

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 22, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR
THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

F. D. R.

1957-1958
1957-1958
1957-1958

THE PRESIDENT TO READ

MEM

PSF; ⁴Wells Folder
1-41

copy

Memo in re
Forthcoming Conference at Rio de Janeiro

It is my belief that Spain's attitude in this War will greatly affect the situation in the Latin-American Republics. There is no doubt of a constant movement of Nazi agents to these countries and whose activities may be far reaching. Special play has and will be made upon the religion of the people of these Republics. The great mass are Roman Catholics who are opposed to communism. Efforts will be made to arouse anti-communistic attitude to react against us. The visits of Cardinal Dougherty to South America during the past two years, and the great receptions tendered him show the depth of their feeling when religious impulses are aroused. General Franco's faith will be used against us unless we take steps to off-set this influence.

It is most important, therefore, that some of the American delegates to Rio de Janeiro should be outstanding Roman Catholics particularly interested in the ideals of the President and this Administration.

M.F.D.

PSF; Welles Folder
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 22, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR SUMNER WELLES:

The Yugoslavian Minister handed me the enclosed December 20th. I have not the time to go through it carefully, but it relates to the horrors of the German occupation of Yugoslavia. He suggested that I make a public statement which could be broadcast from Boston, etc. (not by me personally, of course) strongly deprecating these atrocities.

I am wondering if it would not be better to have you and Donovan's office prepare six or eight broadcasts, each one covering a specific situation such as the Yugoslav, the Rumanian, the Greek and Albanian, the occupied France, the Belgium, the Dutch and the Norwegian. Instead of putting these in the first person, something like this could be stated:

"The President of the United States is deeply concerned by the reported situation in _____ and will always remember the terrible sufferings, murders, imprisonment, etc. which are being visited among the innocent men, women and children by the brutal German occupation. He will always remember what these countries are going through and the United States will use every effort to destroy the conqueror and restore self-government to these lands."

F.D.R.

Lengthy account of the sufferings of the Yugoslav people as reported in letter of Dec. 5th to the Pres. from Yugoslav Minister

PSF; Welles Folder
file 1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 22, 1941.

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

F. D. R.

Cable from Dr. Edward Benes, Pres. of the
Czechoslovak Republic, to the President
of the U.S. Dec. 20 in which he asserts
that he is proud that the Czechoslovak
Republic is on the side of the Allies.

PSF: Welles Folder
1-41

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 29, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

Please talk with the Secretary of State and with Lord Halifax in regard to raising the Netherlands to Embassy rank. I would favor it. I understand the British in the past were against it, but I think the British and ourselves ought now to do it simultaneously -- and as quickly as possible.

You might think over the question of raising the Norwegian Legation also to Embassy rank. I do not know whether they really would like this or not.

Let me know as soon as possible, as I want to talk it over with Mr. Churchill as soon as he gets back.

F. D. R.

PSF: Niles Folder

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 29, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE

I hope you can expedite the matter of the protection of Curacao. If you cannot get a definite answer by Tuesday night, please prepare telegram for me to send to Queen Wilhelmina.

F. D. R.

RS F:Wells Folder

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 29, 1941.

MEMORANDUM FOR

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
THE CHIEF OF STAFF

TO READ AND RETURN FOR
MY FILES.

F. D. R.

P.S. When you have finished with
it will you send it to General
Marshall?

Re Ganguer & military situation in Africa

PSF; Miller Files
1-41

S. W.

O.K.

F. D. R.

December 29, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

I took up with Lord Halifax this afternoon, in accordance with the request contained in your memorandum to me of today's date, the desirability of expediting a decision regarding our protection of Curacao and Aruba.

The Ambassador told me that he had just received a cable from his Government saying that discussions between the British and Dutch Governments were progressing rapidly and that the British Government hoped to be able to give us a favorable reply in the immediate future.

The Ambassador however stated that the British and Dutch Governments were strongly opposed to the inclusion by us, in the arrangements to be made, of a military commission appointed by the Venezuelan Government, similar to the commission appointed by the Brazilian Government when we took over the military protection of Surinam. I told the Ambassador that both because of the letter and the spirit of our existing inter-American agreements,

The President,

The White House.

and notably those reached in Habana in 1940, this Government would wish at least to go through the form of obtaining the cooperation of the other American Governments in matters of this kind. I said that no difficulty whatever had been created by the appointment of a Brazilian military mission in the case of Surinam and I couldn't see that any difficulty would be created if we showed the courtesy to Venezuela of asking that Government to cooperate with us in the same way in the case of Curacao and Aruba. Moreover, having taken this action -- which had been warmly welcomed in Brazil and had created a very favorable effect throughout the continent -- in the case of Surinam, it would be all the more resented by Venezuela if we refrained from taking similar action in her regard in the case of islands lying only a few miles off her shore.

Lord Halifax said he fully understood our position, but expressed to me the hope that we would take this issue up directly with the Dutch Government since he felt his own Foreign Office would only undertake the task in a half-hearted and unsatisfactory way.

I am consequently transmitting a suggested telegram for you to send directly to the Queen of the Netherlands.

-3-

If this telegram is satisfactory to you, I shall have it sent off to Biddle immediately.

Believe me

Faithfully yours,

SUMNER WELLES

Enc.

AMERICAN EMBASSY

LONDON.

TRIPLE PRIORITY.

FOR BIDDLE, NETHERLANDS SERIES NO. _____.

~~STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL.~~

Please transmit the following message from the President to Her Majesty the Queen of the Netherlands:

QUOTE At my request the British Government some ten days ago informed Your Majesty's Government of the willingness of the United States to assist in the defense of the Islands of Curacao and Aruba in order to make it possible for the British forces now guarding those Netherlands possessions to be withdrawn from service elsewhere and because of the fact that Your Majesty's forces overseas are now required to so large an extent for service in the Netherlands East Indies, which they are presently so gallantly defending.

As Your Majesty knows, the security of the Islands of Curacao and Aruba is of vital importance to all of us associated in the common struggle and it is in my judgment imperative that steps additional to those

already placed in effect should be taken immediately since the danger of some attack upon these islands is increasing daily. As Your Majesty has already been informed by the British Government, the basis of the arrangement proposed would be entirely similar to that agreed upon in the case of Surinam and the local administration of Curacao and Aruba would in no way be interfered with.

The British Government has informed me that negotiations between Your Majesty's Government and the British Government are proceeding rapidly and satisfactorily and I trust that I may be very promptly informed that an agreement has been reached.

In view of the urgency of the situation, however, I should like to request that even prior to the conclusion of the formal agreement contemplated, Your Majesty's Government authorize the sending of six American airplanes to Curacao at once in order to render additional protection against attack.

I likewise urgently request Your Majesty's Government to invite the Government of Venezuela, on terms and under conditions similar to those relating to this Brazilian

Government, to participate in the defense measures contemplated in Curacao and Aruba. Such an invitation would contemplate merely the sending by Venezuela of a military mission composed of three officers similar in every way, insofar as authority and personnel are concerned, to the military mission sent by Brazil to Surinam. In view of existing inter-American agreements, this Government believes it imperatively necessary that the Government of Venezuela be requested, at least nominally, in the manner proposed, to cooperate with the United States. Such a step on the part of your Majesty's Government would avoid resentment on the part of Venezuela, would forestall the allegation which would otherwise be made by German propagandists that the United States was occupying Curacao and Aruba with a view to taking possession of those Dutch colonies and would make it far easier for the United States to persuade the Government of Venezuela to take all measures necessary to prevent sabotage and filibustering expeditions from being organized within Venezuelan territory.

I shall greatly appreciate a prompt response from Your Majesty's Government with regard to these proposals

in view of my considered belief that the situation in the islands may be precarious unless these additional defense measures are immediately undertaken. UNQUOTE

For your personal and confidential information the British Government has informed this Government that both the British and Netherlands Governments are opposed to this nominal participation by the Government of Venezuela in the proposed defense measures. Please emphasize in any discussions you may have with the ^{Netherlands} Foreign Minister the belief of this Government that the participation, in the manner proposed, by Venezuela is imperative. Such participation would of course be purely nominal and would be merely a gesture, but it would be of incalculable importance in preventing misunderstandings and suspicions on the part of the other American Republics that the United States had imperialistic designs in undertaking the protection of these Dutch colonies.

The President is deeply concerned by the delay which has already taken place in clearing the proposed agreement with the Netherlands Government. Please do your utmost to expedite a satisfactory and final reply. Each day that passes makes the situation more dangerous.

U:SW:DMK

O. K.

F. D. R.

PSF; Welles Folder

file
Confidential

THE UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

December 30, 1941

My dear Mr. President:

The Minister of the Netherlands has sent me a memorandum regarding the situation at the Surabaya Naval Base which reads as follows:

"The following observations were made by the Governor General of the Netherlands Indies:

"The importance of Sourabaja as a Naval Base in the Far Eastern defense system comes more and more to the front in view of the following circumstances:

- 1) The strategic situation and the unfavorable change in the balance of power in the Pacific.
- 2) The fact that surface vessels and naval planes of the United States Asiatic Fleet are now based on Sourabaja.

It is therefore of the greatest importance and very urgent that Sourabaja be kept, that the approaches be improved, the equipment extended and the defenses strengthened.

"Work on the dredging of the western entrance continues unabated. At present the following results have been obtained.

"The

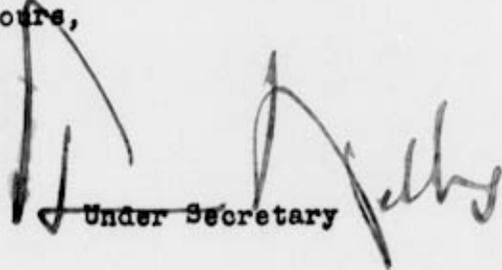
The President,
The White House.

"The Channel is now 100 meters wide and 8 meters deep at low water Spring tide and 10-1/2 meters at high water. Battleships of the Revenge type can already enter the port at high water tide. Work on a new port for battleships is continuing. Work on the Djamoeang Reef has made it possible to place there the 15 c.m. guns of the H.N.M.S. "Heemskerk", but heavy guns are not available.

"The fact that the United States Fleet is, and most likely in the future also the British Fleet will be, making use of our Sourabaja Naval Base, will undoubtedly be a very strong reason for our Allies to make the greatest effort to deliver to this Naval Base all the material it requires. Washington, D. C., 26 December 1941."

I have also sent copies of this memorandum to the Secretary of War and the Secretary of the Navy.

Faithfully yours,


Under Secretary