Dear Dr. Buell:

I received yesterday a copy of the Foreign Policy Association's bulletin "Chaos or Reconstruction", which I read with the keenest interest last evening. It is a splendid document on which I congratulate you and the Association most sincerely. You have rendered our people at home a very great service by this fine presentation of recent developments in Europe and of their significance to us.

I have read the pamphlet most carefully and I am in accord with everything you say except in one respect to which I will revert in the following paragraphs. I find it one of the most clear, correct, and understanding appreciations of what has happened in Europe recently that I have ever seen. May I say that I marvel at the correctness of the details therein and the extraordinarily clear perception of the meaning and implications of the facts. It is in many respects a memorable document.

There is only one paragraph in the whole pamphlet with which I cannot be in complete accord. On page 32, at the beginning of the paragraph, you refer to "liberal critics who insist that because of the Nazi regime Hitler cannot afford to reduce armaments or bring Germany back to the world economy. In their opinion this regime is based on domination rather than cooperation, and these critics regard as utterly insincere the many offers for an arms agreement which Hitler made after taking office. Such an absolutist attitude which bars the door to negotiations can only lead to increased chaos and eventually war". Towards the end of the paragraph you say, "Certainly when he is given an opportunity to save Germany from..."
economic disaster he should be strong enough to abandon autarchy and militarism in favor of an international settlement that the excesses of the dictatorship may be reduced."

Perhaps I am among those "liberal critics" whom you have in mind for I think you know my views. As I hope to go home for at least a brief leave of absence sailing from Hamburg on the MANHATTAN on April 7, and to have the opportunity of seeing you for a long conversation while I am there, I shall not go into this particular quotation with you at this time at any length. This pamphlet, however, is so important and I am in such total agreement with you in practically every respect, that I should like to say that I do not believe that the time for such negotiation which you infer has yet arrived. The National Socialist regime in Germany has not shown any of the flexibility or the possibility to accommodate itself by gradual evolution which has been shown by the communist regime in Russia and the Fascist Government in Italy. The policy and basic objectives of National Socialism remain today what they were at the outset. We must base our conclusions on the facts and the facts show that there has been no change whatever. I will not endeavor to present the ample documentation which is available for this opinion, which I believe is more a statement of fact than an opinion, further than to state that just as late as a day or two ago in the speech which Chancellor Hitler made at the opening of the International Automobile Exposition in Berlin (which in itself is a misnomer as it is in no sense an international exposition) he repeated in detail his adherence to every important basic idea of the National Socialist economic and financial program, just as his latest political utterances while milder in form do not indicate any change in any respect in the political program. The unfortunate irony of the situation of the German people and of the regime is that this Government must pursue its full program either to complete success or complete failure. This is what makes negotiations so difficult and so dangerous.
In this paragraph on page 32, you infer that Chancellor Hitler has deviated from his original program in making the agreement in 1934 with Poland and in 1936 with Austria. I will not speak of the arrangement with Poland and the German intentions with regard thereto as that is out of my immediate sphere, but concerning the agreement of July 11, 1936, I can only assure you that there are no illusions here and the facts show what the real intentions of Germany are. The Agreement of July 11, 1936, was entered into not in good faith by Germany, but forced by a combination of circumstances which she had to meet. The accord of July 11 was the way out which was chosen in order to meet a situation which was of even greater major importance than the immediate position with respect to Austria. The Government here has, and no thinking person in Austria can or does have any illusions with regard to the accord or the intentions of Germany. It represents no change of policy but merely a change of tactics. Germany hopes to gain her ends by peaceful penetration through the undermining of the present government, hoping that if not in the next, at least the following one will be National Socialist which will of its own initiative invite the Anschluss. This peaceful penetration is in the form of continuous pressure on the Austrian Government, which you will be interested to know the Government has been successfully resisting here. I could give you some very interesting data if time permitted, to show the forms that this pressure takes and that the intentions of the present Government in Germany with regard to Austria have not been changed by the accord.

These are just a few of the reasons why agreements with the present Government cannot lead to anything definite and can therefore not lead to peace. I am therefore not of the opinion that the "absolutist attitude" to which you refer in this paragraph, "can only lead to increased chaos and eventually war". I am of the opinion, on the other hand, that it is that attitude which alone can open
the way to eventual negotiations with a Government that
is sincere and has an intention of maintaining its obli-
gations entered into. This is very basic and I believe
very important and in some respects the key of the whole
situation, and this is why I have permitted myself to
write to you at this length. I should be glad when I
have the privilege of seeing you when I go home, to go
into this with you more fully. We must negotiate with
a German Government again, but the time for it has not yet
arrived.

May I say again that I have read no document on
recent developments in Europe which is so accurate and so
helpful as your "Chaos or Reconstruction". Particularly
important, penetrating, and helpful as well as, I believe,
constructive and wise on the whole, is your comment on
the implications which this situation has for us and on
the direction which any neutrality legislation we may enact
should take. This latter is of major importance to us
and is for the moment the most constructive contribution
we can make to the world situation - together with our
trade agreements program. Unfortunately there are so many
well intentioned people who would like to have us embark
on a certain course which they believe would keep us out
of war and would avoid war in general, when in fact their
program would have the greatest dangers of precipitating
the war we all want to avoid and then almost certainly
involving us in it. It is, in my opinion, just as im-
portant to endeavor to avoid war anywhere as it is to
endeavor to keep out of war. Your pamphlet will, I am
sure, be of very great help in orienting correctly a very
large section of our intelligent public opinion.

I look forward very much to the opportunity of
seeing you in April or early May if I find it possible to
make this brief trip home.

With very sincere congratulations and all good
wishes, I am

Cordially yours,

George S. Messersmith,