

A STRANGE ODYSSEY

The Sumner Welles Mission to Europe

by 452

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INTRODUCTION

Foreign offices use many means in the conduct of relations with other nations. They select and apply them according to the needs of the situation, and according to their traditions and predilections. The oldest and still significant instrument in the conduct of foreign relations is the special envoy; indeed, it appears that the importance of special agents is increasing in our time.

Some forms of government are more congenial than others to the use of special envoys. Venice's lead in the establishment of permanent missions is not surprising. She was the only republic among the major European states; decisions were not made by one man but by a small group of aristocrats. It took relatively long to reach an agreement on a specific order for an envoy while the general patterns of Venetian foreign policy remained the same. This is one of the reasons why a permanent representative acting along the general lines of Venetian policy rather than on specific orders was more suited to the Venetian system of government. An administration which is dominated by one man reacts faster, and can make use of the special envoy to represent the opinion of the head of government; the agent becomes his "alter ego," as President Woodrow Wilson once said about one of his envoys, Colonel House.

The American system of government is most susceptible to the use of special envoys in the conduct of foreign relations. The President has a strong and independent position, but constitutional restrictions limit his powers. The appointment of regular ambassadors requires "advice and consent" of the Senate which means delay and sometimes embarrassment for the President. Since the time when American diplomacy began to take shape, Presidents have circumvented that clause. George Washington set the precedent. When he became President, the United States had no regular representative in London since John Adams, the appointed minister, had left England after he had been treated with studied incivility. The British minister in the United States had also returned home. It was essential for the United States to maintain some means of communication with the British. In these circumstances George Washington appointed Gouverneur Morris in October 1789 as "private agent" and did not inform Congress until 1791. In dealing with the Barbary states, the title "consul" was conferred to an agent who received a regular commission and full powers to negotiate a treaty. Again the Senate was not asked for its "advice and consent" to the appointment of a constitutional officer with the power to initiate a treaty. Since then the number of special envoys has run into the thousands. Some were unimportant, others brought significant results; some missions were short-lived, others

stretched the "temporary" character. Myron C. Taylor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal representative, stayed seven years in Italy on his special mission to the Vatican. He was in full-time employment with a regular staff and rank and title of ambassador, but no nomination was sent to the Senate.¹

The habit of sending personal representatives as special envoys abroad has increased rapidly in the twentieth century. Presidents who exerted strong leadership in foreign affairs used this means frequently, for "among all the instruments available to the President in his conduct of foreign relations, none is more flexible than the use of personal representatives."² Since the appointment of special agents--like an executive agreement--is not restricted by Congress, it is often used "specifically to avoid the difficulties, complexities and embarrassments that are occasionally produced" by the procedure as defined in the Constitution;³ those appointments can be made even in "utter disregard of the Senate--and, if necessary, of the Secretary of State,"⁴ since for some Presidents special envoys were also a means to diminish the influence of their

¹Henry M. Wriston, The Special Envoy, Foreign Affairs 1960, XXXVIII, 219-237.

²Ibid., 219.

³Ibid., 222.

⁴Ernest W. Spaulding, Ambassadors Ordinary and Extraordinary (Washington, 1961), 6.

Secretaries of State. Woodrow Wilson and Franklin D. Roosevelt, in particular, disliked the Department of State and regular diplomatic procedure. Therefore, they made extensive use of the institution of the special envoy.

Since the officials of the State Department, not presidential representatives, are the officers charged with the conduct of foreign relations, problems between the two institutions were inevitable. The basic issue was the question of the powers and competence of the State Department and the President. The status of the President's special envoy, his responsibility, his relationship to the State Department and to the diplomats residing abroad had to be defined. The failure to do so led to frequent tensions between Presidents, their Secretaries of State, and career diplomats.

The mission of a special envoy is a delicate affair which poses many problems. The delegate has to have the ability to accomplish his aims and has to enjoy the President's confidence. The President's choice should also be acceptable to the State Department and American diplomats in the countries concerned. Furthermore, the envoy must be welcome to the government or governments to which he is sent. His aims and powers should be well defined and adjusted to the situation. They should be limited to avoid infringements on the rights and interests of other officers

of the administration. Possible favorable and unfavorable consequences should be considered and weighed against each other.

There is no general rule for the mission of special envoys, for conditions are different in every case; but some patterns are alike, some considerations and some consequences are similar. This thesis treats one of the missions under the Roosevelt administration, the journey of Sumner Welles to Europe in February 1940. At a critical juncture in the European war, President Roosevelt sent Under Secretary of State Welles as his personal representative to four European countries. The special envoy stayed nearly one month and talked with all leading statesmen in the countries he visited. This study tries to explain the situation which seemed to necessitate the mission, the origins of the idea, how the mission was planned and carried through. The author deals with the personal problems created by such a mission, the reaction of the State Department, its head and its diplomats, the consequences for the personal relations between the President, the Secretary of State, the Under Secretary of State, and some of the regular representatives. The thesis attempts to examine the ability of the special envoy, the rôle of his personality, his attitude towards his task, and his handling of the problems and issues connected with his mission; it tries to show what he could have achieved, what he tried to achieve,

and what he did achieve. The author makes use of the episode to elucidate certain of the problems connected with the use of personal envoys in American diplomacy. Furthermore, the mission offered an opportunity to examine many of the issues in international relations and problems America faced during the so-called "phony war" or "Sitzkrieg."

The study is organized according to issues rather than in chronological order since chronology was of minor importance to the author's intent. The stage is set with a description of the events in Washington. There follows a short presentation of the journey itself to establish the necessary chronology and to introduce dramatis personae. This part is succeeded by the treatment of the issues of this mission and the possibilities it offered; first there are those for which Welles could have striven. The author tries to prove that the envoy actually did not care for those goals, and he explains what might have been accomplished if Welles had tried to achieve some of those objects. A discussion of the special envoy's real aim follows. The study attempts to show his goal, the way in which he tried to reach success, the problems which faced him in his endeavors, and the chances he missed. A final chapter deals with the results of this mission.

CHAPTER I

THE ANNOUNCEMENT

"The hangman with his little bag came creeping through the gloom." Journalists murmured the distorted Oscar Wilde verse to each other as Lord Runciman stepped from the train in Prague's railroad station.¹ Chamberlain's emissary smilingly greeted the Sudeten-German delegation which had in perfect timing reached the station a few seconds before. The occasion was gloomy, indeed. Less than two months later Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Runciman's chief, emerged from his plane in Munich. A day later the Sudeten-Germans rejoiced. They would become a part of the Greater German Empire. Chamberlain returned to London waving the Munich agreement as he left the plane. "Peace in our time" was secured and Runciman's mission had helped to prepare it.

Eighteen months later reporters were reminded of the scene in Prague. President Franklin D. Roosevelt announced that an American emissary was going to shake hands with Hitler in Berlin. Would there be another "Peace in our time"?

¹John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Munich, Prologue to Tragedy, 2nd ed. (London, 1963), p. 79.

CHAPTER II

PLANS AND PLANNERS

President Roosevelt had frequently mentioned Welles's name in the announcement of the mission; when newspapermen began digging into their morgue files, they found Sumner Welles was no unknown quantity. It was not the first time that the Under Secretary of State had appeared in the lime-light.

At the time of his appointment Welles was 47 years old. He had spent his life at top schools and thereafter a sporadic career in diplomacy. Born in New York City, educated at Groton and Harvard, he had entered the foreign service under Woodrow Wilson in 1915. His career had taken Welles to Tokyo, Havana, and Buenos Aires. He proved to be able and ambitious. As a young diplomat he had realized that Latin America would become increasingly important for its northern neighbor, and offered opportunity for rapid advancement because the State Department had few specialists in that field. In 1920 he became Assistant Chief, in 1921 Chief of the Division for Latin American Affairs. In 1922 he resigned (supposedly because he incurred the wrath of a powerful Republican Senator by opposing the appointment of

a henchman of the Senator's to a responsible post in the Dominican Republic).¹

After his resignation, Welles received several government appointments as delegate to Pan-American conferences and as personal representative of the President to Latin American republics. On April 6, 1933, he was recalled from retirement and appointed Assistant Secretary of State. Three weeks later he left the State Department again and went as Ambassador to Havana. There he spent a busy seven months making himself unpopular. In a rather high-handed manner he interfered in the Cuban domestic turmoil, and instigated and supported revolution and counterrevolution. By the end of the year he had succeeded in replacing the popular and stable government of Dr. Ramón Grau San Martín with the unpopular Fulgencio Batista. The enraged populace hanged him in effigy.² The disregard for Cuban feelings and the way in which the American diplomat incited intrigues reminded Latin Americans painfully of the Panama affair and other activities by their northern neighbor in Central America. Welles's supercilious personal diplomacy had caused a serious setback for the new good-neighbor policy.

¹Julius W. Pratt, Cordell Hull. 2 vols. (New York, 1964), I, 18, S. F. Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, vols. XII and XIII.

²Erich Angermann, Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, dtv-Weltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts, v. 7 (München, 1966), 177f. Time, XXXV, No. 8 (Feb. 19, 1940), 15.

Welles returned to his post as Assistant Secretary. In May 1937 he was appointed Under Secretary of State. In the same year he came up with the idea of an international conference on Armistice Day, which could be stopped only by the combined efforts of Secretary of State Hull and Prime Minister Chamberlain. This event signified an increasing interest in world affairs, especially in European policy. Welles had had little experience with European nations. In the summer of 1939 he had spent a holiday overseas but had remained in Switzerland except for a short visit to London. His sphere of interest and competence was Latin America. The experts for Europe regarded his new concern as an intrusion into their field.

Summer Welles seemed to many the perfect diplomat. His mere appearance suggested his occupation. Tall, trim, "faultlessly groomed"--so the New York Times claimed¹--he was "a casting director's dream of a diplomat."² His intellectual abilities were exceptional, but he lacked human warmth and understanding, kindness and friendliness. His cool rigidity appalled many, though it was praised for his his appearance as a diplomat. Remarks of friends and acquaintances ranged from "unbending personality"--"at best

¹New York Times, Feb. 10, 1940, 2

²Time, XXXV, 8 (Feb. 15, 1940), 15.

the Wellesian demeanor is on the chilly side" to "glacially toplofty even when he is engaged in a fight."¹ A journalist remarked, "Welles wore white gloves as a child at play in the country, and the impressiveness of his mind is still somewhat obscured by his air of suspecting lurking contamination in his surroundings."² Though some people seem to believe the chillier a person is, the better diplomat he makes, this is not necessarily true in Welles's case. The German interpreter, who was present at all of Welles's conversations in Germany, was so impressed with Welles's disposition that he remarked afterward that even if Hitler had wanted to make a constructive proposal, he would have been discouraged by Welles's icy attitude.³ Welles's demeanor was not well suited to induce others to want to do him or his country favors.

Nevertheless, the President esteemed Welles highly as a seasoned diplomat, experienced in the kind of negotiations to be required during this mission. His greatest handicap was his lack of experience in European affairs. In reviewing

¹William Phillips, Ventures in Diplomacy (Boston, 1953), 186; Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, American White Paper; the Story of American Diplomacy and the Second World War (New York, 1940), 13; Harold Ickes, Secret Diary, 3 vols. (1953), III, 223.

²Alsop, 13.

³Paul Schmidt, Statist auf diplomatischer Buehne 1923-1945. Erlebnisse des Chefdolmetschers im Auswaertigen Amt mit den Staatsmaennern Europas (Frankfurt a/M, Bonn, 1961), 476.

the Welles mission an Italian diplomat indeed suspected that Welles had been ignorant of the real state of affairs, and ready to accept all the "commonplaces in the more unreliable press."¹ His inexperience was also an asset, for he had not exposed himself unduly by remarks or by a policy which seemed hostile to one or the other group of Americans or European governments. Only the Treaty of Versailles had enticed him into sharp criticism, and as a rejection of the treaty-establishment was common at the time, this attitude did not annoy the Allies but endeared him to the Germans. The German chargé d'affaires in Washington noted this as one reason for Welles's selection. The President could "count on a sympathetic reaction in Berlin, owing to his [Welles's] sharp attacks on the Versailles Treaty and its consequences for Germany."² Isolationists were enchanted by a speech Welles had given two years ago. He had rebuked those of his countrymen who wanted to interfere in the affairs of Europe. Though he was not considered isolationist or pro-Axis, he was welcome to the most difficult groups at home and abroad, and not disliked by others.

¹Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini (New York, 1956), 248f.

²Documents on German Foreign Policy, ser. D, vol. VIII (hereafter cited as DGFP, D, VIII), 603.

There might have been some doubt in the beginning about a proper choice for an envoy. Stephen Early, the President's secretary, said sending a businessman instead of a diplomat was considered. Joseph Alsop--who often had inside information from the White House--reported that the President talked with Bernard Baruch, and even thought of the geographer Isaiah Bowman, President of the Johns Hopkins University, who had been a member of the Inquiry and had been present at Versailles.¹ If Bowman were sent, this would indicate that a revision of boundaries was expected as a result of the mission. Observers would conclude that the President had a compromise peace in mind.

While the search for an envoy went on, Welles was absent from Washington, attempting to cure an attack of influenza. He returned from his vacation in the South on February 1, and after his return there was no doubt left who would go.²

Welles was the apparent choice.³ Although there were grave doubts about the mission itself, there was little about the emissary. Sumner Welles seemed to have the appearance, the ability, and as a high official in the administration, the gravity needed for such an undertaking.

¹Alsop, 85.

²Pratt, I, 339; Alsop, 84.

³Even Hull admits that if anybody should have gone, it should have been Welles.

* * *

Upon the announcement of the American plan, rumors swept through European capitals. "Well informed sources" offered a host of "stories behind the scene." For a few days the Welles mission had captured the headlines. Most newspapers claimed special knowledge of the President's thoughts, and they offered exact details of the administrative reasoning. Some knew of complete peace plans. Only a few restrained from reporting rumors in absence of any facts.

President Roosevelt's announcement came as a surprise. Nothing of the origins of the idea had penetrated to the American public or to the press. How was the idea really conceived? The story has remained obscure ever since because not even the closest participants agree. Welles offers a version which is contradicted by the recollections of his superior, Secretary of State Cordell Hull. Welles wrote that in early January 1940 the President called him to the White House and informed him of the trip which seemed to be planned already to the last detail. Welles did not recall any initiative by himself; he rather portrayed himself as loyally fulfilling the President's orders. Hull disputed this view. He claimed his subordinate went behind his back to the President on several occasions and pleaded with Roosevelt to be sent abroad on a special mission. A

third, official, version of the mission's origins was believed by nobody: It claimed that the President, his Secretary of State, and the Under Secretary developed the idea of a mission to Europe jointly and in harmony.¹

The accounts of the Secretary and of the Under Secretary were both written when their relations had developed to hostility. On Hull's insistence Welles had been ousted from office in 1943 and replied by sharply criticizing the Secretary of State. Hull's already intense dislike increased. In their subsequently published reminiscences, both tried to justify their own actions while degrading the other's. In consequence, their versions are one-sided but not completely improbable. There is reason to assume that Hull's account reflects the truth, and that the idea of the mission was brought up by Welles. Sumner Welles, indeed, often took his bold schemes directly to the President, thus avoiding their rejection by Hull. This habit had caused close observers like Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes to guess that the proposal stemmed from Welles.² It was certainly like him to go directly to the President with a plan such as the European mission.

¹Sumner Welles, The Time for Decision (New York and London, 1944), 73. Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York, 1948), 737. The President's secretary, Stephen Early, in a White House press conference: London Times, February 15, 1940, 8.

²Ickes, III, 138.

Since the idea had originated between Welles and the President, Roosevelt was the only other person who knew the real author of the proposal; but the President refused to take an unequivocal stand. While Welles was in Europe, the President remarked to Breckenridge Long, Assistant Secretary of State, "that the idea of Welles' trip had come to him as an impulse."¹ He hardly could have said anything else without disavowing the Under Secretary. Hull relates how the President had told him that the idea originated with Welles and that "he was sharply critical of the fact that Welles had not consulted with me [Hull] before making the suggestion."² If that were so, why did the President not inform Hull immediately of the proposal? Why was the Secretary of State kept in the dark? Why was he informed only after the decision had been made? Hull's story seems to be exaggerated. One can try to infer President Roosevelt's real attitude from earlier actions, and the position he had taken at the time of the origin of the idea. Such a consideration cannot determine with certainty who was the author of the proposal, but one can try to find out if there is any probability that the idea stemmed from the President rather than Welles.

¹Fred L. Israel, ed., The War Diary of Breckinridge Long (Lincoln, Nebr., 1966), 64.

²Hull, 737, 1230.

President Roosevelt was willing to take a hand in shaping Europe's fate. In 1933, after two months in office, he had sent to the governments of the world a plea for a universal non-aggression pact. At the height of the Munich crisis he dispatched notes to leading European statesmen urging them to preserve peace. He even contemplated arbitration, despite Hull's opposition to the plan. In April 1939, in strong messages to the European dictators, the President had demanded guarantees for smaller nations against aggression, and in August a last verbal effort followed. But idealistic requests and polite letters did not impress Hitler, who thought of regiments and divisions not ethics.

The outbreak of the war placed the United States in an awkward position. Americans did not want to be drawn in; but too much was at stake to leave the Europeans completely to themselves. One solution would be an American-instigated peace. Roosevelt never lost interest in peace and in personal involvement with the shape of the post-war world. Peace-making, however, presented equally difficult problems. The United States wanted to be a partner at the conference table without getting involved in the deal. Since the European peace would shape the future of the world, Americans wished their interests to be respected, but without having to share the responsibilities. Yet, the consideration of American wishes would necessitate American

participation in the negotiations and make an involvement in European affairs probable. This thought had stirred controversies in the administration. Some had wanted to talk peace at almost any risk; others, such as Hull, had advised restraint. The President and Welles were inclined to a more daring policy. Among the population, advocates of peace had become bolder in their demands and deeds. Throughout the winter the President and the Department of State had been besieged by individual pacifists and peace societies who urged action before the war would become more violent. Certain of these people proffered splendid, foolproof schemes, in most of which their own appointment as secret agents between governments played an important role. Businessmen, such as Thomas C. Watson of International Business Machines and James D. Mooney of the General Motors Corporation, began to show up at the Reichskanzlei to have lunch with Hitler or to talk with his underlings. Axel Wenner-Gren, Swedish industrialist, inventor, and philanthropist, made the journey from Goering's hunting lodge to Washington frequently. These men returned from their meetings enthusiastic peace advocates. They were convinced of Germany's desire for peace.¹ Outside pressure also mounted. Goering, second to Hitler in the Nazi

¹DGFP, D, VIII, fn. to 656.

hierarchy and known opponent of the war, reportedly tried several times to induce the President to mediate.¹ Neutrals demanded that President Roosevelt do something. King Leopold of Belgium hinted to Ambassador Joseph E. Davies that he hoped President Roosevelt would renew his efforts for peace. A similar request came from the Finnish Foreign Minister.² The President did not reject these appeals and listened himself to many self-styled mediators.

On December 23, 1939, the President undertook a personal intervention. The churches had remained among the few effective international organizations working for peace. Roosevelt selected representatives of the main denominations³ and sent them identical messages in a first effort to explore the grounds for a constructive post-war settlement and to mobilize American and world opinion. These messages can be considered as the first step in an effort which culminated in the Welles mission.⁴ More important was the President's decision to appoint a personal representative to the Vatican. He wrote the Pope on December 23,

¹William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation (New York, 1964), 1st ed., 1952, 247f., 254, 345.

²Ibid., 255.

³These were George A. Buttrick, President of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, Pope Pius XII, and Cyrus Adler, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary in America.

⁴cf. Basil Rauch, Roosevelt from Munich to Pearl Harbor. A Study in the Creation of Foreign Policy (New York, 1950), 176.

1939, to explain that this decision was undertaken "in order that our parallel endeavors for peace . . . may be assisted."¹ Before the envoy to the Vatican, Myron C. Taylor, left for Italy, the President told him that he had been considering the bases on which peace should rest. He asked Taylor to take soundings on the possibility of an early termination of the war.²

Peace was on President Roosevelt's mind in early 1940, and he apparently was in the mood to intervene in the European war. A close observer has commented: "The role of peacemaker was certainly congenial to Roosevelt."³ In connection with the Taylor mission he had expressed his hope that peace might be restored by spring. He began to take other practical measures. Under a general order from the President, Hull was busily creating a special State Department Committee to study questions of peace terms and post-war reconstruction.⁴ Adolf A. Berle, Assistant Secretary of State, believed "that the President's mind was still working towards trying to summon a general peace conference

¹Letter printed in Documents on American Foreign Relations, 1939-1940, 367-369.

²Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946. Arnold Toynbee, ed., The Initial Triumph of the Axis (London, 1958), 454.

³Langer and Gleason, 255.

⁴cf. 28f.

before the beginning of the spring drives."¹ On January 9, 1940, Roosevelt announced he had formulated general peace objectives which he regarded as essential to any just and lasting peace. He had confided these to leaders of American Protestant churches under a pledge of secrecy.²

Some action, the President knew, had to be taken soon, or it would be too late. Once the great battle in the west began, any chance for a negotiated peace would be lost. If the President wanted to undertake a peace move, the possibility for success had to be explored immediately. The idea of sending a special envoy to Europe surely did not seem strange to the President. He had a habit of relying upon personal diplomacy--much to the displeasure of his Secretary of State. Myron C. Taylor's mission was the latest of many instances. The thought of sending Welles to Europe could have sprung from President Roosevelt's mind. Thus, the idea was, in some form, on the minds of both Roosevelt and Welles, and it might have originated from either side. It does not matter who said the decisive first word.

Hull was not the only one who was annoyed by the Welles-Roosevelt plan. Neither Congress nor State Department officials had been informed. The President feared for the

¹Ibid., 350.

²New York Times, January 10, 1940, 1.

secrecy of the enterprise.¹ But the concerned diplomats felt left out and thought they had lost the trust of the President. Both, the Ambassador to St. James, Joseph Kennedy, and the Ambassador to France, William C. Bullitt, were in Washington in February. They were resentful because they had not been consulted and also because the Welles mission necessarily appeared a criticism of their efforts. Since the President announced that Welles was going for the sake of information, one had to conclude that the regular diplomatic representatives had failed to inform the President to his satisfaction. Their rage caused Kennedy and Bullitt to speak out bluntly, and in a few days the newspapers were filled with reports about dissent in the State Department.

The situation in the State Department soon was an open secret. Shortly after the announcement of the mission the chief of the Washington bureau of the Chicago Tribune wrote the story of the Hull-Welles dissension. Reports appeared in newspapers all over the country. They asserted that Welles had suggested the mission to the President who approved almost offhandedly, glad to be able to do something for his friend. Most State Department officials appeared to

¹This concern for secrecy was characteristic for the President's planning. Before the Atlantic Conference, for example, not even the participants were informed of the proceedings until shortly before the meeting.

be skeptical of the mission. These stories soon reached such dimensions that the President or Hull had to publish an official denial. Hull reluctantly issued a statement to the press in which he spoke of his agreement with the President, and he even attributed to the Under Secretary's personal abilities some acclaim. But in all the praise for Welles he does not even in this statement deny expressly any disagreements between the Under Secretary and himself. To all insiders it was apparent that he resented making such a statement. He himself remarks dryly "to quiet such rumors I issued a statement," His heart was not in his words.¹

Kennedy protested vehemently to the President.² Bullitt openly expressed criticism of this way of superseding regularly accredited diplomatic representatives.³ He was a seasoned diplomat and an old friend of Roosevelt. Therefore he saw his role not simply as that of a normal ambassador;

¹Hull, 738f.; New York Times, Feb. 15, 4; London Times, Feb. 15, 8; Pratt, I, 341; U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (hereafter cited as F.R.), 1940, I, 8; Chicago Tribune, Feb. 14, 1940, 1; Alsop, 4; Richard J. Whalen, The Founding Father, the Story of Joseph P. Kennedy (New York, 1964), 286; Harold J. Ickes, The Secret Diaries of Harold J. Ickes, 3 vols. (New York, 1954), III, 138.

²Whalen, 287.

³Ickes, III, 138.

he liked to consider himself as a special adviser to the President. Postmaster General James Farley had gotten the impression that "Bullitt was closer than anyone in the diplomatic service to the President."¹ Fellow diplomats observed that Bullitt regarded himself as the President's principal counselor on European affairs.² Welles was supposed to have his sphere of influence in Latin America. When Roosevelt sent Welles to Europe without informing Bullitt, the Ambassador concluded that Welles had violated an agreed division of functions. He had already left France when the embassy was informed of the Welles mission. Chargé d'affaires Robert Murphy was "greatly disturbed" when he heard the news. The immediate subordinate of Bullitt knew his chief and his notions well, and feared the Ambassador's reaction.³ Indeed, from then on a bitterness developed between Bullitt and Welles which did much to impair the functioning of the State Department. The hostility hurt both. Welles was aware of Bullitt's anger and believed the rumors of dissension in the State Department "had all emanated from the vitriolic tongue of Bill Bullitt."⁴

¹James Farley, Jim Farley's Story; the Roosevelt Years (New York, 1948), 194.

²Robert D. Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors (Garden City, N.Y., 1964), 35.

³Ibid.

⁴Israel, Long Diary, 58. It seems that the former Ambassador did much to bring about the final ousting of

Welles's failure to inform the Secretary of State had by far the severest effect. The relations between the two top officials of the Department of State had never been cordial. Welles was Roosevelt's protégé. Hull had accepted him reluctantly and only because he was the President's choice. After his election Roosevelt had recalled his old friend from retirement and offered him a job as Assistant Secretary of State. When Under Secretary William Phillips insisted in 1936 on being sent to Rome as Ambassador after Breckinridge Long had resigned the embassy, a long delay arose in filling his post. Assistant Secretaries Sumner Welles and R. Walton Moore had engaged in bitter contention for the appointment. Moore was an old friend and protégé of Hull. He had already served several times as Acting Secretary of State and was Hull's choice for the opening. After six months a compromise terminated the deadlock. Moore agreed to Sumner Welles's appointment as Under Secretary of State. For Moore the rank of Counselor--equal in salary and rank, but not in actual power and responsibility--was revived. Phillips thought that this arrangement was "a serious disappointment" to Secretary of State Hull.¹

Welles. Welles even regarded William Bullitt as the originator of the rumors about Welles's homosexuality which caused his dismissal. Bullitt at least seems to have helped to spread them. Israel, Long Diary, 58, 324; Murphy, 35.

¹Phillips, 185f. Graham H. Stuart, The Department of State (New York, 1949), 328.

When Hull had become Secretary of State he had established a number of innovations in departmental administration. He authorized the Under and Assistant Secretaries to see the President in his stead. He hoped to delegate some of his own duties and to accredit more prestige and practice to his subordinates while encouraging them in their work. Usually the visits were of a technical nature and on close instructions by the Secretary. At first this system worked well. But, as Hull later complained, Welles increasingly "abused his trust" by going over his head to see the President without instructions from him and "undertaking in one way or another virtually to act as Secretary of State."¹ Roosevelt was not innocent of this development. Rather, he encouraged Welles in one way or another.²

Welles's disloyalty would not have been so serious if he and the Secretary had not differed so much in their policies and their character. Their disagreements forced Welles to turn with his schemes directly to the President. He could not find a sympathetic hearing from his superior. But Hull was the more aggravated since the result of Welles's conferences with the President was frequently contrary to his policies.

Hull was cautious, scrupulous in exploring all the ground, and slow to come to conclusions. He was critical of

¹Hull, 202.

²Pratt, Hull, I, 19.

any proposal for which he was to assume responsibility--even the President's--and did not lack the courage to oppose a suggestion. The Secretary of State was not incapable of reaching a decision, though he often needed a long time to make up his mind. Imagination and creativity were not his strong points. His origin in rural Tennessee and his career in Congress had influenced him deeply. As a former Senator and one of the major links of the Roosevelt administration to Congress, he was aware of the mood in Washington and minded congressional trends and ways. Welles, in contrast, had been born into a wealthy urban family, educated at top schools in the East. Diplomacy was his entire career and natural calling. He had a quick and perceptive mind and was given to daring ideas--"possibly a little on the too daring side."¹ Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long, who was an intimate of Hull, accused Welles of doing blindly whatever the President said without thorough consideration and in disregard of possible dangers.² Welles later complained that Hull "wanted to rely on the linger-and-wait policy of a domestic politician, with the result that instead of shaping events he had permitted events to shape him."³

¹Israel, Long Diary, 210.

²Ibid.

³Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York, 1951), June 13, 1946.

Welles desired to shape events, even at the risk of creating a dangerous situation.

The divergence in character led to friction. Welles felt impeded by Hull's caution. He was frustrated by the lack of appreciation and the rejection of his plans. Hull saw in Welles the restless, evil spirit of the Department who replaced the friendly atmosphere of cooperation among his collaborators with the spirit of competition and suspicion of each other. The Secretary of State saw in Welles's actions an attempt to seize upon his own job and responsibilities, and he feared the division of the Department in a "Hull faction" and a "Welles faction."

Hull was not the man to counteract Welles's endeavors vigorously, but neither was he willing to surrender his position. As a former southern officer and leader of a Tennessee company of infantry in the Spanish-American war, he had much feeling of personal honor and pride, and felt offended by Welles's actions. Though he was jealous of his prerogatives as the President's chief adviser on foreign policy, he could not prevent his being pushed more and more into the background. As the situation in Europe and the Far East grew more menacing, the President started to devote more of his time to foreign policy. Gradually he became his own Secretary of State surrounded by a circle of undifferentiated advisers who were close to his person and policies. The subchiefs in the State Department felt that

the decisions were made in the White House. They came to consider themselves as Hull's equals and began reporting directly to the President.¹ Other departments began to play a role in shaping foreign policy, especially the Treasury under Henry Morgenthau, and Harold Ickes' Interior Department.

If the President seemed to prefer to deal with Welles and others rather than with Hull, Robert E. Sherwood blamed Hull himself for this development. Hull was extremely jealous of his reputation as one officer of the administration who had not committed any conspicuous blunder.

However, in times of desperate emergency when drastic, daring action had to be taken quickly, Roosevelt was bound to become impatient with anyone whose primary concern was the maintenance of a personal record of "no runs-no hits-no errors." To an ever greater extent Roosevelt bypassed Hull to deal directly with Sumner Welles, or to assign what should have been State Department functions to the Treasury Department, the War₂ Department, or to any other agency or individual.

This may be unfair, but undoubtedly Hull was a cautious Secretary of State who was easily deterred by the prospect of impediments and dangers. The President called for Welles's advice partly because of Hull's caution and lack of imagination--he offered no daring and bold schemes which could impress somebody like President Roosevelt--and partly

¹Ickes, III, 216f.

²Sherwood, 135.

because he usually gathered all the advice he could, and formed his own opinion afterward. As he became increasingly interested in foreign affairs he consulted more opinions and asked for more counsel. Hull, formerly nearly the sole presidential adviser on foreign policy, found himself as one of many. Now the President himself made the decisions where Hull had been free to act on his own during the early years of the Administration. Since his advice proved not as congenial to the President as other people's, it was not sought and accepted as often as would have seemed natural in his position. Sherwood, indeed, holds that the President "placed greater dependence on Welles's judgment."¹ Hull's task was reduced to that of an administrative head of the State Department while the shaping of foreign policy and the action in foreign affairs were decided upon elsewhere.

An indication of the shift in the conduct of foreign relations was the President's practice of sending special envoys abroad as his personal representatives. Their number increased rapidly. The State Department felt cut out, and its diplomats in the concerned countries felt offended.² Hull resented these initiatives and frequently expressed his displeasure but without effect.

Hull's scorn centered more and more upon Sumner Welles for the Under Secretary was partially responsible for the

¹Ibid.

²Hull, 200.

declining influence of his own department. In his efforts Welles used what Hull lacked, good personal relations to the President. Hull's subordinate and his superior were connected by a long-time friendship. Welles had grown up in the same city as the President who was eleven years older. They were born into the same social milieu and had attended the same preparatory school and college, Groton and Harvard. They had come socially into contact early in their lives. Welles had been one of the pages at Roosevelt's wedding. When Roosevelt became President, he recalled his friend who had lived some years in retirement. Welles soon became a close adviser of the President and a frequent guest of social events at the White House. He began a meteoric rise. Hull never became a member of Roosevelt's inner circle. Their relationship remained formal. The Secretary of State detested social events. The President looked upon Hull as a political asset and as an able administrator; he regarded Welles as a personal friend. Welles was one of the few "professional" diplomats whom the President admired and trusted.

President Roosevelt's close association with Welles was "unquestionably the most lasting and most deplorable element in the distant relations between the White House and its next-door neighbor to the west," Robert E. Sherwood

later observed.¹ Phillips, Welles's predecessor as Under Secretary remarked:

At any rate the relations between the Secretary and his new Under-Secretary were strained from the start, which demoralized the internal administration of the department. The friction was undoubtedly augmented because of Welles' personal relations with the President, which permitted him direct access at all times to the White House, a privilege which he often used without first consulting the Secretary. Unfortunately it was typical of Roosevelt to let such matters slide until they developed into really serious situations. The Hull-Welles feud adversely affected our foreign relations for several years.²

Hull himself complained to James Farley: "I don't see the President very often. Most of the details of the department are handled through Sumner Welles."³

These developments had been in the making before Welles was sent to Europe and continued afterwards. Before 1940 probably not even those concerned had recognized to where this trend would lead, though it was already apparent that there existed a strain in the relations between the Secretary and the Under Secretary. In February of that year the alienation became evident. The Welles mission marks the point where for the first time a major decision had been made without consulting the Secretary, and where a major diplomatic action had been undertaken against the outspoken

¹Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York, 1948), 135.

²Phillips, 186.

³Farley, 341.

will of Cordell Hull. For the first time, also, he decided to hand in his resignation. Welles's trip to Europe marks a milestone in Hull's career. From this time on Hull lost increasingly control over foreign policy. This was not a sudden revolution but had been long in the offing and developed further after Welles's return. The Welles mission is its first manifestation and high point.

The choice of Welles for a mission to which Hull was opposed was unfortunate. By 1940 antagonism between the two top officials in the State Department had already too far developed. They had already quarreled on earlier occasions. The first major clash came in 1937. Welles proposed an international conference; Hull was opposed-- "almost hysterically," as Welles later said,¹ Hull had his way. A year later it was Welles's turn. During the Czech crisis Bullitt and Welles urged the President to make a personal appeal to the heads of the European states which were most deeply concerned. Hull was not outrightly opposed but he could not see how any good would come of such action. The appeal was sent, but Hull had the satisfaction that not much good came of it.

Then came the Welles mission.² Hull realized how delicate his position had become. He saw that either he would

¹Welles, Time, 66. cf. 28.

²Ickes sees the Welles mission in direct relationship to the Hull-Welles feud: Hull had been more active lately. Welles feared he would be obscured. He proposed his

have to submit quietly to Welles's increasing independence in dealing with Department affairs, or that he would have to pick up the gauntlet. He decided to accept the challenge, but acted half-heartedly. He restricted himself to verbal complaints and did not compel the President to make a choice by pushing his resignation.

* * *

Welles's mission was not the first such effort. Some precedents were recent and still fresh in the minds of many, Americans and Europeans, Axis and Allies. Friends and foes of Welles's enterprise used precedents to support their arguments. Welles and those who took part in planning the mission minded these examples and tried to avoid their errors.

European mission to break his isolation and move again towards the center of the stage (Ickes, III, 138). Basil Rauch connects Welles's appointment as Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations and the Welles mission with his feud with Hull. Hull appointed Welles as Chairman subsequently to the President's decision to send him on the European mission. Rauch characterized Welles's appointment as chairman as an attempt by Hull to "stake down" in the State Department the Under Secretary's activities. Since Welles thus was already a specialist for the post-war settlement, it would seem more logical that he would be sent on the mission. Besides being illogical, this thought does not take into account that Welles had been temporary chairman of that Committee since it was founded long before the Welles mission was considered.

The Allies liked to think back to Colonel House's visits, but his memory was bitter to the Germans. Woodrow Wilson's intimate had approached the President in Fall 1914 with a proposal to bring about peace through his acquaintance with Arthur Zimmermann, who was then German Under Secretary of Foreign Affairs. Wilson not only had approved of these private negotiations by House but had helped to conceal them from Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan. There were other similarities. As in 1940, none of the belligerents appreciated the idea of an American mediation at the moment. Sir Edward Grey, the British Secretary of Foreign Affairs, had done what he could to dissuade House. But House remained obstinate. Grey's fears proved groundless. He was relieved when he discovered that House's sympathies were fully on the side of the Allies. The Foreign Secretary had been afraid that the Triple Entente would have to agree on war aims--that would have badly affected their unity--or that the level of demands would alienate the American public. House did not push peace. The British even succeeded in persuading him to remain in England until the first German defeats would have occurred. After two weeks in London he finally left for Berlin where he stayed for fully three days. He did not even bother to go to Vienna. Returning to Allied territory, he stayed another three weeks in London after spending a week in Paris. The result of six weeks under Allied and three days under

German influence was that Germans could not consider American mediation impartial any longer. Colonel House's diary proved German suspicions right. In Paris he had promised that in case of an Allied victory the United States would not intervene, but in case they were losing ground they could count on the Americans--a statement hardly suited to bring anybody to the conference table--and in London he promised Grey that President Wilson would insist on a peace favorable to the Allies. No wonder that Welles hastened to remind the Axis and isolationist groups that he had divergent aims. He took care to point to the differences between his trip and House's. His mission was made public; he was a high official in the administration; he had no known biases. Furthermore his mission was announced as being only for the sake of "gathering information."

The crisis over the Sudetenland had resulted in another awkward parallel, the Runciman mission. Like Welles, Lord Runciman traveled as a private citizen, though as one apparently with the backing of his government. Chamberlain had planned to send him as an arbitrator, but French pressure had caused a change of mind. He appointed Runciman "mediator and adviser," and instructed him to get Great Britain out of a dilemma which was similar to that of the United States in 1940. Czechoslovakia was threatened with engulfment by Hitler. Britain considered her as a friendly nation, and she was France's ally in the cordons sanitaires. Both had an

honorable obligation towards her, since the Czech state had been an Allied creation of Versailles. The former Allies felt obliged to save her, but wanted to avoid an armed confrontation with Germany. Runciman saved British honor. His recommendations for a just settlement went further than Hitler's demands. The British could drop the Czechs with easy conscience, since Runciman's mission had established that German demands were justified. Welles later was to call it "absurd" for it "disclosed an incomprehensible lack of realism in the British government."¹ Was the Welles mission two years later based on a more realistic attitude? Welles was to advise in 1944 that the only realistic policy of the Runciman mission would have been a threat to use force against force. Was that what he had in mind in 1940? Or would his report look like Runciman's, which in its outright grant of German demands "at least . . . had the merit of simplicity"?²

* * *

Welles was a firm believer in multinational agreements. He had already once shown what he considered the solution to the problems of the world. After the failure of the Brussels

¹Welles, Time, 36.

²Winston S. Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston, 1948), 300.

conference, and after Hull had sounded out Congress and found that a repeal of the neutrality law was not possible, Welles had come up with a plan which was kept secret until he made it public in his book in 1944. He proposed the President should call a meeting in the White House of the diplomatic representatives of all nations on Armistice Day, November 11, 1937. To this audience Roosevelt would deliver a message calling for international cooperation and disarmament. Roosevelt could be won over but Hull was opposed. The Secretary insisted Chamberlain be consulted, confident the English leader would join him in opposition. As a result, the proposal was dropped.

Welles's faith in an international conference was not shared by other advisers in the State Department. After the Polish campaign American-inspired peace in Europe was again the topic of a long meeting of senior members of the State Department on October 8, 1939. After a thorough discussion they reached the conclusion that the time and occasion were not propitious for any move on the part of the United States. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle noted in his diary: "The consensus of the meeting was that while peace ought to be made, now was not the time. . . . For the moment we must wait, but the time might come and might come very soon."¹

¹Langer and Gleason, 255.

The United States wanted to be prepared in case peace came. President Roosevelt requested Hull at the end of December 1939 to create a special State Department Committee to study questions of peace terms and post-war reconstruction. This committee, which carried the non-committal name "Committee on Problems of Foreign Relations" concerned itself mainly with post-war problems. On January 15, a few weeks after its formation, an economic subcommittee had already completed outlines for an economic settlement. Welles presented these to the President. The plan was to form a basis for negotiations with the neutral powers. Subsequent discussions profoundly modified the scheme.¹

The political questions posed more problems, and solutions did not come easily to the committee. Its members could not reach any agreement on American foreign policy. President Roosevelt also reconsidered the situation but he did not present any conclusive solution. On January 9, 1940, the President announced that he had formulated general peace objectives which he said he regarded as essential. He admitted himself that these were "peace ideals," not practical proposals. The President refused to be more specific, probably because Woodrow Wilson's ghost was

¹The speed with which this plan was drawn up is not surprising if one considers that economic cooperation on a global scale had been one of the main aims of Hull's foreign policy since 1933.

haunting him. He did not want to create another Fourteen Points.¹

At the same time the President announced that the United States would undertake no peace campaign in the near future. In light of Welles's later story that the President approached him with the plan of the mission in early January, this statement is surprising. Either the President was less than frank, or the Welles mission was not planned in connection with the establishment of peace, or Welles was not supposed to leave soon. The latter seems most probable since Welles went on a vacation, and Hull did not yet know of the plans. The idea of a European mission at that time seems to have been vague and not of great concern. But during Welles's vacation it apparently took shape in the Under Secretary's or in the President's mind. Upon his return on February 1, Welles became furiously active preparing his trip. Welles himself claims that the President requested him to undertake the mission without delay.² Hull and the cabinet were informed during the first days of February. On February 9, the President made the plan known to the public.³ Those who had been opposed to a multi-national approach and American involvement had to give in

¹New York Times, January 10, 1940, p. 1.

²Welles, Time, 74.

³Welles, Time, 73; Hull, 737; New York Times, Feb. 15, p. 4.

to the fait accompli. Welles's and the President's prediction for an international solution had carried the day by a surprise attack.

Since it was now decided that Welles would undertake the mission in the immediate future, a conception of his aims had to be worked out. The planning up to that point had been for the most part based on the assumption of cooperation with the neutrals. The key question was whether the United States should form a neutral front for peace, or whether it should proceed alone. Cooperation with other neutrals would give a peace campaign more momentum but the United States might be embarrassed by discussions about such topics as the British blockade, or she might even get involved deeply in an international enterprise in which the United States, as the most powerful neutral, would have to bear the burden of the decision of others. The solution was to limit the scope of neutral action to a consideration of common policies in the post-war settlement. The exclusion of war-time problems banned the danger of being forced to anti-British measures, or hostilities with the Axis through some commitment to a common neutral front. The Welles mission offered an opportunity to show American interest in peace and her concern for the position of the neutral states without having to engage in unwanted discussions with other neutrals. Those who planned the mission did not have to mind other neutrals' special interests.

Little is known of the discussion and preparations for the mission. The planners were under immense pressure of time. Welles had to reach Europe before broad-scale fighting began. A spring offensive was expected daily and surely would come as soon as the weather permitted. Preparations were hurried along.

There was a series of conferences between the President, Hull, Welles, and Ambassadors Kennedy and Bullitt. Kennedy had returned to Washington on February 12, just before final decisions were taken. On February 16, Welles had a last conference with Hull,¹ and just before departing he had a final chat with Kennedy.² The discussions were restricted to this small group of insiders. Perhaps that was fortunate. To reach agreement among those five was difficult enough. They never revealed the substance or the result of their conversations, but they could not have discussed much during those two weeks. Since three of them were opposed to the concept of the mission itself, not many concrete positive plans could be expected. Judging from later events, especially the public announcements and Welles's own reports of his conversations with foreign

¹The Secretary admitted afterward that there had been no occasion to take up details. If they had no time to take up details at this late occasion, they probably never reached any decisions about them.

²Newsweek, XV (February 19, 1940), 16.

statesmen, it seems safe to assume that Hull and the Ambassadors used the occasion to limit the scope of Welles's mission. Hull himself attributes such a development to his influence.¹ The result was that Welles's order told him what not to do rather than what to do. The gathering of information was the only goal upon which they could agree. Welles was explicitly forbidden to make any proposals or to enter into any commitments. When the President informed the Cabinet shortly before the public announcement, he explained that the Under Secretary "would go without any specific instructions."² Publicly, the President, Hull, and Welles also repeated several times that Welles would not present any proposals and was not authorized to make any commitments in the name of the United States. The visit was solely for the purpose of information. American diplomats overseas were told that Welles was sent only to advise the President and the Secretary of State "as to present conditions in Europe."³ This pronounced aim was noncommittal and obviously intended to fend off criticism. The important questions remained unanswered: information in what respect and for what purpose?

¹Hull, 738.

²Ickes, III, 138.

³F.R., 1940, I, 4. The same formula was used in the announcement of the mission.

* * *

The next step was the diplomatic preparation of the mission. Foreign governments were hastily informed a week after Welles's return on February 8; the next day President Roosevelt announced Welles's visit before the concerned governments even had a chance to voice opinions. The President played on the certainty of world-wide public indignation if some government should refuse to welcome the American representative. The European states did not appreciate this blackmailing arrangement, but they recognized the inevitable.

The Soviet Union was neither included in Welles's itinerary, nor was she among the neutrals with whom Hull had gotten into contact. The United States apparently assumed that if there were to be a settlement, it should be--like Munich--without the Soviet Union. Welles later explained that the President had felt that the agreement of the previous August between Germany and Russia made a visit to Moscow useless.¹ It might have been profitable to visit the Soviet Union. Besides Italy, Russia was the only major European power which remained neutral in the Western European war. Most of Germany's foreign supplies, which were indispensable for her war effort, were either furnished

¹Welles, Time, 73f.; Sherwood, 137.

by the Russians or transported through Russian territory. As one glance in Mein Kampf could have shown, Hitler was susceptible to the dangers of a war on two fronts. The Soviet Union was not a formal military ally of Germany, and the non-aggression pact of August 1939 had shown how fast she could change her policy if advantageous. In contrast to Italy Russia went her own way. Obvious snubs, such as ignoring her, could only help push the Soviet Union closer to Germany at a time when France and England could use every ally. The only practical reasons preventing Welles from going to Russia were American public opinion and the possible inconveniences of a journey to Moscow in winter. The Kremlin sounded a sour note. The Red Star presented Welles as a warmonger who was being sent by the "American plutocracy" to speed up the consumption of war materials and thus increase Wall Street's profits. Trud, published by the trade unions, regarded the mission as a preparatory step for the entry of the United States into the World War. Trud saw the difference to the House mission in Welles's aim: he wanted to prolong the war. Stella Rossa, the organ of the War Commissariat, emphasized the capitalistic aspect of the mission. Welles, the paper claimed, came to find out what compensations the United States could extricate for the support given to the Allies. The aim of the United States in extending the war was to replace Great Britain and France in their overseas

possessions and influence. American imperialism wanted to see the war continued "to the last drop of English, French, and German blood."¹

Other governments busied themselves attempting to induce Welles to talk with them. The Polish government in exile and Anthony Drexel Biddle, the U.S. Ambassador still accredited to it, tried to convince Welles of the necessity of conversations. The Vatican made it clear that a visit to the Pope would be welcome. Even exiled Ukrainians sent Welles a demand for an independent state in the new Europe.²

The only government to be consulted before the mission was undertaken was Great Britain. This action in itself was hardly frank to the other countries. If it had become prematurely known, Welles might have been considered partial by the other nations. Chamberlain was strongly opposed to the idea of Welles's trip. In a long letter to the President he explained that such a mission would only raise false hopes. The Prime Minister was not convinced that the President's regular representatives could not provide all

¹The Italian Ambassador in Moscow wrote a long report on the Russian reaction in which he treated many Russian newspapers: DDI, IX, 3, 404. See also: W. H. Shepards and W. O. Scroggs, The United States in World Affairs, 1940; published for the Council on Foreign Relations (New York, London, 1941), 13; New York Times, Feb. 18, 40; Feb. 25, 25; Feb. 29, 5.

²New York Times, Feb. 18, 40; Feb. 21, 2; Feb. 29, 1; F.R., 1940, I, 9.

the needed information. At the end of his letter Chamberlain comes to the heart of the matter: "I must frankly admit a good deal of anxiety lest the effect of this move however carefully presented should be to cause embarrassment to the democracies from which Germany . . . will reap advantage."¹ Chamberlain feared for unity among the Allies and that public opinion inside the various countries would be ill affected by discussions about the problems of peace or war and about the aims of the present struggle. On the other hand, he did not want to annoy the President to whom this scheme seemed so important. He agreed in principle, but made a final attempt to reduce the importance of the trip by demanding Welles attempt to mediate the Russo-Finnish Winter War also. Thus attention would be diverted to the Eastern war. Chamberlain requested peace should not be mentioned in the public announcements. He did not want to have anything to do with the procedure of the affair itself. Apparently he wanted to avoid being drawn into the enterprise. He doubted that the undertaking was necessary and tried to convince the President that rumors of an imminent German offensive were a propaganda trick by Berlin. He urged President Roosevelt to think the matter over. Peace would not be any more difficult to secure later. In another message he explained that he was specifically worried

¹F.R., 1940, I, 1-4.

lest the Welles mission ruin the Allies' current plans for operations in Scandinavia.¹ The British leader was given no chance to discuss the matter further. On February 8 the other governments were informed, and the next day the mission was announced by the President. Chamberlain could do nothing but to state to the House of Commons that His Majesty's Government were ready to welcome Mr. Welles and to take him fully into their confidence (Cheers).²

The ambassadors of the other nations were informed by Welles personally. He rushed from embassy to embassy, and insisted that the ambassadors should be briefed in person. The French Ambassador, Count René de Saint-Quentin, was ill. That did not keep Welles away.³ The German chargé d'affaires, Hans Thomsen, was not at home. Welles had Thomsen's valet call his master, and asked that he immediately return. Welles then described to Thomsen the purpose of his mission.⁴ He insisted on these home calls for reasons of security. The haste and secrecy made the mission appear dramatic and important.

¹Langer and Gleason, 362. The Allies considered at that time a military intervention in Scandinavia. They wanted to cut off iron ore transports, which went from the Swedish fields around Kiruna to the German Ruhr. They also hoped to be able to aid Finland in the Winter War.

²London Times, February 14, 1940, 8.

³Alsop, 86.

⁴Dr. Hans Thomsen to the author, September 21, 1967.

All the governments expressed willingness to receive Welles. Count Galeazzo Ciano, Foreign Minister of Italy, replied as soon as he was informed that the Italian government would be glad to furnish Welles with the information he would require. He asked for further details of the stay in Rome--which could not be given as there were none--and offered to entertain Welles during the Italian visit. He wanted to know what might please the American envoy. Welles coldly replied that owing to the nature of his mission as well as because of present conditions in Europe he would prefer not to accept any entertainments while in Europe. He asked only that he be received by Ciano and Mussolini immediately after his arrival in Rome.¹

Welles asked assurances from the German chargé d'affaires before his departure that Hitler and Ribbentrop would receive him in person. No answer came. The Germans were at a complete loss what to do. From this came one of those rare occasions when Hitler asked Mussolini's advice. On February 10, Michele Lanza, third Secretary of the Italian Embassy in Berlin, noted in his diary that the German Foreign Office had wanted to know what the Italians would do with Welles. On February 14, the American chargé d'affaires in Germany, Alexander Kirk, reported that the Wilhelmstrasse still did not know how to treat Welles. On

¹F.R., 1940, I, 5, 7, 8.

February 15, the Italians informed the German Foreign Office that Mussolini would receive Welles. The Foreign Office was relieved and notified the Italians that in this case Hitler would also welcome the Under Secretary. The same day the State Department was informed that the German Government would receive Welles, though it was not specified with whom he would get a chance to talk.¹ Alexander Kirk, the responsible American diplomat in Berlin, had no more information. He complained several times that he was left completely uninformed by the Germans as well as by the State Department. Hull did not even tell Kirk whether or not Welles would be received in Berlin.² The diplomatic preparation also lacked order and planning.³

France's answer came promptly. Charveriat, Director of Political Affairs of the Foreign Office, told Robert Murphy, the American chargé d'affaires in Paris, that the

¹F.R., 1940, I, 8f.; DGFP, D, VIII, No. 598. Leonardo Simoni (pseud. for Michele Lanza), Berlin, Ambassade d'Italie 1939-1943 (Paris, 1947), 83f.

²F.R., 1940, I, 8-10.

³Another account of the confusion in the diplomatic preparation of the Welles mission is given by George F. Kennan. Kennan was sent from Berlin to meet Welles in Naples. He was supposed to advise him on European, especially Soviet, affairs. Kennan recalls: "Mr. Welles seemed unaware of my presence and evinced no interest in my views on Russia. So little did I enter into the ken of the party that on leaving Rome for Berlin they forgot me entirely." (George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950, Boston, 1967, 116). This incident also reflects Welles's haughty attitude.

French Government had "extreme sympathy for Mr. Welles personally" but expressed "reserve as to the purpose of his visit."¹ The reaction was essentially the same everywhere. All governments were willing to receive Welles, all--except Berlin--expressed admiration for Welles personally, all promised full cooperation--again except Berlin--but all expressed their doubts as to the purpose of the mission. Apparently none was fond of the mission, but none dared to annoy the United States. All were nervous because nobody knew what Welles's function was.

As will be recalled, the State Department was hardly in any better shape. When Hull talked about the mission on February 9, he did not know how long Welles was going to stay in Europe, nor with whom he would have conversations. After a talk with the President on February 13, he hinted that a more extended round of visits might be made. Upon leaving New York, Welles still denied that he would visit the Pope. When he stated, "I am leaving the Rex at Naples and go directly to Rome. After that nothing is definite," he probably was right. On February 27, he still did not know if the Pope would receive him on his return to Rome. On March 4, when Welles was on his way to Paris, Hull claimed he was unable to say whether or not Welles would

¹F.R., 1940, I, 6.

talk with the Polish Government while he was in Paris.¹

The planning could not be continued while Welles was in Europe, though it seems that the President and Welles had agreed that the Under Secretary should send brief confidential reports of a general nature in a private code.² Security problems made it necessary that he should keep the details to himself. Upon his return he was to inform the President in an elaborate report.

On February 17, Welles left America on the Italian liner Rex.³ He had final talks with Breckinridge Long, Assistant Secretary of State and former Ambassador in Rome, and with Joseph P. Kennedy. He was accompanied by his wife, his personal valet,⁴ Pierrepont Moffat, Chief of the European Division in the State Department, and Lucius Johnson, a young diplomat whom he had chosen to be his secretary. Welles was not quite well when he left. He had some sort of influenza, which had caused his leave of absence in January. During the hectic weeks since, he had

¹New York Times, 1940, Feb. 10, p. 2; Feb. 18, p. 1; London Times, 1940, Feb. 15, p. 8; Feb. 28, p. 8.

²New York Times, Mar. 7, 1940, p. 7.

³The use of a foreign ship brought immediate protests by American shipping interests.

⁴His valet was, of course, a genuine Englishman and had to be left in Italy since the Germans might have considered him an enemy alien.

not recovered completely, and he was not to do so during the equally busy weeks in Europe.

CHAPTER III

THE JOURNEY

Sumner Welles arrived in Naples on February 25, 1940, and immediately proceeded to Rome to call on the Italian government. The Italians were well pleased with his arrival "if for no other reason than that for once Italy had been accorded priority over Germany in the itinerary of an influential foreign statesman."¹ He was greeted with elaborate floral decorations in Naples and Rome, and the Italian government extended to him all the courtesies for which he could have hoped. Welles soon made it clear that he had not traveled 4000 miles for a round of cocktail parties. Immediately after his arrival he engaged in interviews with politicians and foreign diplomats. During this first visit his Italian counterparts were restrained and cautious. Since Rome was Welles first stop-over, they did not know how his mission would develop and tried to avoid any exposure.

Mussolini's appearance "profoundly shocked" the Under Secretary. He found him looking fifteen years older than he

¹Langer and Gleason, 363.

actually was, and "laboring under some tremendous strain." Welles thought he knew the cause of this state of near exhaustion: the Duce's trouble was "physical unquestionably, for he has procured a new and young Italian mistress ten days ago."¹ Yet, the atmosphere was friendly; Welles was impressed with Mussolini and Ciano.² "Mussolini is a man of genius," he reported to President Roosevelt,³ and he supposedly told Morgenthau that Mussolini "was the greatest man that he had ever met."⁴ He left Italy apparently hopeful of some success. In Berlin, his next stop, he declared himself enthusiastic about his visit to Rome. His conversations there, he said, were the "best guarantee for the success of his mission."⁵ When he returned to Rome two weeks later, Welles found the situation noticeably relaxed. He was less restricted: the press was favorably disposed toward him; even Mussolini had changed--though he still had his mistress. He seemed to have thrown off some great weight, and was much more relaxed. Not the new mistress but

¹F.R., 1940, I, 28.

²See for example Welles's introduction to Ciano's Diaries.

³F.R., 1940, I, 113.

⁴Ickes, Secret Diaries, III, 464; similar praise: ibid., 216.

⁵Simoni, 92.

fearful uncertainties had caused the strain. Now the decisions had been made. Britain had finally proclaimed the coal blockade; more important, Ribbentrop had come to Rome to inform him about Germany's plans; and in a few hours Mussolini was to meet with the Fuehrer himself.¹

The fascist leaders were astonishingly frank. Ciano inveighed bluntly against his German colleague, Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop, and he did not hide his antagonism to Mussolini's pro-German policy.² But the Italians made it clear that hostility to Germany's plans did not mean favoring the Allies--though Ciano used the occasion to tell his visitor all the secret news from the meetings with Ribbentrop and Hitler. Most of this information was already known, but Ciano's indiscretions were perhaps more impressive since they were passed so openly to the second man in the State Department.

During this second visit to Rome, Welles found time and opportunity to call upon the two high non-fascist authorities in Rome--King Victor Emmanuel and the Pope. Both conversations were held in a friendly atmosphere, but revealed nothing of importance.

¹Cf. chapter on Italian Neutrality.

²Elizabeth Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, a History of the Relations between Hitler and Mussolini (New York, 1949), 202, holds that Ciano's difference with Mussolini's opinion can only be explained by his belief that Germany would be beaten, and that he then could persuade the Allies to accept him as the Duce's successor.

Welles left Italy on February 28, rested for a day in Zurich, and arrived on the morning of March 1 in Berlin. In Germany the American Under Secretary caught a cold.¹ This was, however, no indication of the atmosphere of his talks, though his impressions during the first few days were unfavorable. The more he saw of Germany, the more he was disgusted.² Relations between the United States and Germany certainly were icy enough for Welles to catch a cold. Hitler unwillingly had granted the interviews in Germany, and only because he saw no way to avoid an encounter. Roosevelt, who had dealt a blow to Germany in a speech just before Welles left, used the situation to offend Germany again. Welles carried a personal letter by the President to each of the other three heads of government, but not to Hitler. The snub was obvious, since Mussolini had proudly displayed his letter, and everyone expected that Hitler would receive a similar message.³

Welles was satisfied with his talks in Berlin, despite the strained relations. Apparently he did not get "the

¹Simoni, 93.

²In his report he meticulously picks out every little instance and incident to demonstrate his annoyance. He complained, for example, that his hotel did not put out an American flag, while it displayed the colors of "so-called" Slovakia, though the Protokoll-Abteilung in the Foreign Office pointed out that the Slovaks were on an official visit, while Welles's stay in Berlin was unofficial. Welles, Time, 91; New York Times, Mar. 2, 3; DDI, IX, 3, 417.

³Welles, Time, 85; Schmidt, 475.

impression that he landed in a lunatic asylum" as an American journalist had wishfully hoped.¹ The first impression he received was that a war was under way. As he drove from the station to his hotel the air-raid alarm sirens began to shriek. However, there was nothing to fear since it was only a test. Otherwise he was received with punctilious courtesy, and every mark of honor. He was accorded a chance to talk with everyone with whom he requested interviews. No foreign statesman before Welles had been given a more comprehensive glimpse of the Nazi leadership. This was the more amazing, because Hitler and the Foreign Office regarded him with distrust.

Hitler had prepared things carefully for the American visitor, and briefed not only those Germans who were to meet Welles but also his Italian allies. Germany's southern partners were asked to show unity in action with Germany, and to further German aims by convincing Welles that the United States had nothing to lose by a German victory; on the contrary, they could gain freedom of the seas. For the Germans Hitler personally wrote a memorandum. He must have attached great importance to Welles's visit, for only on the rarest of occasions did he write instructions in such a way. These guide lines were followed by all except Dr.

¹William L. Shirer, The Rise and the Fall of the Third Reich (New York, 1960), 686.

Hjalmar Schacht and State Secretary Ernst von Weizsaecker who informed Welles of their existence.¹ The result was that everyone made similar statements, sometimes word by word. It is reasonable to assert that the only one who enjoyed this procedure was Paul Schmidt, the interpreter. One of Hitler's orders was not kept by any of the Germans with whom Welles conversed. They violated Hitler's first rule--that Welles should be allowed to do the talking. Though they dominated the conversations, the Germans remained reserved and defensive, in accordance with Hitler's wishes.

The main point of Hitler's directive was that not Germany but the Allies had declared war. Germany had no other aim but peace. Since only the Allies had war aims, they had to be asked for those. Hitler claimed he could see no justifiable reason for the French and British declaration of war. But he knew what his enemies had in mind: the annihilation of Germany. Germany had no desire to destroy either Great Britain or France but it wanted security against the designs of the Allies. Their determination to destroy Germany itself had to be destroyed. Hitler even had prepared a tempting treat for the Americans: Nazi Germany was not opposed to a freer world economy. The autarchy policy,

¹Weizsaecker was loosely affiliated with the resistance. For conversation with Schacht see p. 117-119.

the Chancellor claimed, had been forced upon Germany but she wanted to participate again as "a sound partner" in a world of free economies. He advised his subordinates to avoid annoying specific questions like Poland and Czechoslovakia. Finally, Welles should be left with the impression that Germany was determined to win this war. This is in essence what Sumner Welles was told over and over again though in different forms. Rudolf Hess needed half an hour to play the record, Goering three.¹

One of these lectures might have been enough. Undoubtedly, Welles thought so. The first monologue was delivered by the Foreign Minister. Joachim von Ribbentrop sat at his desk, and talked with his eyes closed. Sumner Welles concluded that "he evidently envisioned himself as the Delphic oracle."² Germany's top diplomat surprised him with his rudeness. In contrast to Goering, who insisted on conversing in English though his English was far from perfect, the Foreign Minister spoke only German, though he knew English very well.³ Since the outbreak of the war Ribbentrop had refused to speak either French or

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 637; Schmidt, 475f.; Erich Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit. Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten Reiches; Versuch einer Darstellung (Stuttgart, 1948), 239. New York Times, Mar. 2, 3; Mar. 4, 14.

²F.R., 1940, I, 34.

³Welles could speak and understand German fluently but seems to have insisted on conversations in English.

English, probably as his personal contribution to Germany's war effort. Welles disliked Ribbentrop; he was struck by his "very stupid mind."

The next on Welles's list was Rudolf Hess. Welles considered Hitler's deputy "devoid of all but a very low order of intelligence" and "patently of abnormal mentality."¹ State Secretary Weizsaecker was a change in the routine. This "typical example of the German official of the old school" appeared to him "sincere . . . and with deep feeling." Weizsaecker indeed spoke so openly that he thought it wise to pull the chairs into the middle of the room and talk only in a whisper.²

Goering was the last of Welles's German counterparts. Welles found him looking exactly like his photographs: "his thighs and arms were tremendous, and his girth was monstrous," and offered enough space for various emblems, insignia, and a monocle dangling from his neck on a black cord. However, "his manner was simple, unaffected and

¹F.R., 1940, I, 34, 41, 50. Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Mar. 11), 23. New York Times, Mar. 10, 28.

²Welles, Time, 112; F.R., 1940, I, 42. Ernst von Weizsaecker, Erinnerungen (Muenchen, 1950), 277. Maxime Mourins, Les tentatives de Paix dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale 1939-1945 (Paris, 1949), 60, holds this to be a comedy played by Weizsaecker. Welles's story of this incident--published in 1944--might have had ill effects for Weizsaecker. He read Welles's book during the war and recalls being afraid some devoted Nazi might discover that passage.

exceedingly cordial, and he spoke with greater clarity and frankness than any other German official."¹ After the conversation Welles was treated to a tour of Goering's immense hunting castle, Karinhall. Welles recalls having never seen such an incredibly ugly building.²

Most important was, of course, the conversation with Hitler. The red carpet was out, and a SS-honor guard stood at attention as Welles entered the Chancellery. He was at once received by Hitler, whom he found "taller than I had judged from his photographs. . . . He looked in excellent physical condition, and in good training."³ Like many others before, Welles was enthralled by Hitler's charm. The Chancellor said nothing new, but he made it sound better and more promising. Terminating the interview, Hitler assured Welles: "I appreciate your sincerity and that of your government, and I am grateful for your mission. I can assure you that Germany's aim, whether it must come through war or otherwise, is a just peace."⁴ Welles left the Chancellery favorably impressed with the Fuehrer.⁵

¹Welles, Time, 113.

²F.R., 1940, I, 56.

³Ibid., 44.

⁴Ibid., 49.

⁵This was at least the impression some Germans received in their later conversations with Welles. Weizsaecker, 44; Hjalmar Schacht, Confessions of "the Old Wizard" (Boston, 1956), 366.

The Germans viewed Welles with continued bafflement. His purpose remained enigmatic. He appeared to be intelligent but not diplomatically versatile. Paul Schmidt, the interpreter in the Wilhelmstrasse, recalls that the American envoy sat through the talks like "a block of ice."¹

During his German visit, Sumner Welles felt, he had been "most courteously received," and he had found his talks very interesting. The Under Secretary had been most impressed by the German belief that the premier allied aim was the destruction of Germany. Sumner Welles left Berlin, he said to Italy's Ambassador Bernardo Attolico, "moderately but not unduly optimistic."²

Welles boarded his special salon-car in Berlin's Anhalter station on March 4, late at night, and returned to Switzerland where he rested for two days. In the morning of March 7, he arrived in the French capital. He found a grim Paris; at night only the major boulevards were lighted, and those dimly; the rest of the "city of light" remained dark. All places of amusement closed at 11 p.m. and the streets lay deserted thereafter. There was "a sensation of general waiting; of an expectation of some dire calamity. Among the innumerable persons with whom I talked, only in

¹Schmidt, 476.

²Simoni, 92; Roosevelt Papers, PSF State, Welles's Report, conversation with King George VI; Weizsaecker, 277; New York Times, March 2, 3.

the rarest instances . . . did I obtain the impression of hope or vigor, or even, tragically enough, of the will to courage."¹

In contrast with his experience in the dictatorships, he met a wide variety of people and opinions in Paris. First he visited Albert Lebrun, the President of the Republic. The President told Welles the story of his life but his memory was evidently failing. Immediately after his visit to the Elysée, Welles went to see Daladier. Their conversation covered a wide range of topics. Daladier was singularly frank in criticizing French foreign policy in the years that had just elapsed. Paul Reynaud impressed Welles most. He was then Minister of Finance but succeeded Daladier as Premier soon after Welles's visit. The Frenchman had invited the American to a lunch in his office in the Louvre, the former apartment of the Prince Imperial under Napoleon III. They discussed primarily economic and financial matters but talked also about political problems. Welles saw most of the important French politicians. Interestingly, most of the Frenchmen with whom he talked looked backwards rather than forward. They reviewed recent French history but did not mention France's future. Welles found the French statesmen patriotic and honest. Though sympathetic toward the French, Welles found them lamentably inept

¹Welles, Time, 121.

and unrealistic. "German propaganda," he concluded, had "fatally undermined French morale."¹ In Paris the American envoy also met the Polish government in exile. General Sikorski impressed him "as a man of character, of integrity, and of patriotism, but as being without any particular intellectual ability."² Contrary to his reception in Berlin social events were organized in his honor.³ The days in Paris proved to be enjoyable; but more important was Welles's visit to London. On March 10, he crossed the channel in an airplane. Of the three belligerent capitals, he found London affected least by the war. Nevertheless, Welles thought it completely changed. At nights the city was under total blackout. Most of the private houses had been closed, and the atmosphere reflected the war mood.

Welles met in the British capital a great number of people presenting different opinions. The Americans had a hectic time. Welles went from official luncheon parties to dinner parties in his honor, while his entourage paid visits to night clubs "where we drank beer and ate bacon sandwiches

¹Welles, Time, 133; Murphy, 36.

²F.R., 1940, I, 72.

³The only dark spot on his days in Paris was the aftermath of a visit he paid to Leon Blum, the premier of the front populaire. It is notable that almost three thousand letters--most of them in insulting terms--were received by the American Embassy condemning Sumner Welles for thus honoring a Jew by his visit. Welles, Time, 129f.; Murphy, 36.

with the Duke of Devonshire."¹ In spite of all these activities, Welles found occasion already on his second day in London to call on his personal tailor in Hanover Street to order half a dozen suits.² Outside his professional duty he also enjoyed meeting many of his old friends.

The social events presented Welles with a vast variety of opinions, as they enabled him to meet with a great number of people and listen to their view of Britain's problems. This would not have been possible if he had had merely private interviews as in Berlin. Often, however, the talk was non-political, though characteristic for the situation. At a dinner party, given by Chamberlain, the topic was how much sleep everyone of those present needed, and how he got it.³

Most important were, of course, the interviews with top government officials. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain did not fit Welles's picture of him. He gave the impression of physical strength. "The dominating features were a pair of large, very dark and piercing eyes, and a low and incisive voice." He had none of the "puzzled hen" effect

¹Nancy H. Hooker, ed., The Moffat Papers, Selections from the diplomatic correspondence of Jay Pierrepont Moffat 1919-1943 (Cambridge, Mass., 1956), 298.

²Welles, Time, 131f.; Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Mar. 15), 28.

³Hooker, Moffat Papers, 302f.

which Welles had expected.¹ Chamberlain seems to have been favorably impressed by his visitor for he showed him through the room where he kept the souvenirs of his father.² Chamberlain's Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, looked like his photographs. Welles was at once impressed with his "innate sincerity," his determination "to pursue the 'right'" and his "essential 'goodness,'" though he thought that "one can question the ability of his intellect."³

When Welles went to see Winston S. Churchill in the Admiralty, he found him "sitting in front of the fire, smoking a 24-inch cigar, and drinking a whiskey and soda. It was quite obvious that he had consumed a good many whiskeys before I arrived." After the preliminary courtesies Churchill commenced an address which lasted exactly one hour and fifty minutes, and during which Welles was never given the opportunity to say one word.⁴ Unfortunately for Welles, Churchill's speech was mainly a rehash of his just published book on recent history which Welles had already read.

Welles met not only those who were in power, but also old timers like Lloyd George, now 77 but little changed, "alert, mentally very keen, and minutely familiar with every detail of both British domestic affairs and British foreign

¹F.R., 1940, I, 74f.

²Ibid., 91.

³Ibid., 73.

⁴Roosevelt Papers, PSF State, Welles's report.

relations."¹ He was also visited by James Maxton, leader of the small group of independents in Parliament, "a sinister looking individual . . . with very long hair falling about his shoulders, and the eyes and the mouth of a fanatic."² Sumner Welles met most of the cabinet members, and nearly everyone who played some role in Great Britain. The only ones who were denied a chance to see him were the Nationalist members of the Northern Ireland Parliament. They showed some indignation--though they of course blamed the British--that Welles refused to discuss with them the most pressing problem of the time: the union of Northern Ireland with Eire.³

From England Welles flew back to Paris where he met Daladier and Reynaud once more. He returned to Rome shortly before the scheduled meeting between Hitler and Mussolini on the Brenner, and awaited Ciano's report on the proceedings in the Alpine railway station. Immediately afterward, on March 20, he boarded in Genoa an Italian liner headed for New York.

Throughout his trip he remained silent, with the result that journalists continued producing false news and rumors. Welles's mission proved to be a zenith of journalistic

¹F.R., 1940, I, 85.

²Roosevelt Papers, PSF State, Welles's report.

³New York Times, Mar. 14, 8.

imagination and inventiveness. Some were, however, content with watching for non-political events connected with the mission. French reporters used the occasion to invent a "Welles-cocktail." Chief ingredient: ice water. Others discovered that he traveled with at least fourteen different suits. It was observed that he could beat all previous records by making a complete change of clothing in 5 minutes 50 seconds.¹ Such abilities brought him the glory of being first runner-up in the 1940 race for the best-dressed man. Only King George VI surpassed him, and this because the King was ". . . the perfect example of how to wear British uniforms."²

¹Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Mar. 18), 22.

²Ibid., April 8, 6.

CHAPTER IV

LOST CHANCES

All of Welles's conversations in Europe were kept secret, and only little actually leaked out. Even statesmen had to speculate about Welles's talks in other countries, and they had to adjust their policy accordingly. Misinterpretations of Welles's real purpose led to confusion and had effects which Welles neither expected nor wanted. Spectators and diplomats asked if Welles's announced aim was his real aim or if he had other goals. Many tried to influence the American Under Secretary in order to further their own designs and to reap advantages from his visit. It was apparent that the situation in Europe and America offered many possibilities for a special envoy.

What were Welles's real ambitions, what chances did he pass by? For which results did he strive, and what were the actual effects of his mission? Which were planned and wanted, and which were consequences which the Under Secretary had neither foreseen nor desired? Welles's journey showed that the mission of a single and influential emissary has stronger effects than a diplomatic move through regular channels. A special envoy receives far more attention;

every action, every word weighs heavier and causes deeper apprehensions and hopes. Governments react nervously and hastily. What did the visited nations expect, and how did their expectations affect their policy? Speculation upon Welles's intents had sometimes important practical results.

Sumner Welles opened all his conversations with a stereotyped formula, saying that he had come solely for the purpose of information. The great number of people whose varying opinions Welles sought suggests that information was indeed one of the things for which he looked. Some thought that Welles really aimed at Hitler and Mussolini for American diplomats had not had access to the dictators for several years. Welles could provide first-hand reports on the concepts of the Italian and German heads of state. The President himself told Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long that the visits to Paris and London were "just window dressing."¹ But Roosevelt could not expect that Hitler or Mussolini would present Welles with a view which differed essentially from that given by their Foreign Ministers to the regular diplomats. This and the intensive talks in London and Paris show that gathering information in Rome and Berlin was not Welles's only aim.

There is an immense variety of opinion about Sumner Welles's undeclared aims or aim during his mission.

¹Israel, Long Diary, 64.

Diplomatic, military, political, and economic purposes are mentioned. In their yearly publication the Council on Foreign Affairs reached the conclusion that Welles's mission was just a clever way of snubbing Stalin for making war on Finland.¹ Herbert Feis, economic adviser to the State Department, believed that "Mr. Welles's mission initially had as a major purpose the forging of the neutral bloc."² Feis does not explain why Welles should visit for that purpose belligerent rather than neutral countries.

One of the recurring themes is the interpretation of the mission as an attempt to delay the imminent German offensive in the west.³ The two most concerned nations, the French and the Germans, thought immediately of this possibility, one hopefully, the other suspiciously. As with most other supposed aims it is difficult to establish what were Welles's actual intentions. He never talked about these ideas; but this does not mean that he did not consider them and had all of them in mind during his conversations.

An indication of an attempt to delay the German offensive might be his frequently mentioned hope for a peace move

¹U.S. in World Affairs, 12; rather a pompous way of showing Stalin one's dislike. There surely were less illustrious and more explicit means to reach that aim.

²Langer and Gleason, 365fn.

³President Roosevelt gave this as the second reason for the Welles mission to Breckinridge Long, Israel, Long Diary, 64.

in the near future. He expressed this expectation explicitly only in Germany and Italy, the countries which would decide about the offensive. However, he did not include those remarks in the report on his conversations. They are presented only in German and Italian memoranda.¹ As we do not have equivalent French or British sources, we cannot know if he said the same things there. These remarks, furthermore, are reported only by subordinates who had a special relationship to Welles: Hans Heinrich Dieckhoff, the last Ambassador in Washington, and Weizsaecker who had impressed Welles with his frankness. Weizsaecker was the only German who thought that the idea should be taken seriously and that the western offensive should be delayed.²

Hitler suspected at once that Welles had come to put him at a disadvantage by delaying German action. He frequently mentioned that Welles had crossed the Atlantic with that purpose in mind. Mussolini was informed about Welles's intent in Hitler's letter of March 8, for which Ribbentrop himself played the delivery boy. He wrote his friend, "I

¹For a discussion of the sources see Bibliographical Essay.

²Weizsaecker, 276.

³DGFP, D, VIII, 663, 664; Trial of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg (Nuremberg, 1947-1949) (quoted as IMT), XXVIII, 409, Jodl Diary; Ulrich von Hassell, The Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944 (Garden City, 1947), 121.

need not assure you, Duce, that quite apart from this, Germany's decisions are governed exclusively by military considerations and therefore cannot be affected in any way by influences of that kind."¹ The Fuehrer acted accordingly. German's preparations were not in the least affected. The diaries of Halder, Chief of Staff of the Army, and Alfred Jodl, Hitler's director of operations in the High Command of the Armed Forces (OKW), reveal no hesitancy about pressing forward with the attack schedule. There are only two instances which could be interpreted as an influence of the Welles mission on Germany's planning: on March 1, the day Ribbentrop had had his interview with Welles, Hitler gave the final order for "Weseruebung," the occupation of Norway and Denmark, and on March 2--Welles had been at the Chancellery--Jodl noted in his diary that Hitler had spoken "very pointedly" about the necessity for "greatest acceleration" in the North. It is possible that Hitler waited with these decisions until he knew what Welles brought; but by that time planning and weather forecasts had reached such a stage that the final decision for the attack had to be made, and the attack itself soon had to follow. The exact date for the opening of operations was not set until a few weeks later.

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 663.

It does not seem likely that these decisions have been influenced by Welles's journey. Welles could hardly have hoped so. If Hitler was bent on conquest, he would attack, peace offer or no peace offer. If he was willing to negotiate, Welles would have had to present some conclusive hope for success. He did not and could not. A delay of German action would have been useful only if through it the most opportune moment for an offensive could have been bypassed--the time after the spring rains and storms. But Welles rushed through Europe and arrived back in the United States before the best time for an attack had even come. If he had delay in mind, he had to offer Hitler evidence that it would be worthwhile to hold back his armies, and he ought to have stretched his mission over April and May. That he did not do so is an indication that delay was not his aim.

More probable was the idea that the Welles mission had nothing to do with Europe, that it was meant for home consumption. The American public was deeply concerned about the European war, and peace was the desire of the vast majority. A Gallup poll in early 1940 showed that, though a majority was opposed to American entanglement in Europe, 55 per cent believed that now was the time for an international conference (with American participation) to end the war.¹

¹New York Times, Mar. 10, 1940, 27.

Roosevelt was at the same time being pressed hard by interventionists and isolationists. One side claimed he meddled too much in European affairs, and thus was dragging the United States gradually into an undesired war; the other side claimed he did not do enough. The peace move, one may argue, was meant to quiet both. The interventionists would see that the President was willing to do something about the European war, and their opponents could be convinced that the President did not intend to make the United States a belligerent. The road would be free for a third term.¹

Isolationists remained unconvinced of the President's good intentions. Within twenty-four hours after the announcement Senator Hiram Johnson declared the United States should mind its own business instead of sending "a roving listening post" across the Atlantic. "President Wilson tried that, too," he said, "and without much success." Senator Bennett C. Clark of Missouri declared his dislike of "roving ambassadors," everyone of whom "has got us into trouble."²

¹One magazine writer had even figured out Roosevelt's plan. Welles, he calculated, would return from Europe long before the Democratic convention at Chicago. He would present the President with a peace plan of "disarming simplicity," the President would season it to his own gusto, and offer it to the country as a feasible proposal that needed perhaps six months cooking for a happy conclusion. After pulling off this culinary feat, a third term would be regarded as mandatory by more than half of the electorate. Living Age, CCCLVIII, March 1940, 4.

²Chicago Tribune, Feb. 10, 1940, 2.

Interventionists saw in the Welles mission a chance to further their ambitions for peace. Senator Key Pittman, chairman of the Senate committee on foreign relations, went a step further than the President. On March 10 he broadcast an appeal for a thirty days' armistice to allow mediation.

Europeans were not unaware of the domestic aspect of the Welles mission. Ambassador William Bullitt reported that French Premier Daladier thought that Welles's journey must be meant for the American public. Otherwise, Daladier said, the President would have to be completely ignorant of the European situation. Léon Blum believed that the Welles mission might be a prelude to Roosevelt's announcement of a third term candidacy. In their search for Welles's purpose the Germans gave American domestic politics top priority. Hans Thomsen, German chargé d'affaires in Washington, explained as early as February 8, when he announced Welles's mission to his government, that it would have to be viewed in conjunction with President Roosevelt's domestic plans, and his preparation for the Democratic Convention. Ribbentrop, Mussolini, and Hitler assured each other in their conversations on March 10 and March 18 that this might be the major reason for Welles's enigmatic visit. American diplomats in Europe explained it in the same way. Robert Murphy, at that time chargé d'affaires in Paris, wrote:

"The truth was that Roosevelt . . . probably was using foreign policy for domestic policy purposes on this occasion."¹

There is no direct evidence to prove that influencing the American electorate was the real aim of Welles's mission. There is none to disprove it either. Indeed, neglects and defaults in planning the mission and the lack of clear aims with regard to the European scene suggest that a success in foreign policy, be it peace mediation or some other achievement, was not planned and unwanted. One might think that all that was intended was a gesture for the American public to steer free of any criticism and open the way for a third term.

President Roosevelt was certainly aware of the demands of the domestic scene and minded the wishes of the electorate. It is possible that he sent Welles to Europe with an eye to the effect of the trip on the American voter. One should not, however, disclaim his sincere desire for peace. He may have hoped that Welles would produce more than an impression on the American electorate. The dubious mandate for Welles may be rather a default in planning than a planned default.

The belligerents cared more about possible effects of the Welles mission on their own position than on the American

¹U.S. in World Affairs, 1940, 11; Toynbee, Survey, 455; Ickes, III, 146; New York Times, Feb. 15, 1940, 4; DGFP, D, VIII, 398, 603, 665; Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., Ciano's Diplomatic Papers (London, 1948), 341f.; Weizsaecker, 276; Murphy, 38.

electorate. They were afraid that the enemy side might derive advantages from Welles's visit. Rumors flew that his mission was meant as an inconspicuous means to re-establish normal relations with Germany and exchange ambassadors again. This hope was shared by the German side. In their conversations with the American Ribbentrop and Hitler gave special emphasis to the unsatisfactory state of German-American relations. Unfortunately, Welles could not be moved to any commitment. Only on leaving Berlin did he say to Dieckhoff, who bade him farewell at the railroad station, that he hoped to see him soon, returned to his post in Washington. Any and all plans for an improvement in mutual relations were, of course, dashed by the German attack in the North.

Far more important (and probable) was Germany's fear and Britain's hope that Welles came to boost Allied morale, and to inaugurate closer cooperation between the Allies and the United States. Some hoped he would warn Germany to restrict her warfare. This he actually did--though vaguely--by recalling the precedent of 1916/1917 in his talks with Goering.¹ Another thought was that he came to head off a German peace move, but none was in the works anyway. Gallup polls had, however, indicated that 75 per cent favored

¹But that was not enough to impress the Germans in any way.

negotiations when asked if the Allies should meet with the Germans if Hitler offered peace.¹ American public opinion might be annoyed if the Allies refused once more to talk with the Nazis. The Welles mission could prove that peace negotiations with Germany were not desirable.

Many expected some direct encouragement for the Allies. Though British and French newspapers and statesmen emphasized the unity within and between their countries, the truth was quite different. The Allied peoples were badly divided. Bullitt and Kennedy reported that the French and British were low in spirit and yearned for an early peace. Both Ambassadors were convinced that the chances of the Allies in the forthcoming campaign were not good.² Military preparations were lagging. Bullitt demanded all possible American support for the sake of the Allies. He himself did what he could to encourage his French hosts. James Farley wrote sarcastically: "Ambassador Bullitt was busy holding the hands of Daladier, Reynaud, Paul-Boncour, Blum, and the rest of it."³

Allies and Axis powers realized that encouragement for Britain and France might be a possible result of Welles's mission. Whereas the Axis did not take it too seriously,

¹New York Times, March 10, 1940, 27.

²Langer and Gleason, 345.

³Farley, 194.

the Allies tried to make the best of it.¹ Obvious is the frequency of the term "inquiry" in Allied speeches and papers, especially in the London Times. Apparently the Allies wanted Welles to show the world how evil their opponents and how much better they were. It seemed clear what the result would be. Shortly after the announcement the London Times noted: "The Allies welcome the proposed inquiry. They are fighting against the evils which the American people . . . equally abhor."² If the Americans finally came to realize that Germany was a common enemy, if they could be made to recognize what their responsibilities were in this war, the results of Welles's mission would be beneficial for the Allies. Even more important than the expected increase in material support would be the immediate spiritual effect. The allied peoples would be assured that they had a big brother over the ocean--the difference in allied morale in early and late 1917 showed the effects of such knowledge. Welles would only have to brand the Third Reich as aggressor and common enemy unwilling to come to a reasonable compromise. Chamberlain wrote the President after he was consulted about the mission: "We have hitherto felt the best method of handling this difficulty is to state the conditions which . . . are . . . are such as Hitler would find it

¹Villari, 249; Weizsaecker, 276.

²London Times, Feb. 12, 1940, 6.

impossible to accept. I infer that this is not far from the President's thought."¹ The Prime Minister apparently hoped to increase British prestige through American diplomacy. But the President did not want to repeat the errors of the First World War. He had said "no Colonel House business," and Welles kept to it. Nobody was condemned publicly, no promises were made, no statement issued to boost allied morale. Such unneutral acts would not have been wise. After the House mission, American prestige as an honest and impartial broker might have been completely lost.

Hitler tried to forestall a propaganda effect in favor of the Allies by his frequent attempts to prove that the Allies were the true warmongers; the German White Book on the outbreak of the war, published at the time of the Welles mission, and Hitler's directive for the talks with the American are explicit examples of these endeavors. The Germans were afraid that Welles might aid the allied cause in some other ways, too. Dr. Hans Thomsen, the German Minister in Washington, had prepared a rather complete rundown for his Foreign Office of possible results of the Welles mission. One of his points was: "This informatory trip suits the purposes of the British Government very well in order to convince Roosevelt how essential energetic aid by the United States is. . . . On that account it is an open

¹F.R., 1940, I, 2.

question whether the original idea for this trip originated with Roosevelt or is due to English initiative."¹ The British needed American support but their image in the United States could well use some refurbishing. Anglo-American relations had reached their lowest point in early 1940.

During the first few weeks of the war violations of neutral rights had not aroused much opposition in the United States. The public was outraged against Germany; British measures were believed to be only temporary, and did not cause serious harm to America. But as the war dragged on, as victory seemed farther than ever, the British tightened their control of the seas, and Americans increasingly began to feel the consequences of the war. Quarrels and controversies reached a climax over British mail inspections. In early 1940 an American transatlantic plane was held up during its refueling stop in the Bermudas. The European mails were taken off and censored. During the first week of February even stoutly pro-allied papers published outraged reports accusing the British of having taken letters off American planes on the Bermudas at bayonet point. The same week the pro-British Senator Key Pittman demanded economic retaliation against Britain for her violation of American rights. The agricultural lobby of the southern and midwestern states grew

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 603.

increasingly annoyed with British restrictions on imports of agricultural goods, particularly tobacco. After having already been cut out of the central European market by the British blockade, they were hit hard by British import limitations. Refusing to understand that Britain had to use her scarce dollar funds to buy guns instead of cigars, they pressed the State Department for action.¹

At the same time American confidence in an allied victory declined. While Welles was still in Europe, betting in New York was 60 to 40 on a German success. Ambassador Kennedy had the same opinion. He told everybody "that Germany would win, that everything in France and England would go to hell, and that his one interest was in saving his money for his children."² Opinion in the State Department was divided, but many officials anticipated a German victory. "Berle [Assistant Secretary of State Adolf A. Berle] has probably got definitely in his mind that Germany is going to win this war," his colleague Breckinridge Long noted in his diary; and he himself thought "that we do have to take into consideration the possibility of a German victory."³ Though most realized that a German victory would

¹Langer and Gleason, 3555; Toynbee, Survey, 450; New York Times, Feb. 19, 8.

²Ickes, Secret Diaries, III, 147.

³Israel, Long Diary, 71f.

bring dangers, few were willing to run risks to avoid a German success. The situation did not seem perilous enough for the interests of the United States. When Bullitt returned to Washington in early 1940, he remarked, "This country is still in the mood of England before Munich."¹

The Allies had frequently complained about the attitude of the American public. Welles's mission aroused new interest in European affairs. Great Britain and France realized their chance, and used the situation to remind Americans of their moral obligations. As early as February 19, the London Times remarked that the American people did not see the extent of their responsibilities. The Times expressed the hope that Welles would realize those duties, and enlighten his fellow countrymen.² Of course, he did not. He said nothing at all. Nor does his report for the President and the Secretary of State indicate in any way that he advocated an increase in aid to the Allies. An improvement in British-American relations was apparently not on his mind during his European journey. His mission as such was admittedly a boon to the British cause as it directed American eyes again to the European war, and the problem of war aims. Hardly anybody had sympathies for Germany's desire for conquest. Thus the mission offered an

¹Alsop, White Paper, 87.

²London Times, Feb. 12, 6.

opportunity to point out the common interest of the United States and the Allies. Yet this renewed interest in European affairs might have been only temporary, and could evaporate rather quickly. The German attack in the North two weeks after Welles's return did much more to remind Americans of the stakes in Europe. It seems safe to assume that Welles was not sent to Europe to increase sympathies for the Allies, and that the effect of his mission in that regard was no more than minimal.¹

¹There is one instance where Welles gave his opinion on the outcome of the war. Ciano reports it: Before leaving Italy Welles met a relative of his, Blasco d'Aieta, whom he told that Germany would be exhausted within a year, even if no offensive would be undertaken. "He considers the war already won by the French and the English. The United States is there with all the weight of her power, to guarantee this victory." (Hugh Gibson, ed., The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943, New York, 1946, 223). As d'Aieta was not concerned with formulating Italian foreign policy, and as there is no direct testimony, while neither circumstances nor possible motives of Welles, d'Aieta, or those through whom the story was related to Ciano, are known, the author feels justified in not attributing a high degree of importance to this statement.

CHAPTER V

ITALIAN NEUTRALITY

Possible designs by Welles to strengthen the Allies did not bother the Germans as much as a potential attempt to weaken their own alliance with Italy. Apprehensions about a break-up of the Axis as a consequence of Welles's visit attributed to a reconsideration of German foreign policy. The Germans were aware that Welles's greatest chance might be to change Italian policy.¹ Welles himself realized in retrospect: "Only in Italy was it remotely conceivable that the policy of this government might have some concrete effect. If by some means the United States could prevent Italy from actually taking part in the war . . . the outcome of the war might be less certain than it seemed. American influence in Italy might have weight."²

Italy was the center of attention in early 1940. Both sides as well as the neutrals saw Rome as possessing crucial

¹Several historians still hold that Welles's real purpose for this mission was to keep Italy from entering the war. E. Wiskemann writes (p. 139): "More precisely his journey was intended to counteract Germany's pressure upon Italy to join into the war." Or Angermann (p. 192) "officially to gather information, mainly however to keep Italy from entering the war." Also, Pratt, Hull, I, 345; Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Feb. 19), 16. 2.)

²Welles, Time, 76f.

weight in the war. Though formally allied with Germany, Italy had not joined Germany when war broke out, and even continued to supply the Allies with essential war materials. Memories of 1914 and 1915, when Italy had been one of the Central Powers but ended up on the side of the Entente, were still fresh. Italy's neutrality was vital for the Allies. France could concentrate her troops at the German border, and, more important, British supplies would not be endangered between Suez and Gibraltar, but the strong Italian navy could become a menace for British sea-power in the Mediterranean. Italy was equally important to the Axis as a threat to France and the Mediterranean route. It was also a source of material supplies and moral support. If the Allies could break up the Axis they would have won a major victory before the military battle started.

During recent years Italy had proved valuable in two other respects which might attract an American envoy. Italian leaders often received information about the plans of their ally which they passed willingly along to those concerned. The west was uncertain about German designs and military preparations, and Italy was the place to find out what the Germans were scheming.

If Welles had peace in mind, Italy was again the place to start a peace campaign. Mussolini was supposed to be the only foreign statesman who had influence on Hitler. He was credited with saving the peace in 1938 when upon his

suggestion Hitler called the Munich conference. Furthermore, Italy seemed to be the only major European power with a genuine interest in peace.

As all sides were well aware of Italy's importance at this point of the struggle, a competition for her favor developed which reached its climax during the Welles mission. While the American traveled through Europe, Mussolini decided Italy's future. Welles's first visit to Rome was followed by hectic diplomatic activity, especially by the Germans. The American had hardly left the Italian capital when German Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop announced a surprise visit with only a few days notice. Not even a week after the German had cleared out of town, Welles returned for another round of talks. He had not been there a day when Hitler decided to summon Mussolini to an immediate meeting. Welles was one of the few who knew what was going on when Mussolini sneaked through a side entrance into the railway station and into his special train to meet Hitler secretly in the Brenner pass. A few hours later he was informed by Ciano of the proceedings just before he left for Washington. The series of conferences between the leadership of the Axis and Sumner Welles during a few days time was highly dramatic, and led most observers to believe that a matter of immense urgency and importance was discussed.

It offered, indeed, a great opportunity for the American envoy, for relations between the Axis partners had reached

their nadir in early 1940. In December 1939, Foreign Minister Ciano had accused Germany of having broken the pact of steel, since Hitler had not consulted the Italians before the attack on Poland. In early 1940, Hitler received a letter by Mussolini. Il Duce advised peace, for Germany would be unable to win a war. His friend's words made Hitler burst out in rage. He refused to answer. At first the Italians were not much bothered. Later in January they allowed themselves the luxury of carelessly transmitting a warning of an imminent German invasion to Belgium. The message was promptly intercepted by Germany. As time sped on and the Germans remained cool, Mussolini grew worried about his relations with Hitler, especially since the western powers were becoming increasingly hostile to Italy. Furthermore, he seems to have been afraid of a German attack on Italy in case Hitler might have doubts about the attitude of his southern neighbor. Berlin remained quiet. Mussolini was kept uninformed and grew more nervous.¹ He "badgered the Ambassador and Military Attaché in Berlin to find out something of the German plans. . . .

¹Schmidt, 474f.; Hassell, 107; Weizsaecker, 273f.; Toynbee, Survey, 232; John L. Snell, Illusion and Necessity; the diplomacy of global war 1939-1945 (Boston, 1963), 57. Mussolini's letter is printed in DDI, IX, 3, 33, in the original Italian and in DGFP, D, VIII, 504, in English. Its exact date has not been as yet established.

[He] was extremely annoyed at being kept in the dark."¹ On February 24, the Italians thought it wise to inform Germany that Italian non-belligerence did not affect the "intimate friendship" of the two countries. On February 26, Ciano sent an irritable letter to the Italian Embassy in Berlin asking why Hitler did not answer Mussolini's letter. When Welles arrived in Europe both Axis partners seemed ready for reconciliation. The best chance to split the Axis would have been a month earlier; but that was not known by anybody except the Axis leaders. Still, the problems in their relationship remained. The possibility for a disintegration of the Axis had become apparent in January or early February, when it was decided that Welles should travel to Europe.²

If Welles came to tear the Axis apart, he should have informed the British of his plans. He had just arrived in Berlin when Great Britain announced that Italy would be put under a coal blockade. On February 7, Mussolini had stopped all sales of war materials to Great Britain, arguing that Italy needed them herself.³ On March 1, the British announced that in retaliation all shipments of German coal to Italy by

¹Pietro Badoglio, Italy in the Second World War (New York, 1948), 13.

²DDI, IX, 3, 392; Toynbee, Survey, 229; Kordt, Wahn, 239; Villari, 248; Badoglio, 13; Wiskemann, 193-195; Ciano, Diaries, 215; Ciano, Diplomatic Papers, 336.

³Ciano, Diaries, 205.

sea would be cut off. For anybody who wanted to keep Italy neutral this was an unwise measure. Mussolini was reminded painfully that he was a "prisoner of the Mediterranean," as he put it in his conversation with Welles. He concluded his only chance to break out of this prison was a German victory. Ciano noted in his diaries: "The measures taken on the coal question are the sort that will serve to push Italy into the arms of Germany," and a week later--on the eve of Ribbentrop's visit to Rome--Ciano relates that Mussolini felt humiliated by the coal blockade. "In the last few days his hostile attitudes toward the Allies has become more pronounced. The thought of war dominates him."¹ Even pro-allied Italian circles, such as the royal court, were disappointed about Britain's attitude.²

The Germans, already agitated by Welles's visit to Rome, saw their chance. Immediately, several specialists boarded a train to Rome to discuss overland transportation of the needed coal. All available trucks and railway facilities were mobilized in a grand display of German friendship. The Germans' unselfish concern for Italian welfare made them even offer to put the German press at the Italians' disposal for attacks on Great Britain. Ciano saw

¹Ciano, Diaries, 214, 218.

²Shirer, Third Reich, 687; Kordt, Wahn, 239; Ciano, Diaries, 216; Toynbee, Survey, 231; Hooker, Moffat Papers, 304.

through the German design: "The game of Berlin is clear. The Germans are trying at any cost to embitter relations between us and London."¹ However, Mussolini and the Italian public opinion were impressed.

Welles was probably familiar with the circumstances, since the Department of State had treated Italy in recent years with special care, and had sent some of its best diplomats to Rome. The present Ambassador, William Phillips, had been Under Secretary of State. His predecessor, Breckinridge Long, had become Assistant Secretary of State upon his return to Washington. Mussolini had been the addressee of several personal messages by President Roosevelt. One might assume that Welles attributed special importance to his visit to Rome, and to the problem of Italian neutrality.

The conversations during his first trip to Rome warrant little to support that opinion. Though he spoke about American pleasure with the Italian policy of neutrality, Welles did not stick to this point and did not take it up later. In his interview with Mussolini he handed the Duce a personal letter from the President, a missive regarding which much has been made. Welles himself wrote later: "The letter to Mussolini was of outstanding importance. In it the President, emphasizing the satisfaction which the United

¹Ciano, Diaries, 215.

States government would derive from a continuation of Italian neutrality, had expressed his very emphatic desire to meet personally with the chief of the Italian government."¹ The President, Welles explained, believed he could convince Mussolini in such a meeting to stay out of the war. This view was adopted by most other writers. Actually, the text of the letter does not justify the attachment of great importance to it. The relevant passages in the few lines Roosevelt wrote are: "At this grave moment I deeply hope that this exchange of views between us may be of real value to Italy, to the United States, and to the future of the world.

"I still hope to meet you some day soon."² It is difficult to find a "very emphatic desire" in that.³ In any case, Mussolini did not hear anything more about this proposal after Welles had left.

The President's letter had one effect which might have been useful. Mussolini apparently was flattered by the idea

¹Welles, Time, 85.

²F.R., 1940, I, 29fn. Conversation itself in: F.R., 1940, I, 29; DDI, IX, 3, 395.

³The proposed meeting was not necessarily meant as an attempt to convince Mussolini of the advisability of remaining neutral. The course of the talks seems rather to indicate that Welles and the President had a common action for peace of all neutrals in mind. In his first conversation with Ciano Welles asked the Foreign Minister directly what he thought of the present chances of the Italian proposal of August 31, 1939, when Mussolini had suggested a general conference to keep peace. F.R., 1940, I, 23.

that the President of the United States desired to see him. When Ciano translated this passage he began to smile openly, and seemed very pleased, and approved the idea.¹ Nonetheless, the importance attached to this letter is justified neither by its contents nor by the action which followed it.² One writer noted about Welles's success in Rome: "The upshot of Sumner Welles's interviews with Ciano and Mussolini on 28 February was that Mussolini nibbled a little at Welles's suggestion for a commercial treaty,"³ and that was all.

The German government had watched Welles's visit to Rome with apprehensions about the future stability of their alliance. They were afraid lest Italy should associate itself too closely with the United States. On February 19, General Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, noted in his diary after a conversation with Weizsaecker: "Italy: Uncertain. They would really prefer doing business with us, but they remain willing to do business with the other side, too."⁴ The party also worried about their

¹F.R., 1940, I, 29.

²Ibid., 115; Villari, 249; Phillips, 261; Charles Callan Tansill, Backdoor to War; the Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941 (Chicago, 1952), 576.

³Toynbee, Survey, 233f.

⁴Arnold Lissance, ed., Franz Halder, Diary, MS, III, 85.

fascist partner. The party "ideologist," Alfred Rosenberg, expressed in his diary anxiety about Welles's sojourn in Rome and the solidarity of the fascist movements.¹ The Foreign Office was afraid Welles would strengthen anti-German circles in Italy in cooperation with the Holy See. Italy and Germany would be split, and Italy might slip gradually from neutrality to the side of the Allies.² Hitler wanted to restrict Italian liberty of action as far as possible, and tried to get the Axis back on a common line. The Foreign Office warned the Italians that Welles might try to break Italy away from Germany by the "decoy" of neutral cooperation. Italy and Germany, the Italians were urged, must keep in touch (i contatti fra Italia e Germani sone necessari).³

Germany did her best to retain these close contacts.⁴ The Italians received special information about Welles's treatment in Germany.⁵ It was even reported that Hitler and

¹Hans Guenther Seraphim, ed., Das Politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenberg's (Berlin, 1956), diary entry of 3.III.1940.

²Kordt, Wahn, 239f.; Shirer, Third Reich, 683.

³DDI, IX, 3, 386.

⁴The American chargé d'affaires thought the sudden change in the German attitude toward Italy so important and obvious that he reported it to Washington. F.R., 1940, I, 8.

⁵DDI, IX, 3, 477.

Mussolini discussed the coming of Welles's trip over the telephone.¹ On February 23, Erich Kordt, a high official in the Wilhelmstrasse, showed up at the Italian Embassy, and asked for an interview. He reminded the Italians that Italy and Germany were two powers devoted to the same aim, which should be remembered in the important upcoming events. Rome and Berlin, he said, must reach agreement about a common language with which to meet the American envoy. And then the German came to the point: "It is impossible to conquer without combat."² There could be no successes for Italy without a German victory. Germany furthermore displayed a sudden courtesy toward Italy which must have pleased Mussolini. The embassy in Rome was upgraded, two new ministers plenipotentiary were appointed, one by the name of Otto von Bismarck, the grandson of the Chancellor. The German press was suddenly full of praise for Italy--and full of little hints that her place was at Germany's side.³ To all appearances, Italy was once again the most esteemed ally.⁴

Despite these efforts the additional courtesy of the visit of the German Foreign Minister was not welcomed. In

¹New York Times, Feb. 13, 17.

²DDI, IX, 3, 386. Simoni, 86-88.

³Cf. Voelkischer Beobachter, Feb. 21, 3; Mar. 11, 1; Mar. 13, 1.

⁴Simoni, 90, 98; DGFP, D, VIII, 655fn; New York Times, Mar. 13, 4.

contrast to Welles's visit, nobody--except possibly Mussolini--looked forward to seeing the German. The Federale encountered some difficulty when he tried to gather the obligatory enthusiastic crowd for Ribbentrop's salutation, and that one proved reserved.¹ Ciano himself tried to persuade the Duce to stop Ribbentrop from coming, but in vain.²

Ribbentrop made it very clear that Germany would consider no solution other than a military victory. The offensive was imminent; France would be conquered in three or four months. Italy's place was inevitably at the side of Germany. Ribbentrop brought with him the long awaited letter from Hitler--more than ten times as long and cordial as Roosevelt's--in which Hitler very shrewdly played on Mussolini's desire for conquest and on his combative zeal. At the same time Ribbentrop presented the Italians a beautifully bound copy of the German White Book on the outbreak of the war, and he talked much about the "sinister role of the American Ambassadors Bullitt, Kennedy, and Drexel Biddle" who had advised Poland to oppose German plans. Since American counsel had had ill effects for Poland these remarks are an implicit warning against trusting the American envoy. Ribbentrop told the Italians that the White Book

¹Ciano, Diaries, 218.

²Ibid., 217.

contained proof of the "monstrous war guilt of the United States." In reality Americans possessed "a boundless will to destroy" the authoritarian regimes. Italy should not be fooled; her destiny lay with Germany.¹ Ribbentrop supported his argument with a portrayal of the immense number of German divisions at the western border, and spiced it with dreams of victory and conquest.

The German Foreign Minister had no doubt about the outcome of the western campaign. Italy would have to make her decision soon. Mussolini was at first restrained but the prospect of military glory caused a swift change of mind. In his second conversation with Ribbentrop, Mussolini showed readiness to join Italian with German arms. Ribbentrop was surprised at his success, since he had expected only a general pledge of Axis solidarity.² Ciano remained opposed and had been so ostentatiously reserved throughout Ribbentrop's visit that the German Foreign Minister felt compelled to complain to his Fuehrer about Ciano's cool attitude.³

Ciano's doubts had some influence on Mussolini, and his enthusiasm cooled off after Ribbentrop had left. But

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 665.

²F.R., 1940, I, 102; Hooker, Moffat Papers, 304; Ciano, Diaries, 218f.; Wiskemann, 196; Schmidt, 477; Kordt, Wahn, 240; Toynebee, Survey, 236.

³DGFP, D, VIII, 667; F.R., 1940, I, 97; Phillips, 256.

the basic problem remained: Italy was a prisoner of the Mediterranean, and Mussolini, confirmed in his belief in the might of German arms, considered a German victory more than ever the only solution to Italy's dilemma.¹ Ribbentrop and Hitler were content with the talks, though Hitler thought it necessary to deepen the new understanding a few days later by his meeting with Mussolini. Hitler's military intimate, General Alfred Jodl, noted with relief in his diary: "Duce bleibt bei der Stange."² Ribbentrop's visit had reinforced the Axis.³

By the time Welles returned to Italy, the coal blockade had been organized, the Axis had been reinforced, and peace talks were going on between Russia and Finland. This complicated situation became highly dramatic while he was in Rome. Welles had hardly been ten minutes in the Palazzo Chigi, where Ciano resided, when reporters saw Hans Georg von Mackensen, the German Ambassador, arrive. The German left the Palazzo after a few minutes, and took off to Berlin, leaving behind him a tidal wave of rumors. Actually his visit had served the preparation of the Brenner meeting.

At this second meeting between Welles and the Italians the problem of neutrality was not touched upon. Ciano

¹Ciano, Diaries, 219f.

²Jodl Diary, IMT, XXVIII, 412.

³Ciano, Diaries, 219.

again spent much time inveighing against Ribbentrop. He instructed the American about the conversations with the German Foreign Minister, and what he had learned about the German plans. He asked him to wait for further information until the Brenner meeting was over.¹ A peace move remained the topic of the day, since apparently the concern about neutrality had faded away. All Welles did to revive the idea was to repeat the suggestion of a Roosevelt-Mussolini meeting.

The Brenner meeting did not justify the high hopes for peace it had aroused, nor was the Welles mission one of the major points of discussion. Hitler explained the German view of the situation, boasted about German strength, and made clear that he thought a German victory the only possibility for a settlement. Mussolini realized that Hitler was determined to attack. He made an attempt to have the decision delayed three or four months in order to give Italy time to prepare. Hitler answered evasively. Italy, he said, should join at the most opportune moment. This time he frequently praised Mussolini's decision of September, 1939, when he had remained neutral.² Apparently Hitler was

¹New York Times, Mar. 17, 1, 36; Hooker, Moffat Papers, 303; Phillips, 263; Israel, Long Diary, 69; London Times, Mar. 18, 8.

²Mussolini had explained his attitude with the unpreparedness of the Italian forces. Apparently he wanted to wait to see how the war would develop.

not so much interested in having Italy join German military efforts¹ as in keeping her from forming closer ties with the Allies. In this he succeeded. To the surprise and dismay of his advisers, Mussolini expressed in strong words his decision to join Hitler at an opportune moment. Though this still left him a way out in case Germany should not do as well as he expected--Ciano relates how Mussolini had confided to him that this was the reason why he insisted on determining the time of Italy's entry into the war himself--the Axis-alliance had never been as strong as after the meeting on the Brenner.²

After his return from the Alps, Ciano informed Welles about the meeting. He told him that it dealt mostly with Axis affairs. He put him at ease about a possible German attack. After the incident of the intercepted warning to Belgium, Hitler showed more caution in displaying his plans to the Italians. He had left them with the impression that the offensive would not be launched during the next few weeks.³

It is difficult to establish how far Welles's mission influenced German policy. Obviously Germany was not sure of

¹Some of his military advisers had recognized the southern ally might turn out to be a burden.

²Ciano, Diaries, 222.

³Ibid., 224; Phillips, 203.

her southern partner; and equally obviously she had to do something about the relationship before the spring offensive began. One cannot say whether Welles's visit prompted Ribbentrop's and Hitler's travels south. They might have come if Welles had never set foot on Italian soil. The talks reveal little about the direct causes for their visits. The Germans tried to make sure that Italy would stand by her ally, and do nothing detrimental to German interests. Welles is mentioned only glancingly. It could, however, hardly be expected that Ribbentrop or Hitler openly would display German anxieties about American influence in Italy. One cannot establish to what degree German anxiety over Italy was increased by Welles's visit, but doubtless it made a strong impression.¹ It at least reminded the Germans that Italian support could not be taken for granted.

If Welles had wanted to loosen the Axis ties, his mission was an utter failure. While he was in Europe the relations between the two definitely improved.² The press in both countries again began to praise the partnership. Hitler was content with this development. To his generals he "emphatically reiterate[d] his confidence in Mussolini."³

¹DGFP, D, IX, 1; Ciano, Diaries, 223f.; Hassell, 124; Schmidt, 479; of special value for this question is Michele Lanza's diary. The Italian diplomat in Berlin was naturally a diligent observer of the German attitude and their anxieties over Italy. Simoni, 103f.

²Toynbee, Survey, 239.

³Halder, Diaries, III, 132.

Welles did gain, however, an excellent impression of the Italian attitude toward Germany. Ciano was very frank, and Welles left Rome well informed about the personal relationship among the Italian leaders, and the relationship between them and the Germans. Mussolini, of whom Ciano said "when the Duce is with the Germans, he becomes excited,"¹ was apparently strongly pro-German, and turned irrational when he was under Hitler's influence; Ciano showed great dislike of Germany, and wanted to keep Italy out of the war. "A German victory would be the greatest disaster for our country," he noted in his diary.² But he was content to obey the Duce and to follow orders. The Duce's mood had changed rapidly during Welles's stay in Europe. When Welles first met him, he was suffering under some strain; but the American found Mussolini in good humor on his return, and growing more pro-German every day. Though Ciano told Welles that "notwithstanding this fact, Mussolini would never endanger the position of Italy,"³ Welles realized that Italy would move as Mussolini alone determined, and he had been impressed by German might and British restrictions.⁴ When an opportune moment arrived Italian action could be expected. It would come not out of sympathy for the fellow fascists of the

¹Ciano, Diaries, 205.

²Ibid., 216.

³F.R., 1940, I, 98.

⁴Ibid., 113-115.

North but out of dreams of military glory, conquests, and breaking bonds imposed by the Allies.¹

Continued Italian neutrality as a result of Welles's visit would have been a great success. The Italians themselves, as well as most other powers, were aware of their favorable position. Welles noted in his report: "The chief request made of me by the Pope, by his Secretary of State [Cardinal Maglione], and by Count Ciano, was for me to urge the President to utilize his influence with Mussolini to keep Italy out of the war,"² and Ciano told him after the Brenner meeting "that he believed the most important thing for me to learn was that Italy would remain neutral."³ Welles himself became later aware of this chance.⁴ But the talks themselves warrant little concern about Italian neutrality at the time. There were a few remarks about it--often the topic was introduced by the Italians--and Welles expressed the pleasure of the American government and people with neutrality.

But could American sympathy compete with Hitler's promises of glory and conquest? After he had left Italy, Welles realized that something more had to be done. In the conclusions to his report Welles advised the President

¹Ciano, Diaries, 220, 222, 225; Phillips, 256, 264; Hooker, Moffat Papers, 304.

²F.R., 1940, I, 115.

³Ibid., 114.

⁴Welles, Time, 76f.

to take practical steps toward improvement in relations. "A close relationship with Italy is feasible."¹ He proposed that Americans should avoid using the term "fascism" in attacking totalitarian forms of government. A great American pavilion at the World Exhibition planned for 1942 in Rome would also do much.² Notwithstanding the fact that journalists could hardly be forced to abstain from criticizing Italian fascism, one has to ask: Would such measures do to counterbalance the breaking-open of the "Mediterranean prison," and the promise of North African colonies? The rapid sequence of conferences among the Italians and the Germans, and among the Italians and Welles, had offered the American envoy a good chance to drive a bargain, to outbid the Germans, or at least to hint at the possibility of outbidding them, for an attempt to keep Italy neutral would have involved--as in 1914/1915--a bargaining with promises. In World War II the offer had to be even more attractive, since this time Italy had a dictator whose ideological and political views established a close connection with the German side. But Welles was not allowed to give any promises.

American sympathy alone could not sway a Mussolini whose head had been filled by dreams of military glory by

¹F.R., 1940, I, 116.

²Ibid., 115.

Ribbentrop and Hitler. All later and more sincere and realistic efforts to keep Italy neutral failed in this point. The Americans were always outbid by Germany--until German power failed to impress the Italians any longer.

CHAPTER VI

WELLES MEETS SCHACHT

Apprehensions and hopes of the Europeans had proved futile. Welles proved to be not concerned with minor problems. Those issues had all one common origin, and if this source of all evil could be eliminated, all these worries and anxieties would disappear. An end to the war seemed to solve all problems of Americans and Europeans. Welles did not bother with any other aims but this one. Peace was the only subject for which he showed interest. He discussed it at length with all politicians whom he met, even with the Germans, although Hitler had advised avoiding the topic.

In Germany, indeed, he had a strange adventure which might have led him to success in his peace endeavors. But he would have had to cope with circumstances to which the distinguished diplomat was not used. At a tea party given in his honor by chargé d'affaires Alexander Kirk, he met Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, Germany's famous economist.

Schacht had become a mysterious figure. One of the most respected and admired financiers in the 'twenties, he appeared to be the economic and financial architect of Hitler's rearmament program in the 'thirties. Then, beginning in

1938 he faded into the background. He was dismissed as president of the Reichsbank and as Minister of Economics. It looked as if Schacht had incurred Hitler's wrath. Strangely, nothing happened to him. He still roamed freely in Berlin and Germany, and even remained a member of Hitler's cabinet as Minister without Portfolio. Therefore, it was hard to believe that he had fallen into disgrace. A journey to India nourished rumors that Schacht had become one of Hitler's top secret agents, employed in arcane negotiations to revolutionize the world.

By the time Welles undertook his mission, Schacht was affiliated with the German resistance movement. As Hitler's ambitions became more evident the Minister of Economics began to disagree with the Chancellor. He contacted major opposition leaders, especially Carl Goerdeler. However, he remained outside their inner councils, partly because he did not want to get involved in anything risky. He thought the conspirators acted rather uncautiously and was especially critical of Goerdeler. Schacht also was too egocentric to put up with a subordinate role in the already well established leadership of the resistance. The conspirators for their part were suspicious of Schacht because of his early affiliation with the Nazis. In consequence there was little effectual cooperation, but Schacht ranked high in the conspirators' plans. In the preparations for the putsch during the Czech crisis of 1938 he had played a major part, and he

was supposed to become a member of the new government. After the failure of these plans, Schacht had the impression that he was being watched by the Gestapo. An attempt to convince the Commander-in-Chief of the Army, Walter von Brauchitsch, that he ought to arrest Hitler resulted in a threat of his own arrest. By 1939 Schacht had some doubts about the conspiracy, and withdrew from the scene. But he kept himself informed about the activities of the other opponents to Hitler, and they were aware of his movements.

Hitler's domestic opposition had watched Welles's arrival with hope as well as fear. The conspirators hoped to win the German armed forces over with Welles's help. They were convinced that a coup d'état could only be successful if the army was on their side. The leaders of the opposition believed the generals would turn against Hitler's war plans if some great and powerful figure such as the President of the United States would guarantee a just peace. Brauchitsch and especially Franz Halder, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, seemed ready to take action against Hitler; but they were afraid the Allies might use the temporary turmoil resulting from a coup d'état to attack Germany, or to extort a peace even harsher than Versailles. If Welles would guarantee that the power and the prestige of the United States would be committed against such an outcome, the conspirators hoped, the generals would at last

overcome their doubts and act.¹

They anticipated Welles's mission to Berlin at the same time with anxiety. Propaganda-Minister Joseph Goebbels might make use of the American diplomat's visit to explain to the Germans that the United States accepted Hitler as an honest statesman, and were willing to make a deal with him. Hitler would gain in prestige; his popularity would rise to unprecedented heights if Welles's mission resulted in another Munich. A peace settlement of any kind would make an overthrow of the Hitler regime impossible in the near future.

The conspirators tried everything to keep the Nazis from having another success. They used their connections with Alexander Kirk, the American chargé d'affaires in Berlin, in an attempt to convince the American diplomat that peace negotiations with Hitler would serve no useful purpose.² Then they tried to have Welles's route changed. They suggested he should go to Paris and London before visiting Berlin. Talks in Paris and London, they hoped, would make Welles realize that a visit to Berlin was useless.³

¹John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, The German Army in Politics 1918-1945. 2nd ed. (London, New York, 1964), 486.

²Gerhard Ritter, Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung (Stuttgart, 1954), 250.

³This was mainly Carl Goerdeler's idea. He was already acquainted with Welles from earlier visits in America (Ritter,

These attempts were unavailing, doomed to failure from the beginning. Once the government of the United States had decided to send Welles to Berlin, it could hardly abandon the plan because some obscure figures in Berlin thought it inopportune. Since Welles's visit appeared inevitable, the conspirators tried to use it for their purposes. They began to realize that it offered a great chance. The opposition leaders hoped to get into contact with the American government through Welles's mediation. They had for some time tried to establish connections with Washington, through Kirk as well as through emissaries whom they had managed to send to the United States.¹

Of all the resistance leaders, Schacht had been most active in these attempts. Through his former position and his acquaintances in high positions he had excellent connections with leading men in foreign countries. In 1933 he had been in Washington as the German representative in the preparatory negotiations for the world economic conference. There he had had conversations with Roosevelt, Hull, and

161). Hassell, 112. Maxime Mourins, Les complots contre Hitler (Paris, 1948), 103.

¹The last attempt had been the journey of Adam von Trott zu Solz who persuaded some famous German refugees like Kurt Riezler, secretary and intimate of former Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg and State Secretary to President Ebert, to prepare a memorandum on war aims and peace terms. This was sent to the White House and is believed to have been read by Sumner Welles before leaving. (Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis, 486-488.)

others. He hoped to make use of these connections when he busied himself with preparing peace feelers after the outbreak of the war. On October 16, 1939, he tried to induce the President to act as mediator for peace. His letter remained unanswered. In early November he informed Kirk that he would like to be invited to undertake a lecture tour in the United States as an inconspicuous camouflage for his true aim: political conversations in Washington. All his attempts to establish a connection with the Roosevelt administration were rejected. An effort to get Hitler to send him on a mission to America failed, presumably because Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop did not like the idea.¹

Sumner Welles had been informed about Schacht's activities. When he came to Berlin he knew that the Reichminister wanted to get into contact with American authorities, and he also knew that the opposition wanted him to meet one of its representatives while in Berlin. Ulrich von Hassell, a German career diplomat with close connections to Kirk, desired to make sure that "Sumner Welles was properly indoctrinated in Rome, and that he should afterward get correct impressions of the situation here."² He invited Kirk to

¹Earl Beck, Verdict on Schacht, a study in the problem of political "guilt." Florida State University Studies, No. 20 (Tallahassee, 1955), ch. 10. Wheeler-Bennett, Pt. III, ch. 4; Langer and Gleason, 258; Hassell Diaries, 109; Ritter, 235-240, 495.

²Hassell, Diaries, 112.

breakfast "to put him on the right track." Hassell urged Kirk to have Welles meet with someone outside the Nazi hierarchy. He even suggested two: Erwin Planck, son of the physicist Max Planck and former State Secretary in the Chancellery, and Johannes Popitz, Prussian Minister of the Interior. Hassell pressed the same point when he met an emissary of Lord Halifax in Arosa.¹

The conspirators suffered under pressure of time. The military leaders had to be won over before Hitler issued the final order for the attack in the west. Once German troops were engaged in full scale fighting, the generals could not be moved to join in a putsch against their Supreme Commander. Everything seemed to center on Welles's visit. The generals, most of whom were opposed only to a "criminal war" and not inclined to interfere with the political rulers, became hesitant about the overthrow of Hitler. They had received the impression that the Allies were ready to negotiate. If peace was in sight, Hitler ought to have his chance. The renewed qualms of the military leaders made the conspirators the more eager to explain the situation to Welles, but their hopes of contacting Welles seemed to come to nothing. Yet, to everybody's surprise, Welles asked to see Schacht.

¹Hassell, Diaries, 114, 117.

The Reichminister was jubilant. His vanity was immensely pleased. After a long time of obscurity, he was suddenly pushed into the limelight again. The conspirators were doubtful since Schacht was not a member of their inner circle, and Welles was not willing to meet any of them.¹

The Foreign Office, and especially Ribbentrop, were displeased. Ribbentrop disliked Schacht, and thought him dangerous. The Foreign Minister was not the only one in the Nazi leadership who knew of Schacht's objections to the regime. It must have seemed strange that the American wanted to see--besides the Chancellor and the Foreign Minister--just Schacht. The financier had by that time apparently no influence on Hitler, and did not take part in shaping German policy. This was known to the Americans. They had already tried to find out Schacht's opinion, but Ribbentrop had successfully stopped any attempts by Schacht to meddle in American policy.² Now he was confronted with a situation in

¹There is one source which claims that Welles saw Goerdeler in Berlin. Gerhard Ritter, a former member of the opposition and its eminent historian, reports that Baron Palombini, who was also affiliated with the conspiracy, told him orally that Welles had a conversation with Goerdeler. He also reported that they met again in Stockholm in 1942, where he--Palombini--was also present (Ritter, 252, 495, 515). It seems rather strange that Palombini should be the only source for so important meetings.

²In December, 1939, Schacht had been invited to write an article for Foreign Affairs on Germany's attitude toward the present conflict. Schacht checked with Ribbentrop who demanded that the article be submitted to him for censorship.

which an American diplomat came himself and wanted to see Schacht.

The Foreign Minister tried consequently to prevent a tête-à-tête between Schacht and Welles. He invited his cabinet colleague to a luncheon to be given honoring Sumner Welles. At this occasion both of them could be watched. Strangely, this luncheon was cancelled; possibly because the German authorities studiously avoided any social event or relaxed atmosphere.¹ The problem of Welles's request remained. Ribbentrop apparently was determined to ignore the American's expressed wish until Minister Kirk took steps of his own. He invited Schacht to a tea party in Welles's honor. Ribbentrop could not cancel that. He tried a new tack by urging Schacht to take an interpreter of the Foreign Office along. Schacht declined the offer, expressing his confidence that Welles would speak at least one of the three

Schacht preferred not to write anything at all. A few weeks later he received a similar offer from the Christian Science Monitor. This time he bypassed the Foreign Office and went directly to Hitler. He requested not only permission to publish in American journals but to travel in the United States. Hitler seemed favorably inclined, but wanted to discuss the matter with Ribbentrop. Schacht heard nothing further.

¹The Italian Ambassador in Berlin reported that there were no social events planned: DDI, IX, 3, 417. Even when Welles visited Goering in his hunting castle outside Berlin, for a conversation and round-trip which lasted more than six hours covering both lunch and dinner time, he was not even offered a snack--though the gluttonous Luftwaffe chief was hardly opposed to eating.

major European languages. Ribbentrop next took the problem to Hitler. The Chancellor reacted more calmly than had his Foreign Minister. He summoned his Minister without Portfolio, whom he had not seen for quite some time, to brief him on Welles's designs. The conspirators thought the briefing "most remarkable, if only because Hitler was forced to summon Schacht beforehand, thus contributing to Schacht's triumph."¹ The instructions were in line with Hitler's own conversation with Welles on March 2, but Hitler wanted to make sure that the American did not get any wrong ideas, and requested that Schacht report about his talks after Welles had left Berlin.²

Nazi concern about the conversation proved to be without cause. The resistance was disappointed. It is not clear what Welles had in mind when he requested the interview with Schacht. Apparently he was only interested in post-war economic problems; it is doubtful whether Welles had any intention to contact the conspirators through Schacht. For some reason he wanted to see Schacht the genial economist and financier, not Schacht the conspirator and organizer of a putsch. Schacht had something else in mind. In a dramatic scene he looked around for hidden microphones,

¹Hassell, Diaries, 121.

²DGFP, D, VIII, 643; F.R., 1940, I, 56; Schacht, Confessions, 364-366; Beck, 147f.

and confided to Welles in a whisper: "If what I am going to tell you now is known, I will be dead within a week." Then he described the conspiracy, explaining the hesitancy of the generals and their need for assurances "that Germany would not be treated as she had been in 1918." He said, "If such a guarantee as this could be obtained . . . the movement would be pushed to a successful conclusion." He refused to give any names.¹ Welles knew of the existence of this opposition, and he knew that the Army High Command was connected with it, and was considering a putsch.² Icy as always, he remained uncommunicative. Realizing that he was losing out, Schacht asked Welles to get him an invitation to a neutral country or to give a series of lectures at some American university. Welles advised him rather to persuade Hitler to send him abroad. After this attempt also came to nothing, Schacht asked if, at least, he could keep in touch with Welles. Again he was disappointed. Welles referred him to the American embassy in Berlin as the proper place for contacts with the government of the United States. Schacht responded that every cable sent by the American embassy was immediately read by German decoders. Welles rejected Schacht's apprehensions, stating that the

¹F.R., 1940, I, 57.

²Ibid., 109; Langer and Gleason, 247, 255.

United States had various ways for transmitting confidential cables.¹

The conversation from which so much was expected had turned out to be a dud. Though Schacht was encouraged because Welles had not rejected outright his attempts to remain in touch with him, and though the conspirators noted

¹The story follows Welles's confidential report (F.R., 1940, I, 57). This account has been written shortly after the event. There are two later versions of the conversation. Earl Beck (147f.) based his report on Hassell's diaries and Schacht's memoirs as well as on a letter of Sumner Welles to him. He states that Schacht just managed to give Welles some note about the German opposition. As this story is neither in Hassell's diaries nor in Schacht's memoirs, he must have received that information from Welles. Most surprising is Schacht's own account (Confessions, 367). He remembers only flatteries Welles supposedly said to him. According to him the conversation was mainly about economic matters. Schacht states that Welles sought his advice about the economic problems of the post-war world. This was, indeed, the reason Welles had given to Ernst von Weizsaecker, Secretary of State in the German Foreign Office, when he had requested the conversation with the financier. In regard to the resistance movement, Schacht just mentions that he made no secret about his opposition to the war. All three versions probably contain some truth. As more persons than just Schacht and Welles were present at the lunch, they presumably did not have much time undisturbed by others. During these moments they might have talked about the conspiracy; while others were present, economics might have been their topic. What each writer has selected for his presentation of the interview, reflects his character and purposes. Welles apparently thought Schacht's economic opinions unworthy to report, either because the financier presented nothing noteworthy, or because the post-war economic settlement was at this stage not Welles's real interest. More difficult is the problem why Schacht did not report his remarks on the resistance movement, but that is of no immediate concern for our topic. Simplifying, one might say that Schacht's aim was to sell his book. Cooperation with the enemy in war-time might smell like high treason and annoy possible buyers.

that he had said the dismemberment of Germany was not intended by the United States,¹ the practical results were nil.

The generals--the decisive factor--remained unimpressed. Indeed, Welles's visit had an unintended effect in favor of the Nazis, for the generals were confirmed in their belief that the western powers considered Hitler as the only partner for negotiations. To the dismay of the opposition, Welles's trip to Berlin enhanced Hitler's prestige. After Welles's return to America had brought no peace, military circles were more convinced than ever that the real aim of the Allies was the destruction of Germany, a super-Versailles. The conspirators could still not guarantee that the Allies would not use a temporary German weakness to this end.²

Thus it looked to the conspirators and the generals. The affair presented itself to Welles in a different light. Schacht was, to say the least, a dubious character. On March 4, 1940, while Welles was still in Berlin, Newsweek reported that Schacht was far from having broken with Hitler. The magazine stated that he was engaged in some secret and important tasks. Though Welles knew about the resistance

¹Hassell, 121; Ritter, 495.

²Walter Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff (New York, 1959), 370.

movement, he could not be sure what role Schacht played in it. It has to be remembered that State Department and White House had repulsed all earlier attempts by the financier to get into contact with the American authorities. Besides, the Venlo incident--where two British intelligence officers had been lured into a trap by a German Secret Service (Sicherheitsdienst) major who pretended to be a conspirator--showed that one had to be careful in dealing with people who claimed to be emissaries of a conspiracy. A diplomatic incident was easily provoked. Plans and actions of the conspiracy remained mostly unknown. Before Welles arrived in Europe, Newsweek reported that there was no indication of any resistance movement, particularly none within the Army.¹ Bernardo Attolico and Vicomte Jacques Davignon, the Italian and Belgian Ambassadors in Berlin, were probably the most experienced and best informed diplomats at the time in the German capital. They assured Welles that "the internal and army opposition to Hitler . . . has now completely died away."²

Schacht could offer nothing conclusive during the short conversation. There were no plans, no names, no proof that

¹Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Feb. 26), 9.

²F.R., 1940, I, 50. It is interesting that Welles's notes of his talks with these diplomats treat mainly the subject of internal opposition to Hitler. Other subjects apparently did not interest him, or did not seem important enough to mention in his report.

any conspiracy against Hitler existed. Schacht boldly asked for assurances for a "just peace," and for contacts with the United States. The latter had been rejected frequently, and there was no reason why they should be granted now. To guarantee a just peace in case of an overthrow of the Nazi regime would have gone beyond Welles's scope since he was not authorized to make any commitments. The evidence, Welles explained later, seemed too slight to warrant taking seriously the statement of an individual who enjoyed everywhere a reputation for slipperiness. He did not want to become involved in an intrigue with such a man.¹

George F. Kennan, who served at that time in the American Embassy in Berlin, had submitted a memorandum to Pierrepont Moffat, Welles's assistant, warning against the "siren songs of the German conservatives," especially Schacht.² Similarly, he had warned against counting on the known differences between Hitler and the army leadership. Kennan argued, assurances of good treatment in case of an overthrow of the Hitler regime were useless, since the evil lay in the German people.³

These opinions of experts reflect the little knowledge about Germany's internal situation at that time. George F.

¹Langer and Gleason, 367. Their account is based on a conversation between the authors and Welles.

²Kennan doubts that Moffat read his memorandum.

³Kennan, 118.

Kennan, for example, soon learned more about the opposition to Hitler. When he reread his memorandum he was astonished about the "puerility of the nostalgic conclusion." He had come to the belief "that the Allies had missed a chance precisely by failing to deal with the German conservatives and the army leaders."¹ Welles's mission offered possibly the best occasion for an agreement with Germany's better elements; but few realized that chance in early 1940.

What might have happened if Welles had acted otherwise can only be guessed. Two weeks after the Welles-Schacht conversation, Carl Goerdeler, the head of the conspiracy, had a long meeting with Franz Halder, the Chief of Staff of the Army. Goerdeler stressed the necessity of making peace immediately, and pointed to the "possibility of a favorable compromise."² Halder and C-in-C Brauchitsch might have reacted more willingly if Goerdeler had had something more to offer than only "the possibility of a favorable compromise." The desired guarantee--given in the name of the most powerful neutral--might have convinced the Army leaders that the overthrow of the Hitler regime would be the best service to the nation. A less icy final rejection by Welles might have encouraged the conspirators to action. The few minutes

¹Kennan, 119.

²Franz Halder thought it important enough to make a longer note in his diary. Halder, Diary, III, 125.

the American envoy spent in private conversation with Hjalmar Schacht could have led to the overthrow of the Nazi regime; but the probability of such a development was slight.

Even if Welles had been daring enough to trespass his orders so far as to give encouragement to the conspirators, he still might have had no success. The history of the conspiracy justifies this assumption. The conspirators themselves long had been convinced that action should be taken, and it was unlikely that the further stimulation of a guarantee given by Welles would have moved them to finally execute their plans. Chamberlain already had expressed a "solemn obligation" on the part of His Majesty's Government that a just peace would be granted should the German government change. Nothing had happened at that time.

But it should be remembered that Chamberlain's promise brought the conspiracy to the brink of success. The Prime Minister's pledge convinced Brauchitsch. The C-in-C of the Army "was prepared to make a final effort with the Fuehrer. . . . If this failed he would come down on the side of the conspirators."¹ While the army staff began to work out plans for the putsch, the general finally found the courage to go to Hitler. He told the Fuehrer bluntly that the army was

¹Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis, 469f.

opposed to aggression in the west. Hitler turned on Brauchitsch with the "full fury of his vitriolic spleen." He reminded the army of its pledge of obedience, and reproached it and its leaders with cowardice. The C-in-C left the conversation completely broken.¹

While the armed forces waited for the order to attack in the west, the spirit of opposition died down. A promise similar to Chamberlain's but this time given by the neutral and far more respected Americans might have revived it--and this time Brauchitsch might not have been so impressed with Hitler's fury. Action was more urgent than at the time of Chamberlain's pledge. But Brauchitsch was an indecisive man. He was not a born revolutionary. Chances are that the outcome would have been the same.

Encouragement for the opposition, and the promise of a just peace might not and probably would not have changed anything. But it was the only possibility to come to a settlement with a non-Nazi, peaceful Germany. When Welles talked with the President about his mission, President Roosevelt had said there was one chance in a hundred for success. Maybe this was the one.

¹Wheeler-Bennett, Nemesis, 460-474; Ritter, 246.

CHAPTER VII

PEACE

The incident with Schacht had been unexpected and had not impressed the American Under Secretary. Sumner Welles preferred to deal with the established governments rather than with a resistance movement. He tried to reach his aim through cooperation among the existing European administrations, and had high hopes for success. "It will be a very important trip--that is, it may be. If Sumner can find any willingness on the part of the various responsible officials of any of those Governments to cease hostilities, it will be very important, but if he does not find any such situation, it will probably mean that the war will continue on ad infinitum."¹ Assistant Secretary Breckinridge Long had recognized the inherent danger of Welles's endeavors. If Welles, the emissary of the all powerful United States, presented himself as peace mediator and failed, most hopes for peace mediation would be lost. Intervention by the United States was the strongest trump in the gamble for peace.

¹Israel, Long Diary, 58.

This risk, notably, Welles took. He left no doubt that despite all the official denials his aim was to find peace "at this juncture."¹

Peace was what most people expected of him. Newspapers were filled with reports on his progress in making peace.² Even American authorities assumed that he would search for peace. Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt openly said so,³ and her husband explained in a speech on March 16 the bases on which a peace should rest.

The problem of peace had played a major role in the preparation of his mission. It had been discussed with the British government before his mission was announced and was again mentioned by the President in his concluding remarks to the press about the Welles mission on March 29.⁴ Robert Murphy, the chargé d'affaires in France, even claims that he was instructed that Welles would come to Paris "on a peace mission."⁵

What hope was there for the establishment of peace? Welles apparently thought there was a possibility that a

¹F.R., 1940, I, 73.

²Since Welles did not reveal anything, infallible indicators were used, like his facial expression on leaving conferences.

³New York Times, Feb. 12, 1940, 1.

⁴F.R., 1940, I, 1-4, 20.

⁵Murphy, 35.

basis for a settlement might be found. Secretary of State Hull, on the other hand, had no such hopes. "The only way to stop his [Hitler's] preparations was to give him everything he asked," Hull said, "but this meant Nazi domination of Europe and another war within a few years."¹ Joseph Alsop thought a peace mission to Europe "rather like peddling Bibles in a brothel."² Ambassador Joseph E. Davies warned Roosevelt in a personal letter: "They are so 'sot' on both sides that it will take a major reverse on one side or the other to get them to even sit down and talk things over."³ The President did not express his opinion on the possibility of peace publicly, but his "stubborn refusal to deny the fantastic report that he might confer with foreign statesmen was noted."⁴

In September 1939, he had still been strongly opposed to any mediation. At that time Kennedy had reported a British mediation demand. Roosevelt rejected it outright.⁵ However, in his State of the Union Message of January 3, 1940, he had said that the United States would continue to be "a potent and active factor for the re-establishment of

¹Hull, 738.

²Alsop, White Paper, 86.

³Letter of Davies to F.D.R., February 10, 1940; Roosevelt Papers, PSF State.

⁴Newsweek, XV, 1940 (Feb. 26), 9.

⁵Langer and Gleason, 249.

of world peace."¹ His support for the Welles mission is further proof that he was interested in the establishment of peace, and believed that it might be possible to reach an agreement.²

An early, discarded draft of the President's announcement of the mission stated that its object was to ascertain whether the belligerent powers "will state for the confidential information of the President the bases upon which they would be prepared to make peace."³ The President did consider talking peace with the European governments.

Whatever the President's opinion on negotiations with the Nazis might have been, important for the outcome of the mission was what Welles considered to be the President's opinion. He said after the war about his mission: "Roosevelt was at least willing to contemplate a peace with Hitler if . . . the Fuehrer would submit acceptable terms."⁴ William Langer, who was generally well informed and at that time possessed close contacts with the State Department, holds that Roosevelt was willing to talk peace "even, it must be

¹Rauch, 179.

²Myron Taylor, the President's personal representative to the Vatican, hinted to the Italian Ambassador near the Holy see, Dino Alfieri, that the United States would intervene, if possible, to facilitate a peace settlement. Taylor believed that the moment for a peace offensive had not yet arrived, but might come very suddenly (potrà essere offerto subito) after the great offensive. DDI, IX, 3, 409.

³Langer and Gleaton, 362.

⁴Ibid., 362.

supposed, if this were to involve negotiations with the existing German Government." He claims that "it was a major objective of the Welles mission to explore peace possibilities even with a Nazi Government."¹ Americans apparently believed the time had come to sit down at the conference table; but was Europe ready yet? It was Welles's aim to find that out.

Unfortunately, the failure to reach a clear conception of the desired peace resulted in vague questions by Welles which called for vague answers. Welles avoided a discussion of specific stipulations of the intended peace. To describe the desired settlement he employed well sounding but undefined adjectives like "just," "lasting," "real," "secure," not "patched-up" or "temporary." Everybody turned out to be enthusiastic about a "lasting," "real," and "secure" peace and bitterly opposed to a "patched-up," or "temporary" settlement, but most seemed to have something different in mind. The only concrete ideas which Welles presented were contained in a memorandum on post-war economic relations. But, as Hitler pointed out, it was not much use to dream about post-war trade while peace was not even in sight. Disarmament was another topic of Welles's, and it found enthusiasm among his conversational partners. Hitler himself was one of the most enthusiastic. He even shed some

¹Langer and Gleason, 352, 362.

crocodile tears over the principle, complaining his desire had been to build up a happy prosperous Germany but that he now was forced to build guns instead of Volkswagens. The German leader's designs were not endangered; disarmament could come only after peace was established.

* * *

From a traditional point of view the war seemed to be over, and the time for a settlement had come. Hostilities had broken out over east European territories, the military decision had been made, and now it was time to re-establish peace by settling the territorial problems according to the military decision. This point of view had been presented by the Germans in October, 1939, and was adhered to by many neutrals. Differences existed with regard to boundary settlements, and there was a basic problem which was not recognized by many in neutral as well as in belligerent countries. Would a traditional peace settlement as practiced before Versailles, a peace based upon the redrawing of boundaries and the payment of indemnities, suffice in this situation? In 1940 there could not be another Versailles. As there had been no military decision between the western Allies and Germany, it would have to be a compromise peace, most likely at the expense of East Central Europe. Those who advocated peace in 1940 with Nazi Germany--and the

majority of Americans did--at least indirectly advocated such a solution.

The peace would strengthen Germany. The German armies were the only ones who had gained decisive victories, and Hitler would demand his reward. Therefore, the Allies appeared to be opposed to peace negotiations "at this juncture." Seen in the traditional view (not considering the relatively new problem of opposition to a certain form of government or new ways of guaranteeing peace in the future), the western Allies were not ready and willing to grant the territorial adjustment to which Germany seemed entitled as a result of her victory. Germany appeared to be ready to settle down to peace while the Allies refused to accept the fact of their defeat.

Since France and Great Britain had rejected Hitler's peace offer of October 6, 1939, a paradoxical situation had developed. Hitler, the aggressor, increasingly emphasized his desire for peace, while the speeches of the Allied leaders became tougher in their demand for a continuation of the war to the total defeat of Germany. The French and British government had to step up the fighting spirit in their countries. Hitler seemed to have reached his aim, and appeared to be satisfied. Significantly, all rumors of peace moves claimed German initiative, and even Welles was supposed to cooperate with the Germans. The Allies appeared to be the real opponents to peace, and the greatest obstacle to a

success for the Welles mission seemed to be in the Allied capitals; and there Welles discovered a chance for the most surprising concessions.

Both western Allies publicly displayed unity and a firm determination to fight this war through to a successful conclusion. Few were really impressed with this demonstration of toughness. Among these was the American Minister in Paris who reported on February 10 that France was determined "that the constant peril of Germany . . . must be wiped out." Peace was sought by the Allies "by victory of their arms. . . . These are the preliminary conditions to all negotiations."¹ On the same day Joseph E. Davies, former Ambassador to Belgium and now special assistant to the Secretary of State, took the occasion to inform the President in a letter from his vacation retreat in Florida that the French are not "ready yet to be content with anything short of a clean job this time."² Welles himself tried to create the image of the determination and vigor among Allied leaders in his war-time book. The French Premier Daladier, he reported, told him: "France must fight."³

The reality was different. Memories of the sufferings of World War I, the tremendous success of German arms in

¹F.R., 1940, I, 6.

²Letter of Davies to F.D.R., Feb. 10, 1940; Roosevelt Papers, PSF State.

³Welles, Time, 123.

Poland, and a winter of constant fear of invasion had strained French nerves. Frequent rumors of impending attack and the presence of more than two hundred divisions along their frontier, combined with a continual flow of German propaganda, had demoralized not only the population and armed forces, but also to a large degree French leadership.

The French wanted to see an end to this war. They were willing to make concessions. When Welles mentioned territorial readjustment to Daladier, the Premier told him that "in his own judgment there was every reason why the really German peoples of Central Europe should live under German rule, provided they so desired. The City of Danzig was clearly a German city, and it was equally obvious that the Germans of the Sudetenland, or of western Poland should be afforded the opportunity of uniting with the Reich if they so desired."¹ Hitler could not have asked for more. Welles noted: "The Prime Minister made it very clear to me that he did not believe that political or territorial adjustment would create any insuperable difficulty in reaching peace. He made it equally clear that whatever he might say in public, he would not refuse to deal with the present German régime."² Most French statesmen shared this view. Paul Reynaud, who was to become Premier in a few days, assured Welles "that he believed the political and territorial issues

¹F.R., 1940, I, 63.

²Ibid.

now at stake could be solved without any considerable difficulty through negotiations between the Allies and Germany."¹ France was willing to concede Germany what she demanded in the East. Despite the note of confidence and toughness in public addresses² Welles could convince himself that France would not object any longer to a territorial readjustment, that she was ready for another Munich.

Great Britain appeared to be more determined. The British press, and public utterances by prominent politicians showed determination to fight until the complete defeat of Germany. Newspapers praised allied firmness and unity. The frequent rumors of peace feelers were discredited as Nazi designs. The Germans were even accused of using the Sumner Welles mission in an attempt to weaken allied resolution by talk of a patched-up peace.³ Over and over again British papers informed their readers that Welles had not come for peace, that President Roosevelt and the American administration did not want peace now.⁴ When Welles left Berlin, Britishers read that "the certainties of this war are that . . . there will be no shoddy or illusionary

¹F.R., 1940, I, 71.

²On April 3, a few days after Welles had left Europe, Reynaud, the new Premier, declared again publicly that there would be no peace without a decision on the battlefield. New York Times, April 4, 1940, 9.

³London Times, Mar. 11, 8.

⁴Ibid., Mar. 19, 8; Mar. 11, 8; Feb. 12, 6; Mar. 8, 8; Feb. 10, 6; etc.

peace."¹ This determination impressed observers. American pro-Allied papers picked it up. While Welles was in Europe a New York Times editorial stated: "Increasingly . . . it becomes apparent that before this war ends one side or the other must be whipped and whipped decisively."² This opinion was supported by the resolution of public speeches. Just when the world turned its eyes on Welles's arrival in Italy and dreamed about an imminent peace, Chamberlain declared in a speech, apparently intended to obstruct the peace talk which had arisen in connection with Welles's visit, that Britain had "no reason to fear the result of this conflict." The nation, he said, was united as never before in its history to fight for one aim: the destruction of Hitlerism.³

However, the "phony war" had not been without its effects on the British. The thought of peace grew increasingly popular. In a recent by-election an unknown and unsupported candidate had won twenty-four per cent of the votes on a simple anti-war platform. The population was beginning to suffer under the war-time restrictions, and it grew disenchanted with the proceedings.

¹London Times, Mar. 4, 1940, 7.

²New York Times, Mar. 3, IV, 3.

³London Times, Feb. 26, 8.

Despite the frequent claims of unity, and the contention that Welles must have been impressed with the unanimity among British politicians, it seems that if anything impressed him, it was the disunity of British leaders and the wide variety of opinions. In London, Welles had the best chance to meet a truly representative range of thought. His conversation partners came from the far right to the far left, concepts of peace ranged from the necessity of complete defeat with a subsequent "atomization" and a century-long occupation of Germany¹ to the demand of an immediate compromise. Any measure would surely find ardent opponents.

Important were the opinions of those who determined policy. The King made clear that he hoped for a military victory, and not for negotiations.² His government was split into two groups: the former appeasers around Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Foreign Minister Lord Halifax, and the opponents of appeasement, foremost among them Winston Churchill, who was again in the Admiralty, and Anthony Eden, who had rejoined Chamberlain's cabinet as Dominions Secretary. Labor "was not opposed to peace through negotiations with any government of Germany."³ The

¹by which about 70 per cent of the Germany of 1940 should go to its neighbors, while the rest should be divided in four states.

²Roosevelt Papers, PSF State, Welles's report.

³F.R., 1940, I, 81.

dominions' governments let Welles know through the Australian High Commissioner Stanley Melbourne Bruce that they favored a settlement through negotiations.¹

The Eden-Churchill group was still determined to make no deals with Germany. Welles first met Eden, who told him that the only possible solution was "an allied victory, the destruction of Hitlerism, and the forcing upon the German people of a government which would pursue policies" in accord with the Allies. Any attempt at peace "would put us to an unfair disadvantage" for a dictatorship could fairly easy turn from peace to war and back again. Not so a democracy.² Churchill was even more precise: The new peace treaty would have to control Germany's course in the future for a hundred years. "There could be no solution other than outright and complete defeat of Germany."³ Churchill and Eden presented an extreme opinion. They did not determine British policy. Chamberlain and Halifax were still masters of the situation.

Chamberlain had been deeply disappointed by Hitler's insincerity. The events after Munich had stiffened his attitude. He seemed resolved to go through with this fight. Most historians as well as his biographers agree that by 1940 he was firm in his will to crush Hitlerism, but was

¹F.R., 1940, I, 82.

²Ibid., and Sir Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning (London, 1965), 91f.

³F.R., 1940, I, 84.

willing to come to terms with a non-Nazi Germany. He was supposed to be uncompromising about the necessity of the overthrow of Hitler. Indeed, he expressed this idea in the consultation with Roosevelt before announcement of Welles's mission.¹ On February 24 Chamberlain said that Britain for its part was ready to seek a settlement with any responsible and sincere government. After previous remarks about Hitler this apparently excluded the Fuehrer.² Chamberlain made clear at every possible occasion that peace with Hitler was neither considered nor wanted.

The British government had not changed their opinion when they welcomed Welles. In the opening conversation with Halifax, the Foreign Minister declared that "no lasting peace could be made in Europe as long as the Nazi regime dominated Germany."³ Chamberlain expressed himself much more strongly: "England was determined . . . to defeat a Government in Germany which was set upon a policy of cruel military conquest."⁴ The German people had to prove its wish for real peace by the overthrow of the Nazi regime.⁵ But both Prime Minister and Foreign Minister were impressed with Welles's presentation of German feelings. The Germans, Welles told them, were convinced that England was bent upon

¹F.R., 1940, I, 2-4.

²Langer and Gleason, 363.

³F.R., 1940, I, 73.

⁴Ibid., 75.

⁵Ibid., 77.

the annihilation of Germany. Both immediately denied any such intentions; but both thought the problem over and discussed the necessity and desirability of peace. The result was a surprising change of mind while Welles was in London.

The first indication came when Halifax confidentially drew Welles's attention to the fact that "Chamberlain had undergone the most harrowing human experience of which a statesman could conceive as a result of the Munich episode, and that as a result his point of view was necessarily affected in all that related to British policy toward Germany and in particular toward the members of the present German Government." The explanation of this remarkable observation is simple. Halifax was convinced of the importance of the Welles mission. He worked on Chamberlain to change his rigid attitude.²

In his second conversation with Welles the Prime Minister told the American Under Secretary that he had thought much about the situation since their last meeting, especially about the German fear of annihilation. He admitted that the spirit of vengeance after a devastating war might be so strong that a just peace would be impossible. He was, therefore, willing to confirm in a binding statement to the President of the United States that Britain neither wanted

¹F.R., 1940, I, 79.

²Ibid., 87.

to destroy Germany nor subjugate the German people. No future government would deviate from such a solemn pledge. It would imply no commitment for the United States as it was a unilateral declaration. Welles seems to have distrusted the Prime Minister's scheme. He only promised to communicate the British proposal to the President.¹

Chamberlain grew even more earnest and emphasized again that he had thought a great deal and consulted a few colleagues about the first conversation. The result of these meditations, he told Welles, was that he would not discard "an opportunity of striving for a real and lasting peace merely because the present Nazi regime remained in power." He "would not be in any sense intransigent with regard to the ultimate frontiers of Poland, nor with regard to the boundaries of the new Czech state."² Having grasped the sense of this statement, Welles concluded, "he saw no insuperable obstacle with regard to political and territorial problems as a basis of peace."³ Apparently, England was at last willing to acknowledge Hitler's victory and to grant him the fruits of that military success.

The major barrier to a territorial settlement had disappeared. There were still the Italian demands but Italy was not a belligerent, and the French leaders had expressed

¹Nothing ever came of it.

²F.R., 1940, I, 88.

³Ibid., 89.

great willingness to grant most of Rome's requests, though Great Britain might still object to a strengthened Italian position in the Mediterranean.

The exact German demands were not known but did not seem to go much further than what France and Britain were willing to yield. There had been general speculation that German proposals would include a plebiscite in Austria, an independent Czech state, an independent Poland, but both without the parts with a heavy German population, and an arrangement by which Germany could win access to colonial raw materials. The German government had never expressly stated these aims, but Mussolini told Welles that Germany would make peace on them, combined with the concession of a dominating position in Central Europe.¹ Goering affirmed these points.² Hitler indirectly declared that Germany wanted to have the historical German Empire restored-- though without Alsace-Lorraine--but did not desire to dominate non-German peoples. One rather ominous wish was his demand for "security" in Central Europe through disarmament of Poland and the Czech state. This request was combined with the desire for German "economic hegemony" in this area, and what the Germans termed a Monroe Doctrine

¹F.R., 1940, I, 32.

²Ibid., 53.

for Central Europe.¹ These problems, while serious, might have been overcome in negotiations. There did not seem to be any basic difficulties in the settlement of territorial, political, and economic problems.

Was Hitler sincere? Did he really want peace? He had refused to state specific terms or to bind himself by promises. He had avoided any commitment by disclaiming that Germany possessed war aims against England. It was, Hitler stated, purely a war of defense against the allied desire to annihilate Germany. He had rejected any possibility for peace, arguing that the Allies were determined to destroy the German Nation. He had indicated Germany's aims in the East but he had not promised he would abide by them--if a promise by Hitler had any significance. Nevertheless the intimation of his aims had given Welles confidence. He told Attolico, the Italian Ambassador, that his talks with German officials had made him "moderately but not unduly optimistic,"² and he had left Weizsaecker and Dieckhoff with the impression that he saw a chance for

¹Ibid., 38, 48f. For the development of the idea of a German Monroe Doctrine see: Lothar Gruchmann, Nationalsozialistische Grossraumordnung. Die Konstruktion einer "deutschen Monroe-Doktrin." Vierteljahreshefte fuer Zeitgeschichte, Schriftenreihe, v. 4 (Stuttgart, 1962).

²Simoni, 92.

success.¹ Even the press thought the situation improved after the Berlin visit. The New York Times reported that chances had increased from one in a thousand to one in a hundred.²

Hitler had a habit of charming and deceiving his visitors. There is reason to doubt that he meant what he said. He could hardly have told Welles that he was bent upon world conquest. He may have been willing to sign a peace treaty, but he surely was not eager to do so. He had only very hesitantly agreed to receive Welles, apparently because he anticipated that Welles might bring peace.³

Goebbels' orders for the press were meant to nip in the bud any popular hope for peace. Yet this opposition to any peace talks might have been caused by his firm belief that peace was impossible. Defeatism would only support the Allies in their endeavor to destroy Germany. Welles was much impressed with the conviction of the Germans that the war was being fought in self-defense. He certainly spoke

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 665; Weizsaecker, 277; Welles (Time, 109) claims that he realized already in Berlin "that it was only too tragically plain that all decisions had already been made." Since nothing of that is in his contemporary report, one can discount that statement as a later judgment. His remarks at the time as well as his consequent endeavors in Paris, London, and Rome show that he did not consider his mission a failure after the Berlin talks.

²New York Times, Mar. 10, IV, 3.

³Schmidt, 475; Kordt, Wahn, 239.

about it in all his consequent conversations in Europe. Hitler had pressed the same point in his interview with James D. Mooney, a self-appointed peace mediator, two days after Welles's visit in the Chancellery. He told him that as soon as Germany was secure from that menace, peace could be concluded.¹

Since the offer of October 6, Germany had rejected any rumor of a new peace proposal. But it was so obviously in an excellent position for peace negotiations that the rumor mills never stopped, and they reached a high point while Welles was in Europe. Diplomats as well as journalists believed in a German peace move. Ambassador Davies thought Hitler would offer at least the facade of an autonomous Poland and Czechoslovakia.² Henrik M. de With, Netherland's Minister in Berlin, told Pierrepont Moffat that the Nazis wanted peace; Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long expected a German peace offensive with Welles as the instrumentality; even Mussolini prepared mediation of a German offer.³ The Russo-Finnish peace and Ribbentrop's visit to Rome, immediately followed by Welles's return to

¹Andreas Hillgruber, ed., Staatsmaenner und Diplomaten bei Hitler (Frankfurt, 1967), 83-85.

²Letter of Davies to F.D.R., Feb. 10, 1940, Roosevelt Papers, PSF State.

³Hooker, Moffat Papers, 294; Israel, Long Diary, 69; Ciano, Diaries, 211.

Italy, caused a flood of peace stories in the press, centering around a German effort. Ambassador Mackensen's visit to Ciano's palace while the Minister conferred with Welles, and the subsequent news of the Brenner meeting made a peace initiative appear imminent. Michele Lanza, an Italian diplomat in Berlin, wrote in his diary, "Everybody thinks we are but two steps away from peace."¹ The feeling was so general that Mussolini thought--despite Ribbentrop's warning--that Hitler would present his peace conditions on the Brenner.² After the Alpine talks there seemed to be no doubt that the topic had been peace and that Hitler had sought Mussolini's advice and support. "It appeared . . . that Signor Mussolini had this time scored over his colleague,"³ asserted the New York Times. One of the most amazing aspects of the Welles mission is the nonsense which even the world's most respected newspapers spread as the truth in absence of any solid information. German demurrers were not accepted. Several times German officials denied any peace plans, and the German press waged a violent battle to repudiate press stories about such plans.⁴

¹Simoni, 103f:

²Ciano, Diaries, 211.

³New York Times, Mar. 19, 1.

⁴Toynbee, Survey, 455; Ciano, Diaries, 224. Reports in London Times, 1940, Mar. 12, 8; Mar. 16, 8; Mar. 18, 8; Mar. 19, 8; Mar. 20, 8; New York Times, 1940, Mar. 18, 6; Mar. 19, 1; Mar. 1, 1.

German authorities had considered the problem of peace intensively. Before Welles's arrival Hitler hardly left the Chancellery for several days. He was busy meditating about the situation. When he left his seclusion and went to the Brenner meeting, Ciano found him much less uncompromising than had been Ribbentrop.¹ Welles had gained the same impression in Berlin. It meant merely that Hitler was the better diplomat; Ribbentrop was nothing but a mouth-piece, more rigid and less able to simulate than his master. On February 24, the same day that Chamberlain had expressed his opinion on the European situation, Hitler made a speech describing the German position. He declared his desire to break Britain's power. "I am determined to see this fight through," he said. He admitted no possibility of a compromise peace.² Again, one might see in this speech only an attempt to keep public morale high as long as nothing definite had developed, comparable to Daladier's attitude. The address was obviously given in the intention to counteract a possible influence of the Welles mission and meant to choke rising hopes for peace among the population. But Hitler had the same idea expressed in secret diplomatic communications with Italy. The Germans knew of the Italian desire for peace. If Hitler would really have wanted peace,

¹Ciano, Diaries, 223.

²London Times, Feb. 26, 1940, 5f.; Langer and Gleason, 363.

he could have asked his Italian partners to mediate, or at least explore the possibilities. Quite to the contrary, the Italian Embassy was informed that Germany expected Italy to display "great reserve" in case of a new offer of mediation.¹ In consequence, the Italian press was ordered not to mention peace in connection with the Brenner meeting.² Ribbentrop thought it necessary to inform German diplomats on foreign posts in a circular about the Brenner meeting: "Any speculation about a joint peace offensive is pointless, because neither Germany nor Italy consider peace to be possible."³

Hitler himself saw to it that no peace hopes should arise in the wrong quarters. On February 2, before the Welles mission had been announced, he had said to Magistrati, the second man in the Italian Embassy: "I do not see any possibility for a rapprochement and I hope that a compromise solution will never be attained for it would make a new conflict inevitable."⁴ Ribbentrop informed the Italian leaders while he was in Rome that because of the Allied will to destroy the Axis, no solution other than war was possible. "The Fuehrer does not believe in the possibility of peace."⁵ The German press was full of threats

¹Simoni, 98.

²Phillips, 263.

³DGFP, D, IX, 7.

⁴Simoni, 80.

⁵Ciano, Diplomatic Papers, 341.

against the Allies.¹ The generals were told that the peace offer of October still stood, and that nothing new would be offered.² The Allies, of course, could not accept that. After having rejected the offer so emphatically at the time, they could not justify the acceptance to their people now.

The Germans clearly were not interested in another Munich. Hitler had long believed that a major war between the democracies and the corporate states was inevitable. He was convinced that Germany would never again find itself in such a favorable position vis-à-vis England. "To accept a compromise peace under these conditions would make him an accomplice of treason," he told an Italian diplomat.³ This time he was resolved to see the fight through.

If one assumes that Hitler wanted more than the "reasonable" aims he put forward, the nervousness of the German officials becomes understandable. Munich was also a defeat for Hitler. Chamberlain, he felt, had cheated him out of his war at a time when he could have justified it to the German people. Now there was a possibility for another Munich in more favorable circumstances than 1938. Hitler faced a dilemma. The mood for peace and appeasement was strong among

¹Cf. Voelkischer Beobachter, 1940, Feb. 26, 2; Feb. 29, 2, Mar. 20, 2.

²Halder Diary, III, 126.

³Simoni, 95.

the Allies and neutrals as well as among Germans. Hitler knew there was a good chance that the Allies might give in to his demands; yet he had decided that the decisive battle for hegemony in Europe should not be delayed any longer. In case of a peace offer he had to give guarantees for the security of his neighbors. If he refused to do so, or if he made unreasonable demands--demands which could not be justified as a revision of the "dictat of Versailles" or as necessary for German survival and security--he would lose what sympathies he still might have among the population of the Allies and the neutrals, as well as among his own people, especially among the military circles which were, as he knew, still reluctant. If peace was made now, and he again broke it, the world would be united against him to a far greater degree than it had been when he declared war on Poland. Hitler had as much to fear from a peace as had those allied leaders who advocated a tough position.

Hitler's fears might have been Welles's chance. As the Allies were willing to negotiate Germany's territorial demands, Hitler might have been maneuvered in a position where it was either peace or loss of all sympathies abroad, and a peculiar situation at home. But Welles was not aware of that possibility. He left Berlin, as we have seen, optimistically. Hitler had understood to make Welles believe that he really wanted peace.

Welles encountered the main obstacle to success for his mission in Paris. The French government was most willing to agree to a compromise and yet most unwilling to sign any settlement which lacked one stipulation: security. It was only in the light of security that all other problems appeared to be minor. If that great aim could be reached, the ownership of a few square miles in Central Europe would not matter.

A traditional settlement would not do since this was not a traditional war. Welles was confronted with a change in the character of warfare. No longer was a military conflict "the continuation of politics by other means." This war was not fought for limited territorial, political, or economic aims. The shift from limited to total war brought a change from limited to total aims. For the Allies this struggle was a war to end all wars. Traditional war aims were overshadowed by this great purpose.

The extension of warfare involved the nation as a whole. Civilians had become engaged in the war effort on a large scale for the first time in World War I, and had consequently become object and subject of warfare. Popular government gave the affected population the possibility to express their wishes. Those who had to bear the hardship and danger of war could make their opinions felt. Popular pressure for disarmament began long before World War I, but

after that experience the demand for security reached an unprecedented height. Ever since it had remained the major topic of European diplomacy.

Notably, when Welles came to Europe, he hardly touched upon the question of security in Rome and Berlin. It was the French who shoved the problem right under his nose. Nearly all of his conversations in Paris dealt at length with the question of security, and all agreed that there could be no settlement without lasting guarantees. French willingness to come to some territorial agreement depended on their estimate whether Germany would keep peaceful after further concessions had been granted, or whether only a German defeat could secure peace for Europe. "France . . . must fight until she had gained actual security for herself,"¹ Premier Daladier said, and he expressed the feelings of most of his fellow countrymen. This was no war for Poland's territorial integrity. Concessions at the cost of Poland could readily be made "but always upon one fundamental and essential basis, namely, that France should thereby obtain actual practical, physical security."² French political leaders were unanimous: "The real problem was . . . security."³

¹F.R., 1940, I, 63.

²Ibid., 64.

³Ibid., 71, quote from a conversation with Reynaud.

In Great Britain Welles met the same sentiment. British politicians agreed that the primary goal of this war was security.¹ There could be no peace, no settlement without guarantees of security. In London, too, the differences in opinion toward any settlement reflected differences in opinion about Germany's attitude toward peace. Though he accepted the idea with much reluctance, Chamberlain was willing to make another gesture toward the Hitler regime. He continued to doubt whether Hitler would give the necessary guarantees,² which would have to be the basis of any negotiations. Others wanted to see Hitler and his cronies ousted first, and still others believed that the evil lay in the character of the German people. Only a crushing military defeat and enslavement of Germany for the next century could save the world from future aggression. Security considerations formed the basis in any case.

Welles was impressed with this clamor for security. By his second visit to Italy, his attitude had changed markedly. Now the Under Secretary put the question of security forward with great emphasis. He was convinced "that the fundamental problem at the moment was whether human ingenuity could devise some form of physical security."³

¹F.R., 1940, I, 74, 77, 81, 88, 89.

²Ibid., 88.

³Ibid., 92, 96, 107.

His ignorance is astonishing. Welles should have anticipated that after Versailles, after the development of the twenties and the thirties, and after September 1, 1939, security would not be forgotten; yet the French and British requests seemed to take him by surprise. If he had foreseen that security would be a major problem, a logical step would have been to find out in Berlin what guarantees the German government was willing to give in exchange for territorial and economical concessions. In Rome as well as in Berlin, Welles was so preoccupied with the territorial settlement that security considerations were pushed into the background. In Paris and London his hosts insisted on dwelling upon that question. He did not bring it up himself.

Though he apparently was not prepared for the subject, he was not unwilling to consider it. He discussed some vague plan of an international air force guarding the European peace--an idea forwarded¹ by Daladier--and a scarcely less vague proposal by Ciano of a European four power pact in which three powers would unite in case of an attack by the fourth.

American considerations on disarmament had not included a security system; but disarmament without security would

¹President Roosevelt took up the idea later. It figured in his talks with the Canadian Prime Minister Mackenzie King in 1942, when they discussed post-war problems. (Hooker, Moffat Papers, 388.)

only perpetuate the present stalemate in Europe, in which both sides could see a chance for victory. The addition of a strong power, namely, the United States, to the attacked side could deter a possible aggressor, and thus give security while disarmament was underway. This might have been the reason why the topic of a European security system was disliked by American policy makers, why Welles brought up only disarmament, and emphasized territorial settlement in his discussions. Neither mere disarmament nor territorial settlement meant necessarily a long-term engagement of the United States in Europe. American mediation in the European war might lead to such a development but not inevitably. A security guarantee automatically involved the United States in any European quarrel.

Europeans were well aware of that, and apparently thought that Welles would come up with some new idea. When security was discussed in London, Chamberlain asked Welles frankly: "What exactly is your proposal?"¹ Welles had none and he did not want to repeat what the French had suggested a few days earlier. Daladier had explained to him what the French government considered the only possible proposal: only the neutral powers could ensure disarmament, "and this in the last analysis meant the possibility of the use of force by the neutral powers. None of the European

¹F.R., 1940, I, 77.

neutral powers had any military strength whatever, and there was clearly only one neutral power which had the military strength to assume such responsibilities, and that was the United States." Welles did not like the idea. He at once interjected "that the United States would not assume any responsibility of this character which implied as a potential obligation the utilization of American military strength in preserving the peace in Europe."¹

It can be said that a peaceful settlement was possible in early 1940, if a design could be found which would ensure future peace securely enough, and which seemed acceptable to all nations--provided that Germany would agree to any settlement at all. Security was such a popular demand that even Hitler thought it wise to join the general clamor for it² and his domestic propaganda was effectually tuned to the same sound: the war had to be fought for German security, since the Allies wanted to annihilate Germany. An offer of security would have been popular among Germans. It was, furthermore, all the resistance and Hitler's opposition among the generals asked for. A plan for security in combination with an offer for readjustment of the political and territorial

¹F.R., 1940, I, 64f.

²Even more than in the conversation with Welles, this idea is emphasized in the interview with James D. Mooney who came to the Chancellery two days after Welles. (Hillgruber, 83-85.)

settlement of Versailles would have been welcomed by a majority of the western European population. Conversely, any settlement without security guarantees was impractical and would meet the opposition, at the least, of Great Britain and France.

The State Department cannot have been oblivious to that fact. The British Prime Minister even outspokenly pointed to the problem in the Anglo-American negotiations preliminary to the Welles mission. Chamberlain wrote the President:

Any peace settlement must include "guarantees that there would be no renewal of aggression during any of our lifetimes." That is really the kernel of the difficulty. . . . It might not be so difficult to devise a settlement. . . . [The] whole difficulty is to find some means of assuring Europe that this could not¹ be followed sooner or later by a renewed attack.

That was clear. British public opinion reflected the Prime Minister's anxiety that America might try to buy a cheap peace which would not endure. Member of Parliament A. P. Herbert quipped: "Let America do what she will about the war, but for God's sake don't let her have anything to do with the peace."² Without some scheme for future security, Welles could not hope to have success.

¹F.R., 1940, I, 2.

²New York Times, Jan. 28, 1940, 4.

An international security system was such a delicate problem that any discussion about it would surely provoke controversy, and if made public a popular outburst by isolationists could be expected, which could not be desirable in an election year. President Roosevelt thought the American public was not yet ready for any lasting commitment in Europe. The topic was avoided or replaced by catch-phrases like "real peace," "lasting peace," and others. Welles came to Europe without a concrete proposal or any new idea. If he had hoped to find some practical European plans of which he could make use during his trip, he was disappointed. The most concerned European governments had only one plan: to draw the United States in as a guarantor of their security. Otherwise there was only a heap of the same catch-phrases Welles had used and the creation of some new slogans which were hardly any clearer.

* * *

Welles hoped for success of his mission despite the lack of any plan to ensure security. It seems that either consciously or subconsciously he repressed the problem. He did not bring it up until France had made it a condition of any settlement. His talks in Rome and Berlin reflect his belief in the possibility for the establishment of peace, and show, furthermore, what kind of peace he had in mind. He had declared himself "absolutely enthusiastic" about his

conversations in Rome and he considered them the "best guarantee for the success of his mission."¹ Mussolini, it must be remembered, had stated that peace was possible if Germany was granted territorial and political concessions in the East. Mussolini's conditions were used by Welles as a basis for many of the following conversations. He saw in them the foundations for a future settlement; he confided to Weizsaecker, "what Mussolini had already told him was a basis and a hope, a point of departure for constructive proposals."² Welles accepted the conditions enumerated by Mussolini. As we have seen, he had reason to do so, for the British and the French had also accepted this territorial settlement. To Hitler he said: "Personally . . . I could not conceive of a lasting and real peace unless it envisaged as an essential component part a united, prosperous, and contented German people satisfied with their own domain,"³ a point which was noted carefully by the German government.⁴

Sumner Welles believed the aims of the belligerents were compatible. In Berlin he expressed hopes that the fight would be over soon. He left no doubt in the mind of many Germans that some action would follow his visit. He even asked State Secretary Weizsaecker "if Roosevelt should

¹Simoni, 92.

²DGFP, D, VIII, 642.

³F.R., 1940, I, 45.

⁴DGFP, D, VIII, 649.

act alone or preferably in conjunction with Mussolini."¹ Upon leaving Berlin he told Ambassador Dieckhoff that he expected his trip to be successful.² In his conversation with the Italian Ambassador Bernardo Attolico he was even more outspoken: "Before the end of April, the Duce and Roosevelt would endeavor to make a decisive step in favor of peace."³ The same thought was expressed by Kirk to Weizsaecker when the chargé d'affaires called upon the State Secretary to express his thanks for the smooth course Welles's visit had taken. "In unmistakable terms Kirk stated as his opinion that at the end of Welles's trip some kind of initiative by President Roosevelt could be expected."⁴ Welles was still hopeful, even after the problem of security had come up in France. In England he left both Eden and Chamberlain with the impression that he looked forward to an agreement as a result of his mission.⁵ The Italians also expected some action after his return.⁶

Italian diplomats in Berlin could not understand Welles's optimism after his conversations there. Along with some officials in the Wilhelmstrasse they concluded that an

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 642.

²Ibid., 655.

³Simoni, 92.

⁴DGFP, D, VIII, 655fn.

⁵Keith Feiling, The Life of Neville Chamberlain (London, 1946), 429; Eden, Reckoning, 93.

⁶Ciano, Diaries, 274.

American peace move had already been planned and would come regardless of Welles's impressions.¹ Welles's assurance in Berlin that action would follow his mission points in the same direction, for he had not yet been to Paris or London but he knew already that a peace move would come.

If Welles had action in mind, March 16 offered a unique opportunity. Welles had completed his trip and had all the information he could get. On the afternoon of the same day, Mussolini told him that he would meet Hitler in a few hours. Since the Duce seemed willing to cooperate with the United States in a peace effort, his influence combined with American prestige could be used in the tête-à-tête in the Alps to get matters rolling. Such an opportunity would in all probability not appear again in the near future. Welles saw this chance, and the need for fast action. Right after his conversation with Mussolini he telephoned President Roosevelt.

This long distance call to Washington is the climax of Welles's trip to Europe. It decided the outcome of his mission. The topic of his conversation with the President was the advisability of an immediate peace initiative, although Welles later denied this. He stated in 1945 that "nothing was further from my own mind at that moment than to ask 'permission to undertake certain vague moves for

¹Simoni, 93f.

peace." ¹ Yet his contemporary report sounds different. Italian and consequently German diplomats were convinced that the topic of the conversation was a peace move. ²

The phone call originated through a bold move by Mussolini. Apparently tired of the diplomatic beating about the bush, he had asked Welles bluntly if he should "communicate to Hitler the impressions I [Welles] had formed with regard to the possibility of a negotiated solution of territorial and political questions in Europe." ³ Sumner Welles had just told Mussolini that he thought a political and territorial peace possible, based essentially upon an "independent Polish state on a national basis . . . broadening of the autonomy and independence conceded to Bohemia and Moravia, and . . . a plebiscite in Austria." ⁴ Welles realized that granting Mussolini's request might lead to American involvement in a peace initiative. The mission had reached its final stage. Sumner Welles had to decide whether action should follow. He had tried to induce the

¹Washington Post, July 11, 1945, 8. Welles wrote this to refute the presentation of the episode in the recently published Ciano Diaries.

²Ciano, Diaries, 222; Villari, 250; Weizsaecker, 276; Ciano's diary note even suggests that he listened in, for he talks about the "tone of the telephone call" and who took which position.

³F.R., 1940, I, 102; Welles, Time, 138; Ciano, Diaries, 359f., also published in DDI, IX, 3, 570.

⁴Ciano, Diaries, 359f.

Italians to mediate peace without getting involved himself in the procedure, but the Italians were not willing to act alone.¹ Reading the dialogue between Welles and the Italians, one gets the impression that both sides tried to saddle the other with responsibility and tried to avoid committing themselves.

Now Mussolini had put the problem point blank to Sumner Welles, the Under Secretary had to reach for the long distance phone. Unfortunately, we have only Welles's own account of this talk, and his report is not fully trustworthy. Whatever passed between the President and his envoy during their conversation remains speculation. Welles claimed that he advised the President to reject Mussolini's offer and reported full agreement with his superior on everything.²

If Welles's presentation is true, one might ask why he bothered to phone the President. He could have rejected Mussolini's idea offhandedly. He had taken the responsibility for similar decisions before. Why did he make the statement that he thought a territorial adjustment possible in this situation if he were not willing to stand by it? Possibly he used this phone call only as an escape from statements which he considered later to have gone too far, or he thought

¹F.R., 1940, I, 112.

²Printed in F.R., 1940, I, 104.

the affair so important that only the President himself could make the final decision.

Another possibility is that the call had been planned before Mussolini even made his suggestion. Welles had not sent reports during his European tour and he would take more than a week to return to Washington. A telephone call from Rome would enable the State Department to make the necessary preparations for a peace move while Welles was still at sea. That explanation could be supported by Welles's remarks in Berlin on the immediacy of action, and by the fact that he could hardly expect the President to decide such an important matter in a few minutes--after consulting only with him. Since there is no direct evidence that the phone call had actually been planned, and since its origin might well be explained by Mussolini's blunt request, this solution is not entirely satisfactory.

The best information on the telephone call might be derived from the actual attitude of the President and Welles at the time of their conversation. Welles expected a decision before he left Europe. During his stop-over in Paris on March 14, on his return trip from London, he told the Italian Ambassador in France, Raffaele Guariglia, that he considered his forthcoming conversation with Mussolini not only conclusive but decisive (non sole come conclusivo ma come decisivo); immediate action was needed, but he wanted to avoid a spectacular intervention (intervento

spettacolare).¹ His interview with Mussolini then revealed that he was convinced that a territorial and political settlement was possible. This conviction, indeed, had prompted Mussolini to make the proposal which led to the phone call. But Welles had also been made aware that the real problem was security. Astonishingly enough he remarks in the conclusion to his report--written on the way back to America--that "if the attack for peace is made on the issue of security" there would be "a slight chance" for a lasting peace.² To make this attack, he wrote, "there remains only the United States, supported by other neutral states."³ Welles thought peace possible and believed it had to come through American initiative.

The President, on the other hand, by March 16, had reached the conclusion that peace could not be attained. On that same day he delivered a radio broadcast in which he emphasized the "moral bases" of peace. Though his phraseology was vague, it became clear that the President would not negotiate a settlement with Nazi Germany.⁴ Viewed from this angle one might guess that Welles advocated some American action while the President--possibly under the influence of Hull--was opposed.

¹DDI, IX, 3, 550.

²F.R., 1940, I, 116.

³Ibid., 117.

⁴Rauch (p. 181) claims that Hull induced the President to make this statement. This is supported by Hull's memoirs (p. 739).

The telephone call decided for the time being the fate of American peace endeavors. Welles once again declared that he had made no proposal and no commitment, and then he left Europe. The address was obviously given in the intention to counteract a possible influence of the Welles mission and meant to choke rising hopes for peace among the population.

While Welles was still on sea, peace rumors reached their climax when the New York Times presented the world with a complete German peace plan. These "11 points" received great attention. Even the State Department tried to get to the bottom of the story.¹ It was soon, however, apparent that the terms were Mussolini's, not Hitler's. The mouthpiece of the NSDAP, Voelkischer Beobachter, termed it in due consequence "an unusually stupid swindle,"² and swindle it was.

When no peace move followed Welles's visit, the British were relieved. On March 22, Lord Lothian "called at his own request" to thank the United States government for dispelling the rumors of a negotiated peace, for such a peace would be "the equivalent of a German victory."³ Forgotten were the days when that idea had been seriously discussed at Downing

¹Israel, Long Diary, 71.

²Headline in Voelkischer Beobachter, March 20, 1940, 2.

³F.R., 1940, I, 19; Hull, 740.

Street 10, and when Chamberlain had written the President about Welles's peace attempt: "I sincerely hope that this mission may have fruitful results . . . in time to avert the worst catastrophe."¹ Soon Chamberlain delivered another fierce speech to show allied determination.² France awaited her doom fatalistically. Germany made the final preparations for the imminent blow in the North. Welles hardly had returned to New York when the High Command reported readiness to the Supreme Commander. Russian fears of another deal without them were easily dispelled by Ribbentrop. There would be no peace negotiations.³ The Italians still harbored hopes for peace and dreamed of joint action with the United States, but events soon swept these hopes away.⁴

Welles's mission, begun with so many hopes and fears, accompanied by so many expectations and apprehensions, faded out in anti-climax. When he left Genoa his mission had already been consigned to the back-pages of the newspapers. The last traces of his four weeks in Europe were obliterated by the German attacks in spring 1940. Three months after he had left European shores France had to sign an armistice, Italy entered the war, the British began their travail--and nobody thought about his mission any more.

¹F.R., 1940, I, 87fn.

²London Times, Mar. 21, 1940, 8.

³DGFP, D, VIII, 675, 684; IX, 7.

⁴F.R., 1940, I, 112.

CHAPTER VIII

THE AFTERMATH

"The wisdom of any foreign policy can generally be determined only by its results." Welles himself set a standard for a judgment of his mission.¹

The positive results were meager. Reynaud was impressed with Welles's account of Italian resentment against British domination of the Mediterranean. He tried to induce the British to concessions. Nothing came of it.² Ciano attempted in a similar way to persuade the Germans to consider a peaceful understanding with the Allies but equally met with failure.³

The Welles mission temporarily improved the diplomatic atmosphere, particularly with the Axis. An exchange of Ambassadors with Germany was expected. In Washington the Duke of Coburg, German Red Cross President and Hitler's good-will emissary to the United States, was received by President Roosevelt after news of Welles's treatment in

¹Quoted in: Harry Elmer Barnes, Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace (Caldwell, Idaho, 1953), 597.

²Paul Reynaud, La France a sauvé l'Europe. 2 vols. (Paris, 1948), II, 201.

³F.R., 1940, I, 97.

Berlin had reached the White House. Earlier the President had cancelled a scheduled visit.¹ The press reported favorably on Welles's reception by the German government, but the hope for an improvement in the mutual relations lasted only for a few days. Chargé d'affaires Thomsen reported on March 7: "The attitude of the American Government toward us has not improved in any way."² Then the publication of the German White Book spoiled any possibility for a rapprochement.

In Italy the Welles mission left a more lasting mark. The Italians still hoped for future cooperation with the United States. Ambassador William Phillips, who had not seen Mussolini since 1938, suddenly found open doors and friendly faces.³ But as no deeds followed Welles's words and as German actions met with increasing success, the doors began to close again. On June 10, Mussolini declared war on the Allies.⁴

¹DGFP, D, VIII, 683. ²Ibid., 659.

³F.R., 1940, I, 12f.; Phillips, 262.

⁴The Axis states were annoyed by a minor diplomatic sensation in the wake of the Welles mission. A French illustrated weekly published a photograph of Welles in Reynaud's office with a map of Europe in the background. This map showed new boundary lines which were unfavorable to the Axis. Goebbel's propaganda Ministry made use of that picture claiming that Welles and the French had reached an agreement on the division of Europe. The Italians questioned the map in a note to the French government. As it developed later, the French censorship had not passed the original photograph, for some colors on the map could not be

Relations to Great Britain and France did not change, nor did Welles contribute anything to their domestic stability. While he was still in Europe the Daladier Cabinet fell and was replaced by a Reynaud Cabinet.

Americans were not much impressed since Welles's mission had shown no results. Interventionists and isolationists continued their agitation, and pacifists handed the President a new pledge for a negotiated peace as soon as Welles had arrived in America.¹

Hitler might have been right when he wrote Mussolini: "Regarding the visit of Sumner Welles . . . all there is to say is that it contributed no new element for appraising the situation,"² but it surely contributed to a re-evaluation of the situation. Welles's visit was accompanied and followed by considerable activity inside the alliance systems, though it is hard to establish, whether the Welles mission or the imminent spring offensive was responsible for these developments. On March 28, as Welles returned to the United States, France and Great Britain consolidated their alliance by an agreement that neither would accept any proposition to open negotiations either for an armistice or

distinguished on a black-and-white picture and might lead to misunderstandings. The retoucher then had drawn the lines at will.

¹New York Times, March 29, 1940, 3.

²DGFP, D, VIII, 668.

a peace treaty except by mutual consent. The fear that one partner might be lured by a possible American move is evident in this decision.

Welles's most important accomplishment in this respect was the revival of the Axis. His visit proved to be a catalyst in the conciliation of the alienated friends. In its alliance-revitalization program Berlin even thought of the Far Eastern partner and tried to improve relations.¹

The Welles mission left the severest and most lasting effects on the State Department itself. Secretary of State Cordell Hull was, as we have seen, opposed to the mission as such and to Welles's role in it in particular. Hull was at that time in a peculiar situation. Roosevelt's secrecy about his third term decision left him in the field as one of the major contenders for the presidency. He was willing

¹Theo Sommer, Deutschland und Japan zwischen den Mächten 1935-1940 (Tuebingen, 1962), 321, sees a direct relationship between the Welles mission and Germany's new interest in the Far East. One should not overestimate the influence of the Welles mission. The imminent offensive was probably a more important factor. Yet, the Foreign Office was reminded of Japan's value in connection with Welles's visit: The German Minister in the Netherlands sent a long telegram in which he reported that "a neutral source, well disposed toward us" had indicated to him that President Roosevelt's anxiety over the Far Eastern situation had brought Welles to Europe. The President wanted peace in Europe to assure British and French pressure on Japan. Germany, the "neutral source" advised, should foster its relations with Japan. "Roosevelt would then have to bring all his influence to bear on England and France to break off the futile war, accept the new situation in Europe and devote themselves . . . to . . . the Far East." DGFP, D, VIII, 609.

to try his luck. But he would risk dissension within the administration if he forced Roosevelt to oust his friend Welles. If he resigned himself from office, he would seriously endanger his chances for the fall elections, which were good. Gallup polls in early 1940 showed him stronger than Roosevelt, a development that did not at all please the President.¹ In case he parted in anger with the Roosevelt administration and the Democratic Party the chances for a Democratic victory in 1940 would decrease considerably. He was too loyal to run that risk.

Though Hull did not protest openly against his maltreatment he was deeply hurt. He thought his position over and looked for friends who might support him. Breckinridge Long relates that he had a confidential conversation with him shortly before Welles returned from Europe. Hull complained about Welles's behavior and said "he thought he [Hull] should be in entire control subject only to the President. He felt that there should be a united front by the Department."² To James Farley, a member of the cabinet and a man of great influence in the Democratic Party, Hull also confided his troubles. He told him that he had "the devil's own time" with Roosevelt and Welles.³ Hull apparently was looking for allies against the maneuvers in his

¹Farley, 232.

²Israel, Long Diary, 67.

³Farley, 233.

own department. But he was not very successful. By late summer 1940 he thought of handing in his resignation, "partly," as he told intimates, "because the President very obviously seeks Sumner Welles's advice in preference to his own."¹ He may have had doubts about his ability to compete with Welles's brilliant mind and urbanity. As he told a friend, he could not follow Welles's swift thoughts.²

Possibly it might have been better if Hull had resigned over the Welles mission controversy--he certainly would have avoided much humiliation for himself--or if the President had accepted one of his later offers to resign. But President Roosevelt always refused to dismiss him, presumably for reasons of domestic policy. Hull was popular, his prestige was high, and his influence with the Senate strong. President Roosevelt was mindful of the ghost of Woodrow Wilson. The success of the Moscow conference in 1943 proved his consideration right. Hull had negotiated it, and the Senate approved of the planned new international organization by a vote of 85-5.

Welles, the probable successor in case Hull left the State Department, was neither popular nor did he have any influence with the Senate, though his ability was admired by most Congressmen and journalists.

¹Hooker, Moffat Papers, 332.

²Israel, Long Diary, 67.

It is doubtful whether President Roosevelt depended only on such considerations; it is doubtful whether he was fully aware how he had taken over Hull's competencies and functioned as his own Secretary of State; it is doubtful whether he consciously withheld information from Hull and went over his head. To be sure, he was not completely unaware of the situation, and his immediate entourage realized what happened. "Pa" Watson was upset: "He entered in his quite outspoken way on a criticism of Welles for trying to 'take over' Hull's functions; said he was continually trying to confer with the President; and then went on to say that the President felt the same way. . . . Hull had gotten very provoked . . . and . . . used his cuss-words. Pa's mind was very definite and his speech devoid of delicate embellishment."¹ The President just did not seem to want to bother with this unpleasant relationship.

Roosevelt's attitude after the affair is not clear. Apparently he did not talk much about it. But he did try strongly to induce Hull to accept the second place on the Democratic ticket. Hull thought he was more needed--and would have stronger influence--in the State Department.² Possibly Roosevelt had the same reason for wanting him to leave the Department. As Vice President, as both men realized, he would be on the sidelines, while still being obliged

¹Israel, Long Diary, 212.

²Hull, 860-867.

to support the administration with all his skill and prestige. Hull's friend Jim Farley had found himself shortly before in a similar position, when the President had done him the "honor" to insist that he run for Governor or Senator in New York. Farley had rather felt that the President wanted to get him out of the way for the 1940 nomination.¹

Welles also thought his position over. Though he had been unconcerned over domestic and party politics he suddenly developed unheard-of political activity. James Farley, chairman of the Democratic convention in 1940, was amazed to see Welles's sudden interest in party affairs. To his astonishment, Welles even showed up at the convention in July in Chicago:

As the delegates filed past the platform in a joyous snake dance, my eyes popped in surprise to see the austere, impeccable Under-Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, joggling along. I could not have been more surprised if General MacArthur had trotted by in full dress uniform. Welles' creased trousers were getting a collection of wrinkles and his collar was wilting. He was going through the motions, but his wan smile was ample evidence that he was not really enjoying himself.

As his feud with Hull did not develop into an open fight, and his position seemed to be secure for the time being, the Under Secretary of State apparently lost his interest in party affairs rapidly.

¹Farley, 111.

²Ibid., 279-280.

But the feud was not over. Hull watched his Under Secretary's moves with deep distrust. The increasing frequency of illness--possibly a psychological escape from the fact that he was forced more and more into the background without being able to halt the development--pushed Welles automatically into the limelight. Hull felt that Welles used his weakness to proceed as Acting Secretary without consulting and informing him properly. Other departments tried to increase their influence on foreign affairs. A warning by Hull to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau to keep his hands off State Department affairs had no lasting effect. Hull felt put on the defense against infringements from all sides. On Welles centered his disgust; in him he saw his main foe and competitor. In conferences among State Department officials he tried to impress them and "to bolster himself against the suspicion or impression that the President is favoring the dashing, quick deciding Welles over himself and to give the counteracting impression that he is the ameliorating influence in the Cabinet and the personification of wisdom. I think that a natural human reaction and a refuge in self defense." Breckinridge Long noted that in his diary on August 12, 1941.¹ Hull's criticism of Welles became more open.²

¹Israel, Long Diary, 211.

²Farley, 343; Israel, Long Diary, 215; Stuart, 381.

When Roosevelt took Welles along to the Atlantic conference with Churchill in 1941 without consulting Hull, the Secretary of State was much upset.¹ Anxious to show himself the master of the Department, Hull seemed to have often reacted to Welles's proposals from spite. The mark "made by Welles" would cause him to refuse to buy the idea. Welles, on the other hand, seemed to enjoy using his direct channel to the President to discredit Hull's suggestions or to annoy the Secretary of State. To name just a few incidents: There was the affair of a loan to Spain in 1941 to keep Franco from joining the Axis. Hull wanted to grant it. Welles hurried to the President. The loan was blocked, and Hull blew up.² Or the Rio de Janeiro Conference in 1942. Delegate Welles overstepped his orders and signed an agreement which was not along the lines of State Department policy. Hull telephoned while the President listened in. The Secretary used the occasion to speak to his rival "more sharply than I had ever spoken to anyone in the Department."³ The President could see who the master in the house was, though, as the President pointed out subsequently, Welles's signature had already been affixed and could not be changed. But Hull was so mad over this additional flagrant violation

¹Israel, Long Diary, 214f.

²Ickes, Secret Diaries, III, 401.

³Hull, 1143.

of accepted departmental procedure that he was determined to resign and had actually cleared his desk.¹

In spring 1942 it came nearly to the final breach when Hull accused Welles of formulating and announcing new lines of foreign policy in public addresses which had not been shown to the Secretary.² The conflict was settled, but soon there was a new incident. After Operation Torch the French Governor General of Algeria Yves Chatel was to be replaced by Marcel Peyrouton, a former Vichy official who-- as it turned out later--did not have a spotless past. Welles had advised against the appointment. This seemed to be the more reason for Hull to agree to it. The uproar of public protests in allied countries after the announcement was tremendous.³

Even Hull's greatest diplomatic triumph during the war years came as a result of his from-spite policy. The Moscow conference was approaching and Hull read reports that other persons were going to undertake this mission. Though he had not planned to go, upon reading this he suddenly made up his mind, and went over to the White House, and told the President that this time he was going. The President agreed, but again seems not to have been quite frank with the Secretary of State. He appears to have toyed almost to Hull's

¹Stuart, 381f.; Hooker, Moffat Papers, 379.

²Stuart, 382.

³Murphy, 157-159.

departure with sending Sumner Welles or Ambassador Joseph E. Davies.¹

After such a state of affairs had developed between the Secretary and the Under Secretary, it does not seem surprising that Hull felt in no mood to defend Welles when rumors were spread that the Under Secretary had engaged in homosexual activities. Hull was inclined to believe the story though he had no proof. Welles was dismissed from the State Department. Hull and Roosevelt tried to smooth over the dismissal by offering Welles a post as Ambassador or Special Envoy, but the rift was too deep. Welles would rather not serve in a department headed by Cordell Hull. "Secretary Hull . . . felt relieved of the most serious handicap in his conduct of the Department."² After Hull's resignation Welles was mentioned again as possible successor, and insiders believed that Roosevelt would have preferred him to all others. But his appointment would have been a direct affront to Hull and provocative of intense resentment on Capitol Hill.³

Over the Roosevelt-Welles plan the hostility came to the fore, and could never be overcome thereafter. Much energy was wasted, much confusion created in the Department

¹Farley, 361.

²Stuart, 282; Israel, Long Diary, 281.

³Sherwood, 835; Stuart, 397.

of State, and many decisions were affected by the antagonism between the nation's top advisers on foreign policy. A feud arose out of the events of early 1940 which was to end in the ousting of one of the President's most esteemed advisers at a time when his advice was most needed. This development may well be the most important result of the Welles mission.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

The Sumner Welles mission produced no lasting and beneficial results. President Roosevelt's attempt to change the troublesome situation through the mission of a personal representative proved futile. Whose fault was it? The President's? Hull's? Was the envoy not equal to his task? Or was the institution of special envoy to blame? Was it useless as a diplomatic means or was the mission of a special envoy futile only under those particular circumstances? Could there be any success in that situation at all?

The failure of the Welles mission is based upon a combination of errors. Indeed, the first might have been the assumption that there could be any solution to the problem of the European war. Corporate states devoted to the principle of expansion faced militarily inferior democracies which wanted to preserve the status quo. A compromise between the opposing powers would be hard to attain, especially as long as the expansive forces had faith in their military superiority. In all probability a settlement could not be reached without outside pressure, and such pressure would have to come from a major military power. Only the

United States could play that role but it was faced with strong domestic pressure to abstain from using its influence.

This was the situation which the Roosevelt administration faced. The mission of a special envoy could be justified only if there was an attainable goal under these circumstances. The President's advisers could not agree on any such aim. The order to gather information was indirectly an admission that Washington did not know what to do about the situation. Before a special envoy was sent an achievable goal should have been set, and agreement should have been reached about a proposal or commitment which seemed liable to bring some positive results. The preconditions for the mission of any special envoy were not fulfilled. Welles was given neither a clear and accessible target nor was he equipped with any power or authorization. As it was, success of the Welles mission depended on the appearance of a deus ex machina.

The failure to define goal and commission of the enterprise left the decision on the purpose of his mission and on the extent of his powers to the envoy himself. Sumner Welles was unsuitable for such a task. He tried anxiously to avoid any commitment, but reached at the same time for the highest goal. Apparently he believed that he himself was the deus ex machina, that his mere presence would solve all problems. His strong confidence in his abilities made him

strive only for the most difficult goal and to disregard other chances where he might have gained important achievements. Thus he accomplished little. His often praised intellectual ability did not help him to recognize the problems and cope with them. He reminded the German interpreter of a pencil with two ears, and was, indeed, hardly more. The personality of the envoy, his firm belief in himself, his haughty attitude toward the situation and the statesmen whom he met, and consequently his conduct during the conversations made him the wrong choice for this assignment.

The selection of Sumner Welles was also unfortunate with regard to the personal relations among the officials in Washington. The antagonism between Welles and the Secretary of State was bound to be intensified by this mission. Whatever Welles might have accomplished in Europe, it was liable to arouse opposition by Hull because of the already existing hostility. Welles was not the only man available; the President could have sent another envoy.

The errors made in the case of the Welles mission do not justify a general rejection of the institution of the special envoy. During the course of American history, special envoys have accomplished notable achievements. Nicholas Trist's mission to Mexico, his flexibility, and willingness to take responsibility ended the Mexican war of

1846. Indeed, Sumner Welles might have had some success had he not reached so high.

The Welles mission was a momentary inspiration, insufficiently planned and prepared, and carried through by the wrong man; it was ventured upon with good intention but was inadequate to the needs of the situation. One thing might have brought success, as Welles himself admitted: "What is imperatively required is statesmanship of the highest character, marked by vision, courage and daring."¹ Neither Europe nor America could offer that.

¹So Welles wrote in the conclusion to his report. F.R., 1940, I, 116.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The nature of this thesis called for an emphasis on the use of primary sources, mainly documentary and memoir literature. Relevant secondary sources have been taken into account but most proved unprofitable. The same was true for many of the memoirs. Only works which made significant contributions to this study are listed in the following.

A. Documentary material

a) Italy

Three countries have so far published their documents on the diplomacy of World War II. All three were of great value for this thesis. In Italy the Foreign Office (Ministero degli Affari Esteri) has published I Documenti Diplomatici Italiani, Nona Serie 1939-1943 (quoted as DDI, IX). Relevant is volume 3 (Rome 1959). This collection of documents stands out for its able organization and its excellent editorial job, though documents in languages other than Italian have to be read with care, for they abound with typographical errors. The editorial board presented not only material from the Foreign Office archives but has also incorporated materials from other sources, especially memoranda of conversations which appeared in the memoirs of Italian diplomats. This official publication is supplemented by Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., Ciano's Diplomatic

Papers (London, 1948), a selection of notes, records, and memoranda on official business--often written for submission to Mussolini--which the Italian minister kept privately, possibly for the eventual publication of memoirs. Much of this material has also been printed in DDI.

b) Germany

The German Documents on Foreign Policy 1918-1945, series D (quoted as DGFP, D), have been published by an international editorial board. They represent a detailed and well edited selection of the captured documents of the German Foreign Office. No other materials have been incorporated but footnotes refer to relevant related publications. Conversations with Hitler not contained in this publication can be found in Andreas Hillgruber, ed., Staatsmaenner und Diplomaten bei Hitler. Vertrauliche Aufzeichnungen ueber Unterredungen mit Vertretern des Auslands 1939-1941 (Frankfurt a/M, 1967), a complete collection of Hitler's conversations with foreign statesmen. These are supplemented by materials and testimonies made for the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg, published in: Trials of the Major War Criminals before the International Military Tribunal, Nuremberg (Nuremberg, 1947-1949).

c) United States

Most important for this study has been the publication of the Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States (quoted as F.R.). Volume I for 1940 contains a section devoted to the Welles mission. It consists of some documents pertaining to the preparation and of Welles's confidential report to the President and the Secretary of State. Foreign Relations is a very well edited work but, owing to its wide scope, rather selective. Welles's report has been abridged, particularly when his evaluation of a statesman of a friendly country has not been favorable.

B. Memoirs and Diaries

a) United States

Sumner Welles has left no complete reminiscences, but his books on American foreign policy contain much autobiographical material. Of greatest value for this study has been: Sumner Welles, The Time for Decision (New York, London, 1944) which includes a chapter devoted to the Welles mission. This chapter is based on his report to the President and often coincides with it word for word; but there are some differences.

Welles's presentations of his mission have been written at different times for different purposes. In contrast to the report, Time for Decision was published when the United States had been for some years at war with Germany and it

was meant for the public. This had several consequences. Welles could not mention his conversations with some of the French leaders who were then in German reach, and he had to leave out some events and issues which might prove detrimental to the relations among the Allies. Two examples will help to elucidate that point: In the report Welles recalls how he told Hitler that he could not conceive of a lasting and real peace unless the German people were united, prosperous, contented, and satisfied with their own domain and security. At the same time Germany should no longer be regarded as a threat to the independence and security of her neighbors. In Time for Decision the first condition for peace is left out and the second one is stressed. The same change is apparent in Welles's evaluation of the people he met. In his report he is equally critical or appraising, Time for Decision makes a sharp division between heroes on the Allies' side and villains in Germany. An example is the meeting with Otto Meissner, the State Secretary in the Chancellery. In his report Welles writes: "He spoke to me most cordially in English, as did all the other officials present" (F.R., 1940, I, 102). In Time for Decision this sentence is replaced by: "Meissner . . . who, chameleon-like, had maintained his position. . . . A group of flunkies in the entrance hall were dressed in light-blue satin liveries with powdered hair" (Welles, Time, 102). Issues which would be controversial in 1944 are completely left out

in Time for Decision. Particularly, the problem of American peace mediation is treated very vaguely. French and British willingness to grant territorial concessions in the East is not mentioned.

Welles treated his mission in Time for Decision in reflection of the situation at the time of publishing and of the readership. Was his presentation in the report to the President restricted by similar considerations? This question is important since his story is not always identical with the European sources. Welles finished his report on the way back to the United States, probably using notes he made immediately after the conversations. This report, he knew, would be read by the President and Secretary of State Hull. Hull had been opposed to the mission, there had been some quarrels, the Secretary of State had imposed some restrictions. If Welles reported that he overstepped these restrictions, new quarrels were probable. The Secretary of State would distrust his actions in the future. Welles's careful wording in the description of discussions of problems like peace mediation, and the discrepancy to the Italian and German memoranda on these subjects, suggests that Welles modified his presentation, minding the feelings of his superior. When Welles wrote his report he knew that his mission had failed. There was no reason why he should antagonize the Secretary of State any further.

The German and Italian memoranda were written immediately after the conversations without knowledge of future developments. They were meant mostly for the archives. But the writers knew that Hitler and Mussolini might read their reports and might have adjusted them accordingly.

None of the sources can be trusted completely. One has to ask in every instance if the writer had some interest in stressing, changing, or leaving out some issue. Emphasis and selection indicate further what appealed to each side.

Welles was not the only American who reported on the mission. J. Pierrepont Moffat, who accompanied Welles, has left a diary: Nancy H. Hooker, ed., The Moffat Papers. Selections from the Diplomatic Correspondence of Jay Pierrepont Moffat 1919-1943 (Cambridge, Mass., 1956). He constructed his account from brief notes he jotted down at the time. Moffat knew Welles's report and tried to tell of events which Welles has not mentioned, mostly his private talks and impressions. He also wrote an account of the highly confidential aspects of the Welles mission which has, unfortunately, not yet been found.

Several of the American diplomats stationed in Europe at that time have published memoirs in which they recall the Welles mission. Most important among those are William Phillips, Ventures in Diplomacy (Boston, 1953), Robert D. Murphy, Diplomat among Warriors (Garden City, N.Y., 1964),

George F. Kennan, Memoirs 1925-1950 (Boston, 1967). The view from Washington is given in Cordell Hull, The Memoirs of Cordell Hull (New York, 1948), Fred L. Israel, The War Diary of Breckinridge Long (Lincoln, Nebr., 1966), Harold J. Ickes, The Secret Diaries of Harold J. Ickes (New York, 1954), John M. Blum, From the Morgenthau Diaries (Boston, 1965), and Walter Millis, ed., The Forrestal Diaries (New York, 1951). These as well as some of the memoirs of the diplomats offer also some insight into the personal relations among officials in the State Department.

b) Italy

Unfortunately, Mussolini's reminiscences do not cover the time of Welles's visit. Most important is Hugh Gibson, ed., The Ciano Diaries 1939-1943 (New York, 1946) which contain Ciano's famous red diary book which he kept in a safe in his office. Indispensable for the influence of Welles's mission on Italo-German relations is Leonardo Simoni (pseudonym for Michele Lanza), Berlin, Ambassade d'Italie 1939-1943 (Paris, 1947). He also describes the situation in Berlin during Welles's visit. The work by another Italian diplomat, Luigi Villari, Italian Foreign Policy under Mussolini (New York, 1956), is not strictly a memoir publication but rather a defense of Mussolini's foreign policy. The reminiscences of Marshall Pietro Badoglio, Italy in the Second World War (New York, 1948) add also to the picture of Welles's trip to Europe.

c) Germany

None of the German memoirs treat Welles's visit extensively. The Foreign Office interpreter, Paul Schmidt, Statist auf diplomatischer Buehne. Erlebnisse des Chefdolmetschers im Auswaertigen Amt (Frankfurt a/M, Bonn, 1961) had been present at all conversations except those with Schacht and Weizsaecker. State Secretary Ernst von Weizsaecker, Erinnerungen (Muenchen, 1950) devotes a page to the Welles mission, Erich Kordt, Wahn und Wirklichkeit. Die Aussenpolitik des Dritten Reiches; Versuch einer Darstellung (Stuttgart, 1948), a paragraph. Welles is frequently mentioned in Ulrich von Hassell, The Hassell Diaries, 1938-1944 (Garden City, 1947), and once in Hans Guenther Seraphim, ed., Das politische Tagebuch Alfred Rosenbergs (Berlin, 1956).

d) Britain

Welles left even less of an impression on the British. Anthony Eden, Earl of Avon, The Eden Memoirs: The Reckoning (London, 1965) mentions him briefly. Winston Churchill, The Gathering Storm (Boston, 1948) is interesting for the situation.

e) France

French recollections show the least concern about the American envoy. Paul Reynaud mentions his mission once in his first collection of reminiscences, Paul Reynaud, La

France a sauvé l'Europe, 2 vols. (Paris, 1947)

Interestingly, the Welles mission figures rather large in diaries which have been written immediately after the events, but it is hardly mentioned in memoirs which have been written at a later date. The Italians accorded apparently the greatest importance to it. Germans, especially those connected with the resistance, watched it with interest. In England and France diplomats and statesmen did not expect many important results.

C. Semi-official sources

A special category are those works which have been published by writers in or closely related to the administration. These studies are neither official publications nor memoirs, but they contain information which has been inspired directly by government officials. Most important among these is William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation (Harper and Row, New York, 1964, new ed.), a semi-official diplomatic history. Equally interesting is a pamphlet by two journalists who based their study on materials and information supplied by the White House and the State Department, Joseph Alsop and Robert Kintner, American White Paper; the Story of American Diplomacy and the Second World War (New York, 1940). Important for the personal relations among officials is the

study by the writer and author of many official speeches, Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins (New York, 1948).

D. Secondary sources

Secondary sources provide for the most part only the background of the Welles mission. A detailed study on European diplomacy is Arnold and Veronica Toynbee, ed., Survey of International Affairs 1939-1946. The Initial Triumph of the Axis (London, New York, Toronto, 1958) and its shorter American counterpart, W. H. Shepards and W. O. Scroggs, The United States in World Affairs, 1940, published for the Council on Foreign Relations (New York, London, 1941). Helpful studies on the diplomacy of the Roosevelt administration are the works by Basil Rauch, Roosevelt from Munich to Pearl Harbor. A Study in the Creation of Foreign Policy (New York, 1950), who defends Roosevelt's foreign policy, and the revisionist Charles Callan Tansill, Backdoor to War; the Roosevelt Foreign Policy 1933-1941 (Chicago, 1952). Much shorter but with good insights are John L. Snell, Illusion and Necessity; the Diplomacy of Global War 1939-1945 (Boston, 1963), and a German study, Erich Angermann, Die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika, dtv Weltgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts v. 7 (Muenchen, 1966). An older, but still helpful work on peace feelers is Maxime Mourins, Les tentatives de Paix dans la Seconde Guerre Mondiale 1939-1945 (Paris, 1949). Though

generally acceptable, some of the details in this book have to be treated with care. Graham H. Stuart, The Department of State (New York, 1949) deals with the State Department and its officials in particular. Works treating diplomats are Julius W. Pratt, Cordell Hull, 2 vols. (New York, 1964), S. F. Bemis, ed., The American Secretaries of State and Their Diplomacy, vols. XII and XIII, which is based mostly on Hull's own memoirs, and a popular work about John F. Kennedy's father, Joseph P. Kennedy: Richard J. Whalen, The Founding Father; the Story of Joseph P. Kennedy. Elizabeth Wiskemann's work on Italo-German relations: Elizabeth Wiskemann, The Rome-Berlin Axis, a History of the Relations between Hitler and Mussolini (New York, 1949) is important. It contains a whole chapter about the Welles mission.

E. Literature on the German Resistance

The German resistance poses a special problem in the scope of this thesis. The above mentioned diary of Hassell reveals the hopes and anxieties of the conspirators in connection with the Welles mission. Kordt's book contributes some. A main source has been Schacht's recollections: Hjalmar Schacht, Confessions of "the Old Wizard" (Boston, 1956) supplemented by a dissertation on Schacht: Earl Beck, Verdict on Schacht, a Study in the Problem of Political Guilt. Florida State University Studies, No. 20

(Tallahassee, 1955). The outstanding work on the resistance is by Gerhard Ritter, Carl Goerdeler und die Deutsche Widerstandsbewegung (Stuttgart, 1954). Ritter, who was professor of history at Freiburg, was a member of the resistance movement. The British historian John W. Wheeler-Bennett had also some connections to the conspirators and presents a very good study of the role of the armed forces in: John W. Wheeler-Bennett, The Nemesis of Power, The German Army in Politics 1918-1945, 2nd ed. (London, New York, 1964). An earlier work which presents many details but has been superseded by newer studies is Maxime Mourins, Les complots contre Hitler (Paris, 1948). Hans Rothfels, German opposition to Hitler, rev. ed. (Chicago, 1962) is an excellent, but short modern work.

Important for Hitler's plans and the military situation are the diaries of leading generals. Unfortunately, the official diary of the High Command of the Armed Forces, edited by Percy Ernst Schramm, has been lost for the relevant period. But the private diaries of generals Halder and Jodl have been preserved: Arnold Lissance, ed., Franz Halder, Diary, MS, 3 vols. Jodl's diary appears as evidence for the prosecution in the materials published for the Nuremberg Trials. A secondary work is Walter Goerlitz, History of the German General Staff (New York, 1959).

F. Newspapers

Newspapers give many of the details and establish the chronology. Very valuable was the New York Times. The Chicago Tribune presented an isolationist view. British opinion was given by the London Times, the Germans were represented by the Voelkischer Beobachter, the official organ of the NSDAP. The magazines Time and Newsweek contributed many of the side events.