Dear Mr. Secretary:

Needless to say I shared yesterday the general relief which was felt by, I am sure, all of us when the news came over the ticker that an immediate outbreak of hostilities was to be avoided by the four-power meeting at Munich today. I believe, however, that thoughtful, well-informed persons must have this optimism and relief seriously tempered by fears that the greatest mistakes made in handling the European and German problem may be made now. If, in the desire to avoid the war with which Hitler is threatening Europe and the world, too far-reaching concessions are made, we will find that instead of arranging for peace a war has been made inevitable.

The fear of war has grown into a hysteria and there is grave danger that in the face of the tension and psychology prevailing in Europe today and elsewhere preliminary arrangements and promises may be made at Munich in the next few days which, if carried through, will either make Germany the master of Europe and of a good part of the world eventually — with all that that involves for others and ourselves, or a war will be made inevitable. If arrangements are made at Munich now or
or in a general conference elsewhere later which are a cynical sellout of principle -- just to avoid a war, and if Hitler will get promises of economic help, which he is certain to ask for, it will mean that the present Government in Germany will be solidified in power, given permanence and means to exist and fattened, and then through the avoidance of war now we should only have put Germany in a position to carry through successfully the war which she intends to fight and which she is not in a position to wage successfully now.

It is I believe clear that it cannot be hoped that this four-power meeting at Munich will do more than to arrive at some preliminary arrangements which will ward off immediate hostilities. No four powers can sit down and settle in a few days the general problems which are disturbing the world. Further discussions and a more general conference would have to be called to settle these problems and it will be a long drawn out process at the best. If promises are made of economic adjustments now of a far-reaching character, which promises cannot be met later, the maintenance of peace may not have been advanced but further prejudiced. In spite of some of the reports which we get, I am convinced that the weight of evidence is that the economic position of Germany and Italy and Japan is much weaker. I am convinced, out of my direct experience and observation, that there can be no peace in the world and no real progress towards the re-

establishment
establishment of law and order as long as there is not a
return to law and order and an observance of international
practice in the present totalitarian states. These states
are weak and can not much longer continue in their present
practices unless they are given real aid of an economic
nature. This is what they are after. While the economic
readjustments must be made just as much as the political,
they cannot be made at this time if it is done in a way
which will merely strengthen these totalitarian states and
put them in a position to dominate the rest of the world.
This is their unquestioned aim. If there had been any doubts
as to the issues at stake, the last few weeks should have
dispelled them to any person who can think realistically.

If the powers meeting at Munich, or which will meet
later at some other place, will be only dominated by this
fear of war and the desire to avert it at any price, then
arrangements will be made, whether we sit in or not, which
will have the most far-reaching consequences for us not only
in our political relations with other states but in our
economic relationships and the repercussions on our internal
situation, political and economic, will be far-reaching.
Our trade agreements program will go by the board -- we shall
have to take the crumbs which are left to us. Our relation-
ships with practically every state outside of this hemisphere
will become more difficult. Our problems in a good part of this
hemisphere, which are already difficult, will become acute.
We shall ourselves eventually be faced by war which will become just as imminent, a threat as that which has faced Europe in the last days.

I do not wish to assume and am not assuming a defeatist attitude. I have continuously from the beginning of the totalitarian regime endeavored to maintain a constructive but at the same time a realistic attitude. To face the real situation is not taking a defeatist attitude but a realistic one. The Germany with which certain arrangements could have been made under Stresemann and Brüning is a different Germany from the one we have to deal with under Hitler today in many ways. And arrangements which were then possible and which would have been constructive, are today impossible until there is a regime of law and order in Germany. Certain economic arrangements will eventually have to be made and should be made as soon as possible but they can only be made with safety with a Government in Germany which has definite respect for the rights of others — large and small — and which is not aimed at world domination.

I put forward that it is not realistic to assume that with the gaining of its new proclaimed objectives in Czechoslovakia, Germany will be satisfied so far as her territorial objectives are concerned. Only a year ago the German Government said just as definitely that it had no objective in Austria affecting the sovereignty of Austria.
Until less than six months ago the present Government in Germany said that it had no objectives in Czechoslovakia affecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity but only wished to assure decent treatment of minorities. I will not go over the long record, but I think we must view the last Hitler pronouncement realistically and in the light of the known facts and with the realization that with Germany made stronger now, it is inevitable that the progress towards territorial expansion will continue.

Nerves are giving way under the strain in more than one part of the world. We cannot and will not let that happen here. The Monroe Doctrine is just as much of an irritant to the present Government in Germany as the maintenance of the Czechoslovakian State. We have in the end the most to lose if arrangements are made now which endanger our interests and, as I see it, there is a grave danger of that, which must be realized by anyone who takes a long-range view and a realistic attitude. A wise man asked me yesterday what the difference was between Hitler taking something which didn't belong to him and had never belonged to his country and between Chamberlain and Daladier giving away something which wasn't theirs and had never been theirs. I am fearful that in the arrangements about to be made, and which may be made in the near future growing out of the Munich meeting, someone other than ourselves is going to give away something precious that belongs to us.
It is necessary for us, as I feel all of us in this country will, to keep our heads and to maintain the long-range view. There are grave dangers in the situation even in this country. A few months after the present Government came into power, Goebbels was telling me what the Party was going to do in order to regiment the German population in every way and to make it an instrument of the state. I remarked that the methods which had been employed in Russia and which he was planning to employ in Germany would probably not be successful as the German population was much more intelligent and informed. Goebbels, who is the most profound cynic in the world today, said in German the equivalent of the following, "There is nothing so untrue which if repeated often enough all the people will not end in believing". As a fundamental practice of National Socialist Government this requires no elucidation. How dangerously true it is is reflected in the growing opinion in this country that the Czechoslovakian Government has really oppressed and ravaged the Sudeten area. The world has apparently ended in believing that what was in reality a certain unequal treatment of the Sudeten was in effect a regime of barbarity and oppression. There is food for thought in this.

G. S. Messersmith.

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