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## SIX BETWEEN ROOSEVELT AND HITLER: AMERICA'S ROLE IN THE APPEASEMENT OF NAZI GERMANY

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*Forest Hills, New York*

One of the outstanding questions still to be settled in the field of modern history concerns America's role in the appeasement of Nazi Germany. Current controversy centres on two inter-related issues. There is, first of all, Sumner Welles' tour of European capitals in early 1940. Stanley Hilton, writing for the *Journal of American History* in 1971, argued that Roosevelt's principal purpose in sending his under secretary abroad was to split the Rome–Berlin Axis. A secondary object was to buy time for the Allies by forestalling a German spring offensive.<sup>1</sup> Other accounts, earlier as well as later, have assumed that Washington was genuinely prepared, if not anxious, to reach an understanding with the fuhrer.<sup>2</sup> Closely linked with the Welles mission is a second topic which remains equally moot: namely FDR's prior role in events leading to the Munich Conference of 1938. One scholar concludes that the president leaned heavily toward appeasement.<sup>3</sup> Another maintains that he shunned the soft line in private but felt tactically bound to yield, thus propelling France headlong into surrender.<sup>4</sup> Some have suspended judgement altogether, while others have held that he 'dabbled' in appeasement.<sup>5</sup>

In short, historians continue to disagree on a variety of counts. The purpose of

<sup>1</sup> Hilton holds that, inasmuch as FDR's hatred of Hitler was second to none, he would never have appeased him, much less negotiated a soft peace to sustain him in power; Stanley E. Hilton, 'The Welles mission to Europe, February–March 1940: illusion or realism?' *Journal of American History*, LVIII (1971), 94, 100–1, 111, 120.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, William L. Langer and S. Everett Gleason, *The challenge to isolation, 1937–1940* (New York, 1952), pp. 361–3; David Reynolds, *The creation of the Anglo-American alliance, 1937–1941* (Chapel Hill, 1982), p. 81.

<sup>3</sup> Arnold Offner, *America's appeasement: United States foreign policy and Germany, 1933–1938* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969), pp. 276–80. This is the fullest and best account to date, yet it remains fragmentary as the author was unable to avail himself of official French sources (published or unpublished). There is no reference, for example, to crucial conversations between Roosevelt and such Frenchmen as Thoumyre and Saint-Quentin. Neither does Offner allude to key episodes as, for instance: the Fuller missions to Berlin; the Welles and Bullitt trips to European capitals in September and November 1937; Hugh Wilson's talks in Prague during August of 1938; Ambassador Kennedy's role in last-minute negotiations leading up to Munich; Truman Smith's discussion of Czech partition with a Polish colleague in Berlin; not to mention FDR's own effort to win a lion's share of the credit for Munich. The same is true of Offner's sequel, *The origins of the Second World War* (New York 1975), which omits all of the above and passes over the Mooney missions.

<sup>4</sup> John McVickar Haight, Jr., 'France, the United States and the Munich crisis', *Journal of Modern History*, xxxii (1960), 340–58.

<sup>5</sup> As an example of the former, see Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to isolation*, p. 58. For the latter, see Donald F. Drummond, *The passing of American neutrality, 1937–1941* (Ann Arbor, 1935), pp. 78ff.

the following essay is to reconsider the question of appeasement by introducing fresh evidence and throwing additional light on a series of hitherto unrelated episodes.

It may be fairly stated at the outset that Roosevelt felt neither kinship nor sympathy with the enemy of World War I. As a boy, he had mimicked the German accent, and throughout his life, he never ceased to avow prejudice against the land of Bismarck and reiterate his impression of its sheep-like character.<sup>6</sup> As president, he lashed out time and again at the repressive policies of the Hitler regime. Treasury chief Henry Morgenthau, Jr. was encouraged to carry on what Secretary of State Cordell Hull termed a 'personal war' against the Third Reich, and the general run of German-American relations was well summed up in Hull's phrase, 'criminations and recriminations'.<sup>7</sup>

Needless to say, the anti-Christian and anti-semitic tone of Nazi Germany aroused such universal revulsion in the United States that Roosevelt's public stance answered the call of politics as well as personal feeling. At the same time, rhetoric and trade restrictions do not represent the sum and substance of one nation's relationship with another. As we are about to observe, the gap between appearance and reality can be very wide indeed.

It is no exaggeration to say that, with the exception of FDR's attitude toward the stillborn Four Power Pact, the keynote of his approach to Hitler beginning in 1933 was appeasement. Even before inauguration, he tried to persuade British ambassador Sir Ronald Lindsay of the need for 'political re-settlement' to include compensated retrocession of the Polish Corridor to Germany. 'I expressed liveliest alarm,' declared the Scotsman, and 'I think that we shall hear no more about it.' Lindsay proved to be mistaken. The president made no objection when his roving

<sup>6</sup> FDR to Muriel and Warren Robbins, 30 May 1891; Eleanor Roosevelt to Sara Roosevelt, 25 July 1905; FDR to Sara Roosevelt, 4 March 1897 and 30 July 1905, Elliott Roosevelt and Joseph Lash (eds.), *FDR: his personal letters*, 4 vols. (New York, 1947-50), I, 20, 69; II, 46, 51 (hereafter *Letters*); Diary of European Trip, summer of 1918, *ibid.* II, 391, 413, 419, 451, 462; James Roosevelt to FDR, 9 June 1897, box 3, Roosevelt family papers, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Hyde Park (hereafter FDRL); Rita H. Kleeman, *Gracious lady: the life of Sara Delano Roosevelt* (New York, 1935), p. 216; Waldo H. Heinrichs, *American ambassador: Joseph C. Grew and the development of the United States diplomatic tradition* (Boston, 1966), p. 233.

<sup>7</sup> Dodd to Hull, 23 August 1933, U.S. Department of State, *Papers relating to the foreign relations of the United States, 1933-1941* (Washington, D.C., 1950-69), 1933, II, 259 (hereafter FR); Cordell Hull, *The memoirs of Cordell Hull*, 2 vols. (New York, 1948), I, 233, 240, 472, 597-8; *Time*, 19 June 1933, p. 12; William E. Dodd, Jr. and Martha Dodd (eds.), *Ambassador Dodd's diary, 1933-1938* (New York, 1941), pp. 4-5, 86; Henry Morgenthau, 'The Morgenthau diaries', *Colliers Magazine*, 11 October 1947, p. 72; Offner, *Appeasement*, p. 234; Edgar Nixon (ed.), *Franklin D. Roosevelt and foreign affairs*, 3 vols. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1969), I, 337; FDR press conferences, 7 September 1934 and 12 March 1936, *ibid.* II, 207-8; III, 249; FDR, *On our way* (New York, 1934), pp. 115, 136; Julius W. Pratt, *Cordell Hull, 1933-44*, 2 vols. (New York, 1964), I, 90; Corbin to Doubergue, 12 April 1934, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français, 1932-1939* (Paris, 1964-), sér. I, VI, 209 (hereafter DDF); Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American foreign policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford, 1968), p. 102; William Phillips, *Ventures in diplomacy* (Boston, 1952), pp. 165-6; Saul Friedländer, *Prelude to downfall: Hitler and the United States, 1939-1941* (New York, 1967), p. 11; Drummond, *American neutrality*, p. 85; Memorandum by Acting Secretary of State, 8 August 1936, U.S. Department of State, *Documents on German foreign policy, 1918-1945* (Washington, D.C., 1959-66), ser. C, v, 800, 800n., 888 (hereafter DGFP); Thomsen to Foreign Ministry, 17 and 27 March 1939, *ibid.* ser. D, VI, 14, 130; memorandum by Ambassador Dieckhoff, 29 July 1940, *ibid.* x, 351-2.

envoy Norman Davis held that 'political appeasement' would be needed to arrange a lasting peace. On the contrary, he sent Davis post-haste to German officials, including the fuhrer himself, and tried to arrange tête-à-têtes of his own, first with Hitler, and then with Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath. He also tried to gain entrée at the Wilhelmstrasse for presidential adviser Colonel House, though again without success. When Reichsbank president Hjalmar Schacht came to Washington in May, Roosevelt reportedly told him that Hitler was the right man for Germany and that no one else could inspire such confidence.<sup>8</sup>

William E. Dodd, American ambassador to Berlin and a former professor of history at the University of Chicago, is remembered for his scathing criticism of the Nazi Party. Such a reputation may be misleading, however. It was not until the advent of the 1936 election that Dodd became stridently anti-Nazi, and then only to find himself completely isolated. Home on a prolonged leave of absence in the spring and summer, he was denied access to the president. He continued to speak out fearlessly against powers whose function was to 'destroy democracies everywhere', but when Germany demanded apologies Hull gave them. Welles did not attempt to disguise the fact that he found the professor 'incomprehensible' and FDR warned everyone to discount Dodd's prejudice against Hitler. Although the president encouraged Dodd to return to Germany, the ill-fated envoy was fired the moment he reached Berlin.<sup>9</sup>

Dodd's disgrace was but the culmination of a long series of events beginning in 1935 when Roosevelt asked Samuel R. Fuller, an old business friend with influential ties, to sound Hitler on what he would require as part of a comprehensive peace settlement. Two years earlier, Fuller had apprised the White House of Schacht's long list of complaints against German Jewry. Now, he met Schacht at the American embassy, and after entertaining a suggestion for the return of German colonies, currency stabilization, and a new trade treaty with the United States, he journeyed to London for talks with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin and Foreign Secretary Sir Samuel Hoare. The British, however, were not interested.<sup>10</sup>

When German troops entered the Rhineland on 7 March of the following year, Dodd filed a formal protest, but the White House remained silent despite French pleas for condemnation. Mrs Roosevelt went so far as to write an editorial condoning

<sup>8</sup> Lindsay to Simon, 30 January 1933, E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler (eds.), *Documents on British foreign policy, 1919-1939* (London, 1946-79), ser. 2, v, 750-1; Prittitz to Foreign Ministry, 16 March and 7 April 1933; Schacht to Foreign Ministry, 6 May 1933, DGFP, ser. C, 1, 175, 263, 264n., 393; Davis to Hull, 16 April 1933, 500.A15A4 General Committee/297, Record Group 59, National Archives (hereafter RG, NA), Laboulaye to Paul-Boncour, 16 May 1933, DDF, sér. 1, III, 492.

<sup>9</sup> Offner, *Appeasement*, pp. 206-9; Martha Dodd, *Through embassy eyes* (New York, 1939), pp. 359-60; Dieckhoff to German Foreign Ministry, 5 August 1937, DGFP, ser. D, 1, 627; Hull conversation with Dieckhoff, 5 August 1937 and 14 January 1938, microfilm roll 29, Hull papers, Library of Congress (hereafter LC); Robert Dallek, 'Beyond tradition: the diplomatic careers of William E. Dodd and George S. Messersmith, 1933-1938', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, LXVI (1967), 241n.; Dodd and Dodd, (eds.), *Dodd's diary*, 3, 23, and 30 November, 14 December 1937, pp. 430, 434-5, 445 (see also p. 342). For Bullitt's opinion, see Bullitt to FDR, 23 November 1937, Orville H. Bullitt (ed.), *For the president, personal and secret: correspondence between Franklin D. Roosevelt and William C. Bullitt* (Boston, 1972), p. 235.

<sup>10</sup> S. R. Fuller to Roosevelt, 11 May 1933, Nixon (ed.), *Roosevelt*, 1, 175; Fuller memorandum of conversation with Schacht, 23 September 1935, FR (1935), II, 282-86; Fuller to Hull, 14 October 1935, 862.00/3558, RG 59, NA.

the occupation. Two weeks later, after a speech by John Foster Dulles calling for revision of the Versailles treaty, the State Department opened a new decimal file significantly labelled 'World Program'. Roosevelt had decided to seek liberalized world trade and multilateral disarmament at a conference to be held in the United States or abroad during 1936. As part of the settlement, he would promise to cancel war debts and reduce the American tariff. Fuller therefore returned to Germany to advocate, among other things, a British scheme for long-term leases in Africa which were to be offered in lieu of outright return of colonies. Following talks with Hitler and Schacht, of which Dodd remained ignorant, Fuller again crossed the Channel to see 'personages of great importance'. Once more, Britain's foreign secretary held aloof.<sup>11</sup>

In September of 1937, Welles travelled to various European capitals exclusive of Berlin and returned home to argue that the United States should support Hitler's demand for colonies as well as 'European adjustments'. Only with a satisfied Reich could one settle with Italy. This was the logic of the so-called Welles Plan, submitted to Roosevelt on 6 October, just as Dodd was about to be dismissed. Emphasizing the injustice of Versailles and the need to adjust access to raw materials, it left little room for doubt as to Roosevelt's basic intent. Whatever doubt there may have been evaporated when William Bullitt, Roosevelt's confidential overseas adviser, left his Paris embassy in mid-November to complete the Welles itinerary. If important concessions could not be wrung from England, perhaps they might be found elsewhere. Sceptical about the chance of winning Hitler without cutting into Czech and Polish boundaries, Roosevelt sent Bullitt to Warsaw and Berlin. Several days of talks and five conferences with Foreign Minister Josef Beck focused on what concessions the Poles might be prepared to make and what Warsaw might expect to gain at the expense of Prague.<sup>12</sup>

On reaching Germany, Bullitt entered talks with Neurath, Schacht, and Göring. He was consulted by the latter on steps preparatory to German annexation of the Sudetenland, and the French ambassador in Berlin quoted him as saying that the time was ripe for Paris to talk seriously with Hitler. Foreign Secretary Halifax's visit would suffice, according to the American; concessions must be seen as part of a plan to promote European unity. Schacht and Göring agreed that the Polish Corridor might stand if a way could be found to bridge it and unite Danzig with East Prussia. In addition, Hitler would not require the return of German East and Southwest Africa if he could count on compensation elsewhere, as for example in the Belgian or Portuguese empire. The American was given to understand that Hitler had no designs on Alsace and would conclude an offensive and defensive treaty with France the moment his colonial demands were met. An exultant Welles congratulated

<sup>11</sup> Dallek, *Roosevelt*, p. 124; François-Poncet to Flandin, 12 March 1936, Laboulaye to Flandin, 19 March 1936, DDF, sér. 2, 1, 517, 609–10; 600.0031 World Program, RG 59, NA; Stafford Little Foundation Lecture at Princeton University, 19 March 1936, box 15, Dulles papers, Princeton University; Bingham diary, 30 June 1934, 20 March and 15 April 1936, box 1, Bingham papers, LC; FDR to Dodd, 5 August 1936; Dodd to FDR, 19 October 1936, box 49, Dodd papers, LC; Leith-Ross to Phipps, 4 February 1937, Phipps papers, Churchill College, Cambridge (hereafter CCC); Lothian Memorandum, 11 May 1937, Halifax papers, CCC. Dulles, already one of America's leading specialists in international law, had not yet left private practice for a post in Washington.

<sup>12</sup> Welles Memorandum to FDR, 10 January 1938, FR (1938), 1, 116; Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to isolation*, p. 23; *Letters*, iv, 1460; Bullitt to Hull, 23 November 1937, box 24, President's Secretary's File (hereafter PSF), FDRL.

Bullitt: 'I wish to the good Lord that during the past years we had been getting this type of information from Germany!' At the same time, German Ambassador Hans Dieckhoff, who had been in close touch with Roosevelt, was assured that the president's stern Quarantine Address did not apply to Germany.<sup>13</sup>

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Roosevelt thought he saw a way to steal the diplomatic lead from Paris and London. What is surprising is not so much his underlying policy – he simply wanted to be on deck – as the appearance he managed to convey of checking dictators at every turn. Prominent on the record is a string of presidential speeches between 1935 and 1937, all of them decrying autocracy and aggression, followed by the Evian Conference on aid for refugees in 1938. When Joseph Kennedy, Roosevelt's ambassador to the Court of St James's, made a speech which hinted at appeasement, *New York Times* reporter Arthur Krock was instantly reassured by the White House that it implied no shift in America's basic position.<sup>14</sup>

Appearance and reality drew even further apart on 11 January when Roosevelt sounded Britain on the Welles plan which by now had undergone three revisions.<sup>15</sup> Welles' solution was twofold. It called for a conference of representative neutrals to frame new principles of international law. Presumably, these would include guaranteed access to raw materials; methods by which international agreements might be 'pacifically revised'; and the removal of 'inequities...reached at the termination of the great war'. Second, there was to be a convention of major powers in Washington to implement recommendations and orchestrate disarmament. To Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, bent upon cutting his losses by direct negotiation with Hitler and Mussolini, this could not have appeared very attractive. Roosevelt was proposing arms reduction, a thorny enough challenge in any age, when Britain had just begun to mount a credible rearmament programme. Most officials in London shuddered at the prospect of returning to Versailles. To some, the plan appeared vague, to others it was 'fatuous', a 'preposterous effusion' which would invite disdain. Chamberlain therefore declined. Yet it does not seem that FDR had great confidence in his own proposal, for after Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden persuaded the prime minister to reconsider and Chamberlain flashed a green light

<sup>13</sup> François-Poncet to Quai d'Orsay, 19 November 1937, dossier 307, Amérique-États-Unis (hereafter AEU), Quai d'Orsay, Paris; M. Lamarle (French chargé at Prague) to Paul Boncour, 5 April 1938 (recounting events of the previous fall), DDF, sér. 2, ix, 221. See also *ibid.*, p. 112n.; Bullitt to Hull, 13 January 1937, 23 November 1937, PSF, box 24, FDRL; Offner, *Appeasement*, p. 190; Dieckhoff to Foreign Ministry, 27 September and 20 December 1937, DGFP, ser. D, 1, 630, 658; Bullitt to Hull, 23 November 1937 (a thirty-two page letter), Bullitt (ed.), *Bullitt*, p. 239.

<sup>14</sup> Moffat Diplomatic Journal, 3 November 1937, Moffat papers, Harvard University; Davis to Hull, 15 April 1933, 500.A15A4, General Committee/297, RG 59, NA; Beatrice Bishop Berle and Travis Beal Jacobs (eds.), *Navigating the rapids, 1918–1971: from the papers of Adolf A. Berle* (New York, 1973), pp. 164, 183–4; speech by German consul general, 30 January 1940, box 19, Dulles papers, Princeton University; *Time*, 29 November 1937, pp. 18–19; 24 January 1938, p. 15; Nancy Harrison Hooker (ed.), *The Moffat papers: selections from the diplomatic journals of Jay Pierrepont Moffat, 1919–1943* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1956), 21 October 1938, pp. 220–1; Samuel I. Rosenman (ed.), *The public papers and addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 13 vols., iv, 442; v, 9–12, 289, 583, 599, 605–607.

<sup>15</sup> Eden memorandum, 21 January 1938, vol. 29, F.O. 954, Public Record Office, Kew (hereafter P.R.O.); Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to isolation*, pp. 21–6; Welles to FDR, 26 October 1937, box 23, PSF, FDRL. Welles' first memorandum was issued 6 October. There followed other plans dated 9 October, 26 October, and 10 January (1938).

on 20 January, Welles's scheme was postponed five times *by the White House* – thrice before Eden resigned, twice after, and the last time (13 March) indefinitely.<sup>16</sup>

During March of 1938, one week after the German absorption of Austria, French Ambassador Count René de Saint-Quentin spoke with Roosevelt at the White House and reported that the president, sporting yellow shoes ('souliers jaunes'), had said that Czechoslovakia would not be able to resist German pressure without British and Russian aid. Since, in the president's considered opinion, such aid would not be forthcoming, France had no other recourse than rapprochement with Germany. By this time, Paris had begun to stiffen with respect to German designs on Central Europe – accounting, perhaps, for Saint-Quentin's reference to yellow shoes. According to the ambassador, the State Department was in full accord with the White House in regarding Czech acquiescence as 'inévitables dans un avenir très proche'. American newspapers continued to depict France as a psychological invalid, and Bullitt met quietly with Foreign Minister Georges Bonnet to urge that France lower Prague's expectations.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps the most arresting thing about Roosevelt's posture in March, April, and May of 1938 is the transformation that it underwent in June. Suddenly, as if to fall in with the new mood of Paris, he began to praise France for backing Czechoslovakia against a country that understood 'only force'. Making like a boxer, he said to Saint-Quentin, 'this is how one must speak to them', France had no choice but to 'risk war' and if she were to go down, 'quite obviously we shall go down with her'.<sup>18</sup>

There were the usual elements of contradiction. Kennedy sought out German Ambassador Herbert von Dirksen in London and assured him that he sympathized not only with Germany's racial policy but also with her economic goals in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.<sup>19</sup> The most authoritative American voice in Berlin, that of Ambassador Hugh Wilson, was likewise criticizing Czechoslovakia's president, Eduard Beneš, for duplicity and delaying tactics. According to Wilson, a democratic defence of Czech borders would be unrealistic. During the first week of August he gave force to his words by flying to Warsaw and Prague in a Messerschmitt fighter on loan from the German airforce. While in Prague, he attended a British luncheon honouring Walter Runciman, saw President Beneš for an hour and a quarter, and then met with Foreign Minister Krofta. In no uncertain terms, he warned Beneš not to count on any support from the United States since interventionist sentiment existed only along the Atlantic coast. Such were the facts of life, and the wisest thing for Czechoslovakia would be to satisfy Germany by pulling out of her defensive pact

<sup>16</sup> Langer and Gleason, *Challenge to isolation*, p. 22; Foreign Office to Lindsay, February (?) 1938; Lindsay to F.O., 22 January and 16 February 1938; F.O. to Lindsay, 13 January 1938, F.O. 371/21526, PRO; Eden Memorandum, 17 January (?) 1938, vol. 29; undated précis by Michael Wright, based on the Halifax files, vol. 30, F.O. 954; F.O. to Lindsay, 4 February 1938; Lindsay to F.O., 6 and 12 February 1938, PREM 1/259, P.R.O.; Stephen Roskill, *Hankey: a man of secrets*, 3 vols. (London, 1970–4), III, 301; Maurice Cowling, *The impact of Hitler: British politics and British policy, 1933–1940* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 176; David Dilks (ed.), *The diaries of Sir Alexander Cadogan, 1938–1945* (London, 1971), 12 January 1938, p. 36; Offner, *Appeasement*, pp. 229–34.

<sup>17</sup> Saint-Quentin to Quai d'Orsay, 22 March 1938, dossier 308, AEU, Quai d'Orsay; Saint-Quentin to Paul-Boncour, 26 March and 1 April 1938; Bonnet to Saint-Quentin, 23 May 1938, DDF, sér. 2, IX, 111, 194–5, 857.

<sup>18</sup> Saint-Quentin to Bonnet, 11 June 1938, DDF, sér. 2, X, 39–40.

<sup>19</sup> Dirksen to Weizsäcker, 13 June and 20 July 1938, DGFP, ser. D. 1, 714–15, 717–18, 721, 723; Offner, *Appeasement*, pp. 251–3.

with Russia. By implication, this meant surrendering those areas of the Sudetenland where, by Beneš's own admission, German minorities were receiving shabby treatment. In sum, Wilson's goal appears to have been the same as Bullitt's. Each sought to compose Poland's differences with Germany by seeing to it that both nations shared in the spoliation of Czechoslovakia. Colonel Truman Smith, U.S. military attaché in Berlin, would soon be discussing with his Polish colleague which portions of Czechoslovakia, excluding those already awarded to Germany, were to go to Hungary, which to Poland (the assumption being that Slovakia would obtain its independence).<sup>20</sup>

When Ambassador Bullitt delivered an interventionist speech at Pointe de Grave, one expressly authorized by FDR, Whitehall considered it a 'great help' and indicative that the United States was 'fully with us'. Nonetheless, London and Paris were confounded to behold Washington returning straightaway to the language of appeasement. Bullitt began to say that any chance of American entry into a war with Germany must be liberally discounted; there would be no way to negate the neutrality laws. Welles sailed for Europe to warn the French in person that American opinion was 80 per cent opposed to intervention; France, in time of war, would not even receive planes which had been ordered in May and for which it had already paid. Senator Key Pittman, regarded by the French as close to the president, blasted all hope of collaboration in a speech given on 17 September, and although Morgenthau continued to confer secretly with French treasury agents on how to evade various provisions of the Neutrality Code, Roosevelt began to position himself so that he might share in the credit for Munich.<sup>21</sup>

Once it became clear that Chamberlain intended to satisfy Hitler at Czechoslovakia's expense, Kennedy commenced confidential talks with high-ranking British officials. Not only did the American ambassador see the prime minister three times in two days (17 and 19 September); he spoke with Permanent Under-Secretary Alexander Cadogan on 21, 23, and 24 September. On the 24th, he phoned Hull to report: 'Halifax will call me when they finish the conference... we have been working until three or four o'clock in the morning.' More meetings with Halifax followed, and on the 27th he cabled Welles, 'There was a cabinet meeting at nine and that is what kept me so long.' The next day, after receiving a call from Chamberlain, he informed Hull that Hitler's reply had been read in parliament. With everyone quite obviously relieved, he could now reward himself with six hours of sleep, something he had not had for seven days.<sup>22</sup>

Roosevelt's only regret was that he had not assumed a more prominent role. During the third week of September, he had told White House guest Leon Jouhaux,

<sup>20</sup> Francois-Poncet to Bonnet, 15 August 1938, DDF, sér. 2, x, 678; Henderson to Halifax, 26 July 1938, DBFP, ser. 3, ii, 12; memorandum by State Secretary Weizsäcker, 8 July 1938, DGFP, ser. D. ii, 481; Wilson, *Career diplomat*, p. 45; Wilson diary, 5 August 1938; Carr to Hull, 6 August 1938; Wilson to Biddle, 6 October 1938, boxes 1 and 4, Hugh Wilson papers, Hoover Library, West Branch, Iowa.

<sup>21</sup> John Harvey (ed.), *The diplomatic diaries of Oliver Harvey, 1937-1940* (London, 1970), 6 September 1938, p. 170; Saint-Quentin to Bonnet 27 September 1938; Bonnet to Saint-Quentin, 27 November 1938, DDF, sér. 2, xi, 588, 588n.; xii, 814; Bonnet, *De Munich*, pp. 124-5.

<sup>22</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, *The wartime journals of Charles A. Lindbergh* (New York, 1970), 19 and 29 September 1938, pp. 71 and 79. Bullitt to Hull, 15 September 1938; memorandum of conversation between Kennedy and Welles, 27 September 1938; Kennedy to Hull, 28 September 1938; Kennedy conversation with Hull, 24 September 1938, 760F.62/827, 1117<sup>76</sup>, 1248, 1333, RG 59, NA (see also the rest of the file).

president of the French labour organization, that while he could not summon a conference, he was prepared to participate in one if called by France or England. At about the same time, he had seen Lindsay and told him (he would be impeached, he said, if word got out) that he would be the first to cheer if French and British pressure on Czechoslovakia bore fruit; should the western powers call a frontiers conference he would attend in person as long as it was not held in Europe.<sup>23</sup>

Ultimately, Roosevelt never achieved the status he sought as chief architect of Munich, though various efforts were made to impress contemporaries with the degree of his instrumentality. Arthur Krock of the *New York Times* was alerted to the fact that FDR had invited Hitler to a meeting, either at sea or at the Azores.<sup>24</sup> Saint-Quentin received a time chart from Welles containing data 'clearly indicative' of Roosevelt's desire for credit.<sup>25</sup> Wilson, in Berlin, was instructed to inquire into the exact order of events which led to Hitler's decision.<sup>26</sup>

Roosevelt could never have guessed how quickly world opinion would transmute Munich into a symbol of capitulation and how grateful he would be that he had not jockeyed more successfully. With new currents in the air, he found himself free to fashion a new policy. This, in fact, is what he proceeded to do, incrementally and with all requisite skill, until the outbreak of war.

As soon as Poland collapsed under the combined weight of Russian and German armour and doves began to make themselves heard across the continent of Europe, German-American relations reverted to their original position. Hitler, safe behind the Siegfried Line, seemed eager to disavow hostile intent, while Roosevelt, for his part, heard from the American embassy in London that he might be of service in arranging a peace settlement.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, on 15 September 1939, he summoned William Davis, a businessman formerly involved in the sale of Mexican oil to Germany. Davis, after being encouraged to take soundings in Rome and Berlin, held a series of talks with Göring (1, 2, and 3 October). Hitler's second in command suggested a conference between Germany, Britain, and France to be held in Washington and indicated it was time for the White House to outline its conception of peace terms and how it proposed to mediate. Germany, he declared, would gladly accept a new Polish state as well as an independent Czechoslovakia.<sup>28</sup>

Outright French and British rejection of Hitler's peace overture of 6 October seems

<sup>23</sup> Moffat memorandum, 20 September 1938; Hull memorandum, 23 September 1938, FR (1938), 1, 625-6, 638-9; Lindsay to F.O., 19 September 1938, F.O. 371/21527, P.R.O.; Berle, *Rapids*, 26 September 1938, p. 186.

<sup>24</sup> Krock later learned that this invitation had been delivered to Ribbentrop by a Hohenzollern prince who was staying with Roosevelt at the White House (Louis Ferdinand); Krock, 'Reminiscences', *New York Times* (clipping), 19 June 1945, box 52, Krock papers, Princeton University. See also FDR to Prince Louis Ferdinand, 14 January 1935; FDR to Hider, 11 July 1935; Gilbert to Hull, 9 January 1939; Summerlin to McIntyre, 10 January 1938; Prince Ferdinand to FDR, 31 December 1936, 811.458 Germany/18, 23, 25, 27, 30, RG 59, NA.

<sup>25</sup> Saint-Quentin to Bonnet, 2 October 1938, DDF, sér. 2, XI, 759-60. See also, Saint-Quentin to Bonnet, 28 September 1938, *ibid.* p. 656.

<sup>26</sup> Hull to Wilson, 18 October 1938; Wilson to Hull, 21 October 1938, FR (1938), 1, 724, 727. For other indications of Roosevelt's attitude, see Bullitt to Hull, 28 September, and Phillips to Hull, 29 September 1938, *ibid.* 692, 699.

<sup>27</sup> Friedländer, *Prelude*, pp. 37-8; Offner, *Origins*, p. 168.

<sup>28</sup> Offner, *Origins*, p. 168; Saint-Quentin to Quai d'Orsay, 9 February 1940, dossier 319<sup>ter</sup> AEU.

to have given the president pause, although Davis returned to confer with State Department officials and was beginning to draw British agents into the act when a Swiss leak threatened to expose the nature of his activity. Secretary Hull felt it necessary to deny any connexion between him and the White House and there is nothing to indicate that he ever served the president again.<sup>29</sup>

The man recruited by FDR to take up the skein of negotiation where Davis left off was General Motors' Vice-President James Mooney. After speaking with Göring for two and a half hours in October, Mooney reported to the American embassy and set out for London to confer with ambassadors Kennedy and Bullitt (the latter by telephone). During December and January, he spoke with Roosevelt and maintained, much as Davis had done, that Hitler would consider sizable concessions. These included an independent Poland, an autonomous Czechoslovakia with new frontiers, and possibly a reconstituted German regime purged of such figures as Goebbels and Ribbentrop.<sup>30</sup>

Mooney's next mission to Europe is of exceptional interest for two reasons: first, because it runs parallel to segments of the Welles mission; secondly, because it throws light on obscure aspects of the American peace plan. Roosevelt, as it develops, sought to appear as friendly as possible to the Germans.<sup>31</sup> He wanted it said that he had spent a portion of his youth in Germany, having attended elementary school there, and that the Germans might retain whatever form of government they preferred – this was 'their affair'. In addition, Mooney was to let it be known that FDR wished to act as 'moderator' rather than 'mediator' since the former term was associated with American town meetings. Berlin might satisfy its colonial appetite by developing Central Tropical Africa instead of its former colonies, but with the *right* to the colonies reaffirmed (Göring accepted, adding that it would be a pity to undermine the stabilizing influence of the British Empire). As anticipated, disarmament and liberalized world trade were brought forward as a substitute for 'extreme' political demands which could not be met, and Roosevelt went beyond this to promise contributions to the German economy, including tariff reduction and a 'free gift' of American gold.<sup>32</sup> Finally, a way was suggested whereby Hitler might improve his popularity rating in the United States: by obtaining a peaceful resolution of the Russo-Finnish War.<sup>33</sup>

Mooney not only set the pattern for Welles by opening and closing his talks in Rome; his three and a half weeks in Germany coincided precisely with the Welles visit. He went into conference with Ribbentrop on 29 February, one day before Welles, and with Hitler and Göring on 4 and 7 March, in each case a few days later.

<sup>29</sup> Hull to Kirk, 13 October 1939; Harrison to Hull, 31 October 1939; Berle memorandum, 31 October 1939, 740.00119 European War 1939/78, 112, 117, RG 59, NA.

<sup>30</sup> Mooney to FDR, 15 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL; Berle diary, 16 October 1939, Berle papers, FDRL; Drummond, *American neutrality*, p. 133; Messersmith to Swanson, 8 October 1938, 093.622/43, RG 59, NA; Messersmith memorandum, 25 January and 13 February 1940; Bullitt to Hull, 23 October 1939; Harrison to Hull, 31 October 1939, 740.00119 European War 1939/104, 112, RG 59, NA; Messersmith to Phillips, 16 November 1934, item 442, Messersmith papers, University of Delaware.

<sup>31</sup> Mooney to Roosevelt, 15 March 1940, 740.0011 European War 39/1824½, RG 59, NA.

<sup>32</sup> Mooney to Roosevelt, 12 March 1940, 740.0011 European War 39/1824½, RG 59, NA; Mooney to Roosevelt, 15 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL; Hull to American Embassy, Berlin, 12 February 1940, 121.840 Welles, Sumner/7, RG 59, NA.

<sup>33</sup> Mooney to Roosevelt, 13 and 14 March 1940, 740.0011 European War 39/1824½, RG 59, NA; Mooney to Roosevelt, 13 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL.

He thus not only smoothed Welles' path but attempted to clinch what the under secretary had set in motion. His was the first word and the last – until trouble arose from an unexpected quarter.<sup>34</sup> Although his detailed reports from Rome were forwarded to Washington by naval intelligence, their contents became public knowledge and the State Department denied any link between him and the White House.<sup>35</sup> Mooney was thus forced into retirement in much the same manner as Davis.

Before examining Welles' overtures, it should be said that there were four basic facets of the Roosevelt peace strategy: first, a sustained effort to separate Mussolini from the Axis by offering choice imperial inducements; second, a campaign to exact meaningful concessions from Britain; third an attempt to organize various neutral blocs, including Scandinavia, the Low Countries, and Latin America, with an eye to drawing up principles of peace which would satisfy Berlin and focus world opinion on London.<sup>36</sup> Finally, Roosevelt hoped to enlist leaders of the three major religious faiths, the Roman Catholic, the Greek Orthodox, and Islam.<sup>37</sup> Of the four aims, only the first and second, entrusted to Welles, came anywhere near fruition.

It is important to recall that the president, partially out of deference to Chamberlain, made haste to assure Ambassador Saint-Quentin and others that there was no thought of bargaining with Hitler. As a result, many have attributed Welles' mission to domestic politics in an election year. Robert Murphy, in Paris, suspected this, as did Mussolini and a number of other foreign leaders.<sup>38</sup>

Yet if Welles lacked conviction, he certainly managed to conceal it from the Court of St James's where his trip created rank consternation. British intelligence showed Roosevelt to be in deadly earnest, and his desire to make peace with Hitler was viewed as *both* a 'dirty trick' to secure re-election *and* a 'crime against common sense'.<sup>39</sup> It would kindle anti-war sentiment and raise false hopes.<sup>40</sup> Offers of mediation tendered by Denmark, Sweden, and the Vatican were already providing more than enough fuel for the British peace movement.<sup>41</sup> Foreign Secretary Halifax thought Welles naive yet typical of what one should have to expect from America. He dared not say this publicly, of course. One could not afford to offend the president 'by appearing to assume either his duplicity or his stupidity'.<sup>42</sup> Prime Minister

<sup>34</sup> For Welles' itinerary, see Welles to FDR, 2 March 1940; Welles to Hull, 17 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL; Schmidt (Foreign Ministry interpreter) Memoranda, 1, 2, and 4 March 1940, DGFP, ser. D, VIII, 821, 839, 850–62.

<sup>35</sup> Messersmith memorandum, 13 February 1940, 740.00119 European War 1939/104, RG 59, NA (see also *ibid.* file 1824½).

<sup>36</sup> On the first of the four facets, see Lothian to Smuts, 14 September 1939, GD 40/17, file 445, Lothian papers, Scottish Record Office (hereafter SRO). On FDR's plan for neutral participation see Berle diary, 10 February 1940, Berle papers, FDRL; Dallek, *Roosevelt*, p. 216; Hull to Caffery, 8 February 1940, FR (1940), I, 117–18; Davies to Hull, 8 November 1939; Atherton to Hull, 13 February 1940, 740.00119 European War 1939/172 and 254, RG 59, NA.

<sup>37</sup> Berle to FDR, 18 and 26 March 1940; FDR to Berle, 27 March 1940, FR (1940), I, 129–31.

<sup>38</sup> Ulrich von Hassell, *The von Hassell diaries, 1938–1944* (Garden City, 1947), p. 120; Hilton, 'Welles Mission', pp. 104–5, 117; Bullitt (ed.), *Bullitt*, p. 404. Murphy was counsellor of the U.S. Embassy in Paris.

<sup>39</sup> Vansittart minute on prime minister's account of talks with Welles, 18 March 1940, F.O. 371/24406, P.R.O.

<sup>40</sup> Chamberlain to Lothian, 4 February 1940, Halifax papers, F.O. 800/324, P.R.O.

<sup>41</sup> Cowling, *Impact of Hitler*, p. 358.

<sup>42</sup> Halifax to Lothian, 11 March 1940; Halifax minute, 20 March 1940; minutes by Vansittart on Halifax report, undated, F.O. 371/24406, P.R.O.

Chamberlain reacted with 'white hot anger' to Welles' proposal that Hitler remain in power, and Vansittart thought it shocking that Britain should be asked to cede Gibraltar to Italy.<sup>43</sup> How could the president propose a revised Czech state without Moravia? And how could he maintain that French peace terms were too harsh?<sup>44</sup> Roosevelt's solution was simple: whatever adjustments might be required would be offset by relief in the area of trade and disarmament, the latter to be backed by an international peace-keeping airforce. Washington would contribute its share in the field of finance and volunteer to inspect the dismantling of armament and weapons plants.<sup>45</sup>

According to Welles, Chamberlain and Halifax 'laughed' at his proposals and subjected him to a comical seminar in which members of the War Cabinet, led by the foreign secretary, held forth on a series of unrelated topics. Sir John Anderson, minister for civilian defence, who had not spoken a word during the session, took Welles by the arm and said, 'Please do not for an instant believe that most of us agree with the opinions you have heard expressed tonight. I can assure you we do not.' Pain turned to astonishment as Churchill unburdened himself of an hour and fifty minutes of oratory, 'brilliant and always effective, interlarded with considerable wit'. It can be said that Welles stood his ground, but so did Chamberlain, who agreed only that Danzig might return to Germany along with German-speaking parts of Poland, and that Hitler might be granted free immigration, trade, and investment in Africa from heartland to horn.<sup>46</sup>

The sincerity of the under secretary's professed intent was accepted wherever he went. Hitler had long sought American mediation, and Welles was known for his criticism of the Versailles settlement.<sup>47</sup> Ulrich von Hassell, distinguished veteran of the German diplomatic corps, agreed with the British that Roosevelt aimed at *both* re-election *and* a peace settlement.<sup>48</sup> Thus, when Welles arrived in Germany on the heels of Mooney, he was able to deal seriously and at length. Ribbentrop saw him on 1 March, Hitler and Göring on 2 March, Göring a second time on 4 March. The last of these conferences lasted three hours and twenty minutes.<sup>49</sup> By special request he also held talks with Rudolf Hess and Hjalmar Schacht.<sup>50</sup> Although Hitler insisted on a Monroe Doctrine for Eastern and Central Europe, in addition to colonial restoration, this did not discourage Roosevelt's emissary, who told Göring on his departure that he wanted to stay in close touch. To Dieckhoff, he said he expected his mission would succeed, and to Ernst von Weizsäcker, he confided that Washington could be counted upon to resume the initiative after his (Welles') return home.<sup>51</sup>

France also took Welles at his word. But in contrast with British ridicule and

<sup>43</sup> Halifax to Lothian, 11 March 1940, F.O. 371/24406, P.R.O.; Welles report, 11 March 1940, FR (1940), 1, 77.

<sup>44</sup> Halifax to Lothian, 11 March 1940; minutes by Vansittart on Halifax report, undated, F.O. 371/24406, P.R.O.

<sup>45</sup> Halifax to Lothian, 11 March 1940, F.O. 371/24406, P.R.O.

<sup>46</sup> Welles report on his special mission, 11, 12, and 13 March 1940, FR (1940), 1, 77, 80, 84, 88-9.

<sup>47</sup> Thomsen to Foreign Ministry, 10 February 1940, DGFP, ser. D, VIII, 757-8.

<sup>48</sup> Von Hassell, *Diaries*, 14-17 February and 11 March 1940, pp. 112-13, 120.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.* 11 March 1940, p. 120.

<sup>50</sup> Welles to FDR, 2 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL.

<sup>51</sup> Dieckhoff memorandum, 4 March 1940, DGFP, ser. D, VIII, 864, 864n.; von Hassell, *Diaries*, 11 March 1940, p. 120.

German satisfaction, Paris expressed outrage. Only a few, including Treasury Secretary Paul Reynaud, preferred FDR's plasticity to Churchill's steel. Most resented the undermining of their position and the strengthening of so-called 'defeatists' like Georges Bonnet. Welles was recognized for his proximity to FDR as well as for a set of isolationist views which led him to prefer the spread of nazism to any major risk of American involvement. On the morning after Munich, while Roosevelt was congratulating Beneš for refusing to be drawn into a war in which he would have been 'crushed', Welles had told the French of his optimism that Munich would pave the way for further concessions to Hitler, including a retrocession of former German colonies held by France.<sup>52</sup> It was this same Welles who now held extensive talks with Daladier and left the impression that Washington was not only resigned to German control of Central and Eastern Europe but supremely confident in Mussolini. No amount of praise for the *duce* would suffice.<sup>53</sup>

Welles' first and last stop was Rome, in keeping with his strategy of seeking to detach Italy from the Axis, and the ground there had been well laid. FDR has assured Mussolini's ambassador that in any peace conference hosted by America, the *duce* could expect reasonable satisfaction. Roosevelt had also lunched with Cardinal Mundelein in late 1937, thus clearing the way for an episcopal trip to Italy where the cardinal had been warmly greeted by Foreign Minister Ciano.<sup>54</sup> Now there were elaborate floral decorations at railway stations and a private car to take Welles from Naples to Rome.<sup>55</sup> He was able to return the compliment by presenting a written note from president to *duce*: 'I still hope to meet you some day soon!' When Mussolini disregarded the invitation to meet in the Azores, Welles repeated it on his return to Rome after visiting Berlin, Paris, and London.<sup>56</sup> He also brought pleasant news. Although the administration was still undecided as to whether it could recognize Italian rule in Ethiopia – to do so would imply willingness to recognize Manchukuo – it did intend to seek a generous congressional appropriation for American participation in the Rome Exposition planned for 1942.<sup>57</sup>

As might have been foreseen, Mussolini turned out to be more interested in Gibraltar, Tunis, and Djibouti, or a share in Suez, than he was in world fairs or in meeting Roosevelt face to face. Disarmament and free trade ranked relatively low on his list of national priorities. Nor did he forget German aspirations in Central Europe which he insisted must take precedence over all else. Welles seems to have grasped the importance of this consideration. Nevertheless, when he phoned Roosevelt for permission to discuss territorial issues, the answer was no.<sup>58</sup>

Interestingly enough, American overtures continued despite Mussolini's indifference to a personal meeting. The president granted a unilateral concession when he

<sup>52</sup> 'Origine du Voyage Sumner Welles', author unknown, 24 February 1940, 3DA5, dr. 7, sdr. b; Beneš memoire, 2DA3, dr. 6, sdr. d, Daladier papers, Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, Paris (hereafter FNSP); Saint-Quentin to Quai d'Orsay, 10 February 1940; Daladier to Saint-Quentin, 16 February 1940, dossier 319<sup>ter</sup>; Saint-Quentin to Quai d'Orsay, 1 October 1938, dossier 310, AEU, Quai d'Orsay.

<sup>53</sup> Daladier, notes on conversations with Welles, undated, 3DA5, dr. 7, sdr. b, Daladier papers, FNSP, Paris; Bullitt to FDR, 18 April 1940, Bullitt (ed.), *Bullitt*, p. 410; Hilton, 'Welles', p. 115; Bullitt to Moore, 18 April 1940, box 3, Moore papers, FDRL.

<sup>54</sup> Welles memorandum, 22 March 1939, FR (1939), II, 622–3.

<sup>55</sup> Phillips to Hull, 1 March 1940, box 46, Hull papers, LC.

<sup>56</sup> Hilton, 'Welles Mission', pp. 108, 120.

<sup>57</sup> Welles report, 26 February 1940, FR (1940), I, 22.

<sup>58</sup> Welles to Hull, 27 February and 17 March 1940, box 4, PSF, FDRL.

lifted America's countervailing duty on some of Italy's most valued silk exports – this, in spite of Germany's conquest of Denmark and Norway and Bullitt's impression that Washington was showing too much velvet and not enough iron.<sup>59</sup> At about the same time, in response to a suggestion by Welles and Myron Taylor, Roosevelt dropped all derogatory reference to dictatorship in his speeches.<sup>60</sup> On 10 April, in a dramatic reversal of all he had been saying since he took office, he stressed that the United States enjoyed friendly relations with many countries under authoritarian rule and that the manner in which other people chose to be governed was not the proper concern of Pennsylvania Avenue.

Taylor, after sounding British envoys and concluding that Italy must be granted some or all of her territorial demands, assured the president that he need not be concerned about any 'lack of caution' in the handling of these 'delicate matters'. At this juncture, Lord Lothian, British ambassador to the United States, advised Roosevelt on how to draft an inquiry respecting terms for Italian neutrality. Mussolini must be assured that the Allies were prepared to consider 'all reasonable Italian claims' and that any agreement with regard to them would 'come into force as soon as the war was ended'. The United States, in other words, would lend moral support by acting as recorder and monitor of a pact between Rome, London, and Paris.<sup>61</sup> The French went so far as to speak of an American 'guarantee'. On 26 May, Roosevelt cabled Mussolini that he stood ready to 'communicate' Italian desiderata to France and Britain. Paris and London were prepared to give 'assurance' that such a compact 'would be faithfully executed by them at the end of the war and that those governments would welcome Italian participation at any eventual peace conference with a status equal to that of the belligerents'. The sole requirement on Italy's side would be for Mussolini to state that the secret covenant satisfied all Italian claims necessary for the guarantee of Italian neutrality.<sup>62</sup>

Italy's response was crisp and immediate. She planned to enter the war in a matter of weeks if not days: 'It will happen soon', Ciano declared. Again, an American proposal had arrived too late. This was the third rejection of as many Roosevelt offers within a month; yet the president resolved to make still another *démarche*, this time threatening to supply the Allies with aid and, if need be, troops. Mussolini again came to the point: he had decided on war and preferred not to receive any further pressure from the United States.<sup>63</sup>

Two days after the Dunkirk evacuation, with Belgium and the Netherlands firmly under German control and the battle of France a day old, Roosevelt once again returned to the charge, suggesting that Europe, as well as Asia, might operate on the principle of the Monroe Doctrine. Admiral Horthy of Hungary had championed such an arrangement in the form of three leagues, each to be headquartered in Geneva, and *Time* magazine had called it as 'improbable as a Hungarian opera'.

<sup>59</sup> Bullitt to Hull, 14 May 1940, FR (1940), II, 703, 703n.

<sup>60</sup> Welles report, 19 March 1940, FR (1940), I, 115. See also *ibid.* II, 687. Taylor was U.S. special envoy to the Vatican.

<sup>61</sup> Taylor to FDR, 3 and 11 May 1940; Lothian to FDR, 26 May 1940, FR (1940), II, 701–2, 710.

<sup>62</sup> Hull to Phillips, 26 May 1940; Hull memorandum, 26 May 1940, FR (1940), II, 711–12. See also Corbin to Quai d'Orsay, 24 and 27 May 1940, Papiers 1940: Fouques Duparc, Quai d'Orsay; note by French under-secretary for Europe, 3 June 1940; Churchill to Reynaud, 27 May 1940; Daladier to Saint-Quentin, 25 May 1940; Papiers 1940; Reynaud, Quai d'Orsay.

<sup>63</sup> Hull, *Hull*, I, 783; Phillips to Hull, 27 May and 1 June 1940, FR (1940), II, 712, 715.

Now, with reporters unaware of any clandestine links between Lafayette Square and Berlin, the editorial page of the *New York Times* poured scorn on the idea. Whereupon Roosevelt hastened to issue a 'clarification'. He would like to have supported another French offer of concessions to Italy, but this time he yielded to Hull's better judgement. On 10 June, Italy's notification to France that she would enter the war within hours precluded further effort on the part of the United States. Lothian would extend feelers to Berlin as late as September, but FDR's address to the graduating class of the University of Virginia on the day that Italy invaded France inaugurated a new phase of American policy. 'The hand that held the dagger', he intoned, 'has struck it into the back of its neighbour.'<sup>64</sup>

On hindsight, Roosevelt's use of stiletto imagery would seem to have been less than accurate as it implied an attribution of virtue to American foreign policy which was hardly deserved. White House strategists may not have deployed shock troops in the manner of Mussolini, but they dealt lethally enough in the language of diplomacy. The Welles mission was entirely consistent with what FDR had been saying and doing behind closed doors since at least the mid-1930s. Indeed, it may be viewed as the culmination of a series of feelers that had their origin in the president's initial ambiguity and reached their zenith over a year earlier at the time of Munich. Beginning with pre-inaugural statements and running like a *leitmotif* through the work of Fuller, Bullitt, and Wilson, then of Davis, Mooney, and Welles, is the theme of appeasement. This becomes all the more apparent in light of Dodd's humiliation at the hands of the White House, Kennedy's first-hand connexion with Munich, and Roosevelt's own effort to obtain a lion's share of the credit.

To the degree, therefore, that blame may be assessed for the ultimate failure of Allied strategy, the United States must accept its fair share. Too many spans linked the chancelleries of Europe with Lafayette Square to allow the position of one western capital to be set apart from that of the others. FDR, in particular, was intimately involved in the patronage of Nazi Germany, more so than anyone has perhaps supposed. Throughout the decade, he managed to cover nearly every track that ran between Washington and Berlin. In the popular eye, he remained what he had always been: an uncompromising foe of dictatorship. But such policy carried with it important elements of weakness as well as strength. In the end, there was a price to be paid for ambivalence, and it remains for history to decide whether, in this case, the price proved exorbitant.

<sup>64</sup> *New York Times*, 7 July 1940, p. 1; *Time*, 25 October 1937, p. 22; Colonna to Hull, 11 June 1940, FR (1940), II, 716; Thomsen to Foreign Ministry, 8 September 1940, DGFP, ser. D, XI, 42 (on the Lothian peace feeler).