection with our relations with Italy in the event of a severance of relations with Germany, and this is of great help to me.

While I have nothing of any striking importance to tell you today, I must say that I am becoming more and more convinced that Mussolini's day is past and that, given the opportunity, the country would not be averse to discarding him. This growing dissatisfaction with him is more in evidence in the north of Italy than in this region, although even in Rome one rarely hears a loyal word spoken in his behalf. To put it briefly, people everywhere, from top to bottom, seem to be fed up with him and appreciate the pitiable position into which he has forced the country. This dissatisfaction has not as yet, by any means, reached a head, and it may never do so, but there are unmistakable signs that it is increasing.

The latest gossip regarding the personal affairs of the Duce is that he has got tired of the Petrucci sisters,

The President,

both

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

both of whom have been his mistresses, and has now discovered a new star, in the form of a very young Italian girl. In saying goodbye to the sisters, he is said to have bestowed a villa upon one and a very handsome necklace, worth two million lire, on the other!

It is equally true that one never hears a good word for the King, who, in these troublesome times, continues to lead a quiet and secluded life at his country estate near Pisa. Occasionally he makes a visit to a war hospital in the vicinity, which is given brief mention in the inside pages of the Italian press. In my opinion, he is coming to be regarded more and more as a useless appendage of government, and by his inactivity and insignificance has become personally responsible for the loss of prestige to the throne and the House of Savoia. He had a brief come-back after his widely publicized tour of Albania, but since then he has practically disappeared from view.

Briefly, it seems to me that the Italian people have lost confidence in their Government and are reduced to a pitiable pass. It is easy to see how, under such conditions, the country as a whole is left wide open to German influence and penetration in any form or manner which the Germans desire to use. Certainly at present the only Ministry which
appears

appears to be functioning with any degree of efficiency is the Ministry of War, and notably that part of it which is given over to the secret police, - an appendage of Germany's Gestapo.

In spite of a great deal of ostentatious talk in the press about the great war against communism in which Italy is participating, the Italians show no enthusiasm whatsoever, but rather contentment that the Germans are doing all the heavy work. Actually only a small part of the first division destined for Russia, which was reviewed by Mussolini on June 26th, has yet departed. And likewise, the second division, reviewed on July 3rd, preparatory to departure, is still awaiting transportation.

I understand that the Germans do not expect either division to participate in the fighting but that they will be used to police conquered territories.

This morning comes the announcement of your message to Congress with regard to the landing of troops in Iceland. It is a great stimulant and tonic to us over here!

Devotedly yours,

William Phillips

file
personal
no answer

P3F Phillips Falden
(Study)

Rome, August 14, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

I do not feel that there is any marked change in the situation here since my last letter, but, on the other hand, I am satisfied that Mussolini's stock is continuing to fall throughout the country. A rather striking example of this occurred at the time of the death of his son Bruno, who was killed a week ago while testing a new type of airplane. The funeral services were widely dramatized in the Italian press, and for days we had accounts of the heroism of this young man. Very likely he deserved all that was said, but the interesting part to me is the lack of sympathy for the Duce on the part of the Italian public. I have had comments to this effect from so many sources that I must accept it as a fact, and that in spite of what appeared to be a press campaign to arouse sympathy, the reaction has been quite the contrary. In many quarters

The President,

the

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

the impression seems to be that, in view of the widespread losses in Italian families, it was not inopportune that the Duce himself should suffer some similar loss in his own family, in order that he might better realize the sufferings which had been inflicted upon the Italian people.

I think this is of interest in view of the fact that, generally speaking, the Italian people are a highly sympathetic race and that the death of Bruno Mussolini in the performance of his military duties might have been expected to bring to the father a fresh wave of national sympathy and support.

In Milanese circles in particular there is outspoken condemnation of the fascist regime. The view is held that the army and navy are united in their desire to get out from under German domination and that should the time come when there was a decided weakening in the German military power, the Italian military and naval forces might seize the opportunity to insist upon a return to Italy's former position of non-belligerency. It is felt that Mussolini's leadership in such a movement would not necessarily be of importance and that, given favorable conditions, it could be accomplished with or without him.

There

There is, of course, a good deal of wishful thinking in any such program, but that it is being widely discussed, especially in northern Italy, is perhaps worthy of note.

On the other hand, we must remember that the Italian military forces are widely scattered, probably even with German intention, - in North Africa, Ethiopia, Greece, Croatia, and along the Dalmatian coast. The fact, therefore, that a substantial part of the army is outside of Italy proper makes it all the more certain that the German army and air forces could dominate the internal situation of Italy at their will.

However anti-fascist may be the sentiment of northern Italy, I find the sentiment in other parts of Italy, especially among the farming classes, is becoming decidedly anti-regime, although perhaps for other reasons. Price fixing of summer crops is being held at such a low point, while the prices of other commodities necessary to the farmers are being allowed to soar, that the entire "contadini" class finds itself in a pitiable condition. They cannot sell their produce at prices which will enable them to buy the necessities for their families, and, as a result, they are beginning to refuse to send their stocks to markets. Already I have reports that in some instances they are destroying their stocks of wheat and vegetables rather than

sell

sell them at the ruinous prices which have been forced upon them. Even in Rome potatoes are almost unprocurable, and although on certain days they appear on the markets, the individual portion is pitifully limited.

One hears it said that the condition of the farmers is reaching a point when an explosion may be expected in the autumn or early winter, but what form that could take, it is very hard to visualize.

It is of importance, however, to realize that while the intellectuals, business men, and men of standing in northern Italy are discussing a possible change to non-belligerency, the farming class throughout Italy are in a state of indignation against the Government's domestic policy, which touches upon the very existence of their individual families. Both classes, therefore, are highly dissatisfied with the regime.

There is another aspect of the situation which is not without interest. I hear that the circulation of the Italian press has greatly diminished of late, inasmuch as the public has grasped the fact at last that the press contains little of truth and is being used by the Government to delude the people. A very real public opinion touching all classes of Italians seems to be growing rapidly, and although the points of view may differ, there is a decided unity of feeling that the course of the present Government, both in external and

internal

internal affairs, is a tragic failure.

In previous letters I have referred to Italian apathy, but now I am impressed by the growth of national discontent.

This afternoon I have been listening over the London broadcast to Atlee's momentous announcement of your meeting with Churchill on the high seas. Although we have been guessing that some such meeting was taking place, the fact and the joint program agreed upon, are of outstanding importance. How marvellously you have dramatized the event! I am, of course, eagerly awaiting the reaction of the Axis, and perhaps especially to point six. Naturally I shall keep you constantly in touch with everything we hear in this connection from Italian and other sources.

Devotedly yours,
William Phillips



EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, August 30, 1941.

Dear Mr. President,

This morning the press contains little else than an account of the Mussolini-Hitler meeting on the Russian front, and all the comment received so far emphasizes the contrast between your meeting with Churchill, held in a "well sheltered Atlantic bay under the vigilance of British-American squadrons", and the meeting of the dictators "held on the fields of battle and concerned with the program of international justice, in which the causes of war would be eliminated"!! As of possible interest, I am sending you enclosed the first page of this morning's "Messaggero" and invite your attention to the noble figure of the Duce. I need not dwell on the man's aspect, for the changes that are taking place in the man himself, physically and mentally, are self-revealing. Inasmuch as the meeting is the reply of the dictators to your meeting and your program, it occurs to me that this press exhibit will not be without interest.

I heard the other day another rather revealing report of Mussolini's condition. It appears that the Colonel in command of the air group of which Bruno Mussolini was a

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.

member,

file *FSF*
personal *Phillips* *Feld*



- 2 -

member, called by appointment on the Duce in order to offer an expression of his sympathy and that of his associates in the group upon the death of the son. As the Colonel entered the long office-hall in the Palazzo Venezia, the Duce was seated motionless with his head resting upon his hand. When he was about half-way across the hall, Mussolini looked up suddenly and, pointing his finger at the Colonel, shouted "I know what you are here for. I know what you all feel. I know what everyone is saying. You are all glad that I have had this loss. You can go!" The Colonel was not permitted to open his mouth and beat a hasty retreat.

In my last letter I also referred to the increasing dissatisfaction with the regime throughout Italy. Since then, we have some very interesting information with regard to the critical situation which has developed in Sicily, where the opposition to the regime had become so acute that radical steps had to be taken to offset it. Estimates differ, but the most conservative figure mentions 20,000 Sicilians who are to be moved to continental Italy and their places taken by Italians, probably from the north. They include police, prefects, teachers, health officers, communal authorities, railroad and port employees, etc., etc., and their families. It appears that, in addition, a large number of Sicilian laborers are to be shipped to Germany and occupied territories

at

at the request of the German Government, for employment in clearing snow from airfields and roads. There are many stories, which I cannot confirm, to explain this drastic move on the part of the regime. Among them is a well established report that the civilian population cheer the British planes, which are engaged in bombardment of Sicilian ports and airfields, and openly express the hope that the British will make a new offensive and next time take Tripoli and Sicily too. There is another report that a British submarine has been actively at work in the Straits of Messina, causing the loss of Axis transports, and that it has been kept supplied by the Sicilians at some unknown point on the nearby coast. But whatever may be the actual causes, it is clear that the regime has become seriously alarmed at the disaffection throughout the island and have taken steps to control it.

Everything we now hear points to an early resumption of activities in North Africa. For the last several weeks the Italians have been moving their forces back into Libya, while the Germans are believed to have been replacing their losses, which were largely caused by dysentery and blindness. And already I understand that the German air force, which was largely withdrawn in the early summer, is back again in
Sicily

Sicily to protect the convoys now on their way to Libya.

We hear vague reports of British plans to recapture Cirenaica, but the British will probably wait until the Germans and Italians are fully prepared to receive them. The British technique in the Mediterranean, and especially with regard to Italy, is hard to understand. That they should have given back Cirenaica to the Italians at the moment when the road to Tripoli was wide open, and before the Germans had arrived, will always remain a mystery to me. What a difference it would have made to the entire Mediterranean campaign if the British had been able to dominate this sea through possession of the North African coast up to and perhaps including Tunisia!

From this angle, one thing seems clear. Neither the Germans nor the Italians are going to do anything which might bring us into the war, and I hear that Hitler has issued orders to his submarine commanders that any one of them who sinks an American ship by mistake will suffer capital punishment. In Rome there are signs in Government circles that orders have gone out to be particularly courteous to the Embassy, for we all notice a more friendly atmosphere. Probably your defense program is the explanation! But it is equally true that the Italians are becoming more and more convinced

convinced that we are not going to enter the war against the Axis. They are learning through their own press that the war is to be a long one and probably for the first time they are beginning to have their doubts that Hitler will win the war.

I hope with all my heart that you are bearing up well under the terrific strain of the Presidency. The spring and early summer months, when the country seemed to lag dangerously, have fortunately passed, and even at this distance I begin to feel the impetus of our growing speed in production.

Devotedly yours,

William Phillips

I principi dell'ordine nuovo

La sola circostanza che il Duce e il Fuehrer si sono incontrati su un campo di battaglia, basta a definire l'incommensurabile differenza fra il convegno al fronte orientale e il così detto convegno atlantico. Mentre in alto mare i dittatori della plutocrazia anglosassone hanno studiato il modo migliore di portare aiuti al bolscevismo, al fronte orientale, fra i soldati, i condottieri dell'Asse hanno ribadito quei principi semplicissimi, per i quali l'Italia e la Germania hanno affrontato, subito, la nuova guerra, quei principi fondamentali sui quali si reggerà l'ordine di domani, l'ordine nuovo.

I dittatori delle plutocrazie si sono ispirati esclusivamente a un criterio di distruzione. Nell'ipotesi temeraria e inconcepibile di una prevalenza anglosassone e bolscevica, si dovrebbe sanzionare l'insuperabile e definitiva divisione dei vincitori e dei vinti. Ai primi tutti i privilegi e tutti i monopoli, ai secondi tutte le servitù. Le interpretazioni officiose degli otto punti hanno messo in chiara luce il pensiero di Roosevelt e di Churchill: i vinti saranno disarmati, ma il loro disarmo deve essere garantito e l'unico modo sicuro di garantirlo consiste nel controllare le loro industrie, mettendole nell'impossibilità di poter produrre delle armi. In altre parole, i paesi proletari, che sono poi quelli che contano una più alta natalità e dispongono di una maggiore capacità di lavoro, sarebbero condannati alla miseria e alla fame, a quel pauperismo, che dovrebbe, in breve volgere di anni, ridurre la loro popolazione, abbassare il loro livello di vita, ripristinare, forse, quelle correnti migratorie che sottraevano alle nazioni povere tante energie vitali nell'atto stesso in cui fornivano a basso prezzo una mano d'opera prestolostissima al capitalismo sfruttatore dei paesi privilegiati. Al fondo di questa concezione inumana c'è un sottinteso inconfessabile ma chiarissimo, che si compendia nella parziale distruzione dei popoli di alta natalità, che per la loro energia vitale costituiscono un pericolo, un motivo di preoccupazione per gli antichi padroni del mondo.

A questi disegni perversi il Duce e il Fuehrer hanno opposto il solo programma che può veramente assicurare una pace durevole ed una solidale collaborazione fra i popoli nell'interesse reale e permanente dell'umanità. Questo programma si riassume in una formula elementare e di immediata comprensione: nella eliminazione delle cause che portano alle guerre. Le cause delle guerre sono l'ingiustizia, l'inequità, distribuzione delle risorse mondiali, il controllo esclusivo e arbitrario delle grandi vie di comunicazione, la pretesa delle nazioni ricche di dominare e di asservire le altre. Queste sono le cause che bisogna eliminare e solo allora le ragioni di guerra saranno ridotte al minimo e risolte attraverso eque mediazioni.

La risposta alla così detta « carta atlantica » non poteva riuscire più tempestiva e perentoria: con la vittoria e con la giustizia l'Italia e la Germania elimineranno le cause che portano alle guerre, alle distruzioni di vite, di ricchezze e di beni di ogni genere. Esse non creeranno un mostruoso sistema di schiavitù, che non sarebbe pace, ma morte o rivoluzione.

Gli otto punti della dichiarazione Roosevelt-Churchill si riassumono, in sostanza, in uno solo: nell'abbassamento degli altri popoli, nel loro asservimento alle nazioni che detengono le materie prime e controllano le vie di comunicazione; mentre la dichiarazione scaturita dal convegno al fronte orientale si ispira alla volontà di elevare la vita di tutti i popoli attraverso una più equa distribuzione delle risorse della terra. Nessuno soffrirà mai di un ordinamento fondato sulla giustizia, che comporta necessariamente la solidale collaborazione di tutti gli

Stati su un piano di parità politica, economica, giuridica e morale. La differenza profonda fra le due enunciazioni basta di per sé a definire la moralità della causa che è affidata alle armi dell'Asse. Questo programma altamente umano esige la distruzione non di altri popoli, ma dello sfruttamento plutocratico delle masse umane. Ogni comunità deve avere la capacità di produrre, esportare, elevarsi col ritmo necessario al suo benessere e al suo livellamento sociale in condizioni equivalenti a quelle delle altre comunità. Ciascuna grande nazione organizzatrice deve poter di sporre di una sufficiente somma di fonti di rifornimento e di mercati per la produzione e il commercio, di un sufficiente possesso diretto delle più necessarie materie prime, di una adeguata attrezzatura agricola, industriale e finanziaria. Ogni comunità deve essere un tutto organico e vitale, capace di un alto tenore produttivo. Di qui la necessità indeclinabile, ribadita con « irremovibile volontà », di « continuare la guerra fino alla vittoria ».

Il comunicato sull'incontro

Il Duce e il Fuehrer si sono incontrati al Quartier Generale del Fuehrer fra il 25 e il 29 agosto.

Nei colloqui svoltisi il 25, il 26 e il 27 agosto al Quartier Generale del Fuehrer al fronte nord e al fronte sud, sono stati esaminati dettagliatamente tutti i problemi di carattere militare e politico che sono in relazione agli sviluppi e alla durata della guerra. L'esame di tali problemi è stato ispirato dallo stretto cameratismo e dalla comunità di destini che caratterizza i rapporti fra le due potenze dell'Asse.

I colloqui sono stati informati alla irremovibile volontà dei due popoli e del loro Condottieri di continuare la guerra fino alla vittoria.

Il nuovo ordine europeo che scaturirà da questa vittoria dovrà eliminare, nella maggior misura possibile, le cause che diedero, nel passato, origine alle guerre europee.

La soppressione della minaccia bolscevica da una parte e dello sfruttamento plutocratico dall'altra, permetterà una pacifica, armonica e feconda collaborazione nei campi della politica, dell'economia e della cultura fra tutti i popoli del continente europeo.

Nei corso di questa visita, il Duce e il Fuehrer si sono recati in località importanti del fronte orientale e in tale occasione è stata anche passata in rassegna una delle divisioni italiane impegnate nella lotta contro il bolscevismo. Al fronte meridionale il Duce e il Fuehrer sono stati salutati dal Maresciallo Von Rundstedt.

Hanno inoltre avuto luogo visite ai quartieri generali del Maresciallo del Reich Goering e del Comandante dell'Esercito.

Erano al seguito del Duce il Capo di Stato Maggiore Generale Italiano, Cavaliero con i generali Marras e Gandin ed un gruppo di alti ufficiali di Stato Maggiore, il Capo di Gabinetto Anfuso, in rappresentanza del Ministro degli Esteri Conte Ciano, attualmente indisposto e il R. Ambasciatore a Berlino, Alfieri.

Ad una serie di colloqui militari e politici svoltisi durante il soggiorno del Duce al Quartier Generale del Fuehrer hanno partecipato, da parte tedesca, il Capo del Comando Supremo delle Forze Armate, Maresciallo Keitel, con il generale Von Rintelen, il Ministro degli Esteri del Reich Von Ribbentrop e l'Ambasciatore del Reich a Roma Von Mackensen. (Stefani).

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EMBASSY OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Rome, September 16, 1941.

39 Philip Fisher
1-41
File
personal
confidential

Dear Mr. President,

Your historic broadcast of the eleventh came across with unusual clearness at four a.m. on the following morning and set me up to such an extent that sleep thereafter was utterly impossible. In my telegrams since then I have tried to give you and the Department some idea of the violent reaction of the Italian press. From time to time we have been able to obtain copies of the instructions given to the press by the Ministry concerned, which of course are not supposed to get into the hands of foreigners. These instructions reveal clearly that the violent attacks upon our defense program, and the really vicious attacks upon you personally, are being officially ordered, which is of interest because ^{we believe} the Germans are in control of Italy's propaganda offices.

While it is impossible to foresee any breaking apart of the Axis powers until Germany is clearly known to be going down under the stress of war, relations between Italians and Germans are steadily growing worse everywhere. In Greece this is particularly noticeable, where it is said that the hatred

The President,

The White House,

Washington, D.C.



- 2 -

hatred between Germans and Italians is even greater than that between Greeks and Germans or Greeks and Italians. For example, Germans will not sit with Italians in restaurants at the same table. It appears that the only authority permitted to the Italians by the Germans is that of policing the streets. An American just back from Athens tells me that the Germans rarely pay the slightest attention to the street police nor to the street light signals. He was eyewitness to an attempt of a Greek child to cross a thoroughfare against the signals. The Italian police pulled the child back and remonstrated with it, whereupon two German soldiers berated the Italian for interfering with the child and proceeded to beat him up, and this on a crowded street corner, evidently for the purpose of publicly showing their contempt for the Italian.

While, therefore, Italians are nominally in control of Greece by virtue of a gift from Hitler, actually the Germans are robbing the country at will and are paying not the slightest attention to the Italian authorities. Utter chaos in government and administration is the result, with the Germans, however, actual masters of the situation.

Here in Italy the tension between Germans and Italians is undoubtedly on the increase. No one is permitted to know how much food is being shipped to Germany, but everyone is

aware

aware that food is becoming scarcer, that food prices are continually rising, and that in certain districts people are very hungry. And yet, generally speaking, the crops this year have been good. In these circumstances the regime is probably wise in guarding the secret of the export of food, for otherwise public indignation might be greatly aroused.

Last week's decree forbidding the sale to anyone of gold, jewels and precious stones, has been put into effect to prevent an internal flight from the lira, as well as to prevent the Germans from buying up these stocks. Likewise decrees have been issued limiting the sale of clothing, shoes, leather goods, etc., to residents of Italy, and forbidding the sale of autos to foreigners, both issued to protect Italians from German greed.

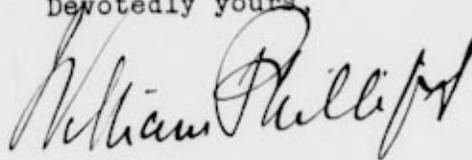
But the most pitiable part of the picture is the utter inaptitude of the Italians to get out from under German domination, in spite of their rising indignation. Some day of course a break will come but, in my opinion, it will be delayed until the Italian people are convinced that Germany is losing the war and that they therefore have nothing more to fear from German domination, - and then something is almost sure to happen.

It is the greatest pleasure to have the Myron Taylors staying with me, and as a result I am feeling far more

closely

closely in touch with you. Myron has already had two highly satisfactory talks with the Pope and is to have one more before his departure next Monday. There is no question in my mind but that it was wise to send him over, particularly at this time, in order to emphasize not only to the Pope but to the Vatican officials the role which the United States is playing in this gigantic struggle. And Myron has a way with him which takes exceedingly well in all Vatican circles.

Devotedly 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".

Pres

Confidential

PSF Phillips Folder

HSM

PLAIN

Rome

Dated December 11, 1941

Rec'd 8:51 a. m.

Secretary of State,
Washington.

TRIPLE PRIORITY

1940, Eleventh.

Count Ciano sent for me at 2:30 this afternoon, and immediately upon my being shown into his office, by the Chief of Ceremoniale, he rose from his desk and in all formality spoke a single sentence substantially as follows: "I have sent for you to tell you in the name of my King and in that of the Italian Government that as of today Italy considers itself at war with the United States."

HSM

[George] WADSWORTH