The former Chancellor of Germany, Dr. Bruning, who is an old friend, spent last evening with me at my home prior to sailing for England where he will spend the next three or four months at Oxford. He has been spending four or five months quietly at Lowell House at Cambridge. Although Dr. Bruning refrains almost entirely from commenting on the general situation, the following may be of interest.

He said that he felt that the approach which our Government was making to a settlement of the general problem was the correct one. We were arming to be prepared for defense at a time when this was the only prudent and was the essential thing to do. At the same time we were approaching the problem through our trade agreements program in a constructive
constructive manner. The political approach had been tried for years and was definitely unsuccessful. The post war ills had grown out of economic conditions and the healing approach must be through economic appeasement. He hoped that we would continue on our program for, while the effects would be slow, they were being steady and sure. Italy and Germany could not in the end stand up against this pressure. It might be one more year and it might be three years but they could not in the end resist and would be obliged to adapt their economic system to the general one we were trying to bring about. These economic changes in Germany would be accompanied by the necessary political ones there and give a reasonable hope for peace.

He was much concerned about conditions in Germany. Things were getting worse in every way rather than better in the country. There were likely to be some changes but he did not think them of much significance except as indicating a strengthening of the radical elements. Blomberg was really not a well man and he felt sure that his marriage would be seized as the opportunity for retiring him. He had not been well since 1931 or 1932 when he had his accident. Since then he had been suffering from occasional mental disturbances and was at times really out of his head. It did not make so much difference for the present who replaced him.
him as long as Fritsch and Beck remained. Goering was trying
to get the Army under his control but under present conditions
even if he were made Minister of War it would not mean his
controlling the Army with Fritsch and Beck remaining. It
would, however, be a step in the direction of getting the
Army, police and S.S. under one head. There was no doubt
that Himmler and his group were definitely opposed to Goering
and that Himmler eventually hoped to be the head of all the
armed forces. If that came about no one could make any
prognostications about what would happen in Germany and in
Europe. He knew that Himmler was openly saying in Berlin
that some of the Army Generals (meaning Beck and Fritsch)
should get the same treatment as certain Generals had re-
ceived in Russia.

It was a question as to how long Fritsch and Beck could
stay. They had steadfastly refused to send troops to Spain
toward the end of 1936 at Hitler's demand. They would have
been replaced then but Hitler had not found a single high
ranking general who would replace them. It was a sort of
strike of the Army. Even General Reichenau had refused to
replace Fritsch or Beck. The position of Fritsch and Beck
had, however, recently been weakened on account of various
Englishmen going to Berlin and telling Hitler that no matter
what Germany did, England would not move. This disturbed
even some of the other generals. Londonderry had told Hitler he could move into the Rhineland and England would not move. He knew that Flandin had recently been in Berlin and told Hitler that France would not move even in case of German encroachment on Czechoslovakia. It was the same old story of 1914. Simon then had told the German Ambassador in London what the situation in the British cabinet was and that if it came to a vote there would be a balance of two against England joining in a war, and this is what influenced the Germans then to go ahead.

Dr. Bruning emphasized the important part which the Army was playing in Germany but that it was a question as to how long it could hold this position. Once it no longer had this control over foreign policy, particularly external adventures, war was almost a certainty.

He was a good deal concerned about the English position for they did not seem to be able to make up their mind. Chamberlain was a good Chancellor of the Exchequer but he was not a statesman and could not get away from his City ideas and influences. There were too many still in the City whose principal interest was in immediate profits. Chamberlain was too old and too inflexible to change his ideas. If England would establish a definite policy in the right direction of standing up to Germany and Italy, Chamberlain would have to go.
go. If he went, Dr. Bruning felt sure that Simon could not stay in the Cabinet. He also felt sure that in that case Hoare would have to go for Labor would then no longer tolerate him and he was too vulnerable on account of his tin connections and certain scandals which touched him. Chamberlin, Hoare, Simon and Norman rest under the strange delusion that if they did not support in some way this present government in Germany, it would be followed by communism. They did not realize that there was already something in Germany far worse than communism in Russia and that what would come if they supported this present government in Germany would be even worse still and that instead of bringing appeasement the situation for England would be even worse than they now feared.

He was very pessimistic with regard to the Van Zeeland report. It was useless to try any approach through a meeting of the five powers as he had suggested. Italy and Germany would never enter such a conference except to sabotage it. Italy might be willing to make certain concessions of real value and could be brought into line but Germany would not do so. King Leopold was trying to follow out the tradition of his father who had been a wise and sound man. The Queen Mother was also advising her son to go slowly. He had talked over the Van Zeeland plans with her at length. The young King was a fine man but could not realize
realize the scope of the problem. He was getting too many letters from his sister in Italy and was seeing the whole problem from too narrow a point of view. Van Zeeland was a good economist but not a statesman. His last talk that he had with him after seeing the Queen Mother was most disillusioning. He had the most naive views about Germany and the Germans. It was really appalling to find that a man about to make such a report had so little understanding of the German situation and the elements and personalities involved. It was useless to think of concessions to Germany as helping the situation as she was not prepared to and would not make any counter concessions that would be lived up to. This was the great fallacy and where the thinking of so many went wrong. As a German he must be presumed to know something about that. There were plenty of sound men in Germany today and the sound ones would never get control of their country if the rest of the world did not make a more firm stand.

He said that he thought we in this country were doing all that we could and that we were on the right path. He hoped that we would stand up to England and insist on a fair constructive trade agreement. It was the best thing we could do for the whole world. The English were a strange people. They understood one thing and that was a firm steady attitude
in others. If they found that we were going to stand up firmly in these negotiations they would finally come around. If they found our attitude such that they thought they could swing us away from our main principles and objectives, the situation would only be made worse. He was confident that an American-British trade agreement was the next great constructive step and we could do a great service to peace by not swerving. Even Chamberlain inflexible as he was and influenced by the City as he was would have to give way. It was too bad, he said, that the British were writing in their papers the way they were about our country recently. They were having a very real recession in business there today and were trying to hide it by talking about that in the United States. It was a very short-sighted policy, he said, but we must remember what kind of men control in the City today. They are a very short-sighted lot, he said.

He said that he was naturally much disturbed over this armaments program because, although necessary reduction in armaments would have to be slow, he knew something about generals and admirals and their methods. Once it had been decided in principle in a Cabinet to give them a new kind of gun, it was useless to try to stop them until every single unit had the new guns. Under any circumstances, since economy in so many countries was so largely based on armaments, reduction would have to be slow. It was well to remember this
this as it was just one of those facts that had to be faced and that idealists found it hard to face the facts.

As to war, he felt that the worst phase was past about a year ago. It was now a question as to whether England would evolve soon enough a definite policy and keep her armaments program going. If we went on with our trade agreements program and England joined in, slow but steady progress would be made toward bringing most of the world in line and little by little those fundamental changes would be made which would eventually force Germany and Italy to bring their economic systems into line. When that point came there were those in Germany who would see that the necessary political changes were made there. The important factor in the meantime was no faltering in this program of determined economic approach and no concessions of any kind to Germany and Italy.

G. S. Messersmith.