Berlin, Germany
June 12, 1938

Dear Mr. Messersmith:

The tension which existed in this part of the world over the weekend May 22d must have given you the impression that the political information which I had volunteered to send to you previously was not altogether accurate. I was very much surprised at the excitement and anxiety here, and while there was a good deal of nervousness even in the American colony, particularly after it was known that the British women of the diplomatic staff were being sent out, I refused to take notice of the rumors and fears and went about my weekend relaxation as usual. I shall not go into the details of this affair, as I know that you have had reports from the Embassy covering every phase of the events of that week. But I am not sure that everything has come to light. I am still not convinced that there was complete military inactivity on the part of the Germans and that Hitler was not almost tempted to try his hand at Czechoslovakia.

The latest information is that nothing drastic is to be done at the present time to emancipate the Sudeten Germans from the Czech oppression. There is, of course, great annoyance at England for mixing up in the domestic affairs of Germany; but as I have pointed out in previous letters the Germans are not willing to let loose an European war at the present time to carry on the Pan-German program. That program is to be fulfilled by the march of time and the unending broadsides of propaganda and abuse which are to be hurled across the frontier. No doubt the differences between the two countries will become more deep as the months roll by; and after the first of August much impatience will be shown and I think the European situation will become more dangerous. I am still convinced that everything, however, will be done to avoid a major conflict. There are no illusions here regarding the dangers of a real conflict. In this regard the National Socialists have the greatest respect for England, France and their potential allies; but there is a deep conviction in the minds of the leaders here that Germany will be permitted to go a very long way before anybody says "halt". This is true of their entire policy at home and abroad. It is true respecting their attitude toward us, and I hope that we will take a strong stand where our interests are affected. As I wrote you in a previous letter Wiley and I gave the Secret Police an ultimatum early last month; and forty-five minutes before the time limit expired they yielded. They will not face the music; and if they know they will be beaten they back down. They have gone farther in modern times than any other people to arouse public opinion throughout the world against them; but I am still convinced that they are very much worried about it and feel a profound uneasiness.
not in the way of remorse, but fear. In spite of everything that is said and proclaimed about valor and honor I am sure that there is about as little of either of these virtues in this country as there is decency. But they are afraid, because they know that they are hated and in the normal course of the compensation which naturally takes place they are afraid, afraid of the results of their own misdeeds. This is at the bottom of the uneasiness among the people, among the business classes and among the leaders themselves. I lay no stock in the tales which are constantly circulating about the mental state of Hitler; but the most casual observer of political events in this country must admit that those who run affairs here are not men of normal reactions. Their own decisions and actions are enough to unnerve them in the face of certain realities which call for genuine stalwart virtues. That is why the present clique of unprincipled men running this country will be very wary about throwing themselves upon the mercy of the world in an international show-down where no mercy would be shown.

I think nevertheless that they will be allowed to go much farther on the road of aggression, before the final halt is called; and therefore the future of European events is incalculable. Great Britain and France are making a great mistake to allow the Spanish situation to deteriorate to the extent to which it is going. The plan here is to cooperate with Mussolini in bringing the Spanish conflict to a successful close for Franco. In the meantime the Czechoslovakian feud can be kept burning so that if the strategic position can eventually be secured in the Mediterranean sufficiently to the advantage of the dictators to immobilize France and England a try can be made in the march toward the east. Therefore the situation here will remain on the "very bad neighbor status" until France is threatened on the south. If, then, the situation is propitious for Germany to try her hand at a military venture into Czechoslovakia it will be done, provided the German General Staff approves and says the coast is clear. One thing is sure: nothing will be accomplished by such agreements which England and Italy have concluded unless to enable Great Britain to catch up with her armaments. No peace can be established between the dictators and the western democracies, including our own, and an eventual show down must come. I think it is a great pity for the American people to have illusions about our position in the whole matter. We cannot escape the evil fate which the rise of the dictators have thrown upon us. They must sooner or later force England and France and the countries which may still be allied with them to make a stand. Mussolini and Hitler will continue to stand together during the development of this period, which may be much longer in duration than we think. It may last even five more years; and this period of the strengthening of the dictators strategically and economically will have opposite effects in the rest of the world. The western democracies will do themselves little service by continuing to proclaim the message of peace and good will. The aggressors do not share these sentiments, but are most content that their potential enemies are dedicated to
these principles, which render them less dangerous and formidable. I am sure that a dangerous, less "peace-loving" group of nations allied for their own security and interests would defeat the dictators and cause them to crumble. The courage to risk a war over Spain would have already started the dictators down hill. The western democracies must be willing to envisage war and should in fact prepare not only to wage a war of defense but one of tremendous "offense" as well. In the face of this obstacle the peace of the world may be secured; but there will be no chance of it until the dictators see that in peace is their only hope of survival. Ans I think we should play our part in bestowing this conviction where it will do the most good. I wish our statesmen would no longer proclaim their attachment to peace but to those things which we prize more than peace.

There is a feeling over here among the Germans that in case of war with England and France we would come in again on the side of our old allies; and this conviction has done a great deal of good and is, I understand, held in the highest circles. It is the right impression to give and does the most good. When they think of a conflict with England they see the great shadow of the United States in the background and this fills them with a deep and dreadful fear; and fear is the only helpful deterrent so far as these people are concerned. Good examples are lost as well as any appeal to law, decency or the general good of the world. We should have no illusions about how to deal with the Germans. That is why I have wanted our mission splendidly installed in the Blucher Palais; for then they would fear us, and fear is the only state of mind that can influence a people and a government such as this.

Faithfully yours

[Signature]