Dear Mr. Messersmith:

I was sorry that circumstances made it impossible for us to meet on your brief visit here. I wanted at that time to bring a number of things to your attention. I want to do so now more than ever.

I am sure you must feel as I do a strange mixture of sentiments as we review the events of the last few days - profound gratification that war has been avoided, but an equally profound, lurking fear that the issue is only delayed. Of course, the State Department knows a great deal more than I or the average citizen. I cannot help wonder, however, if Mr. Chamberlain's persistent and consistent program does not represent a complete volte face in British foreign policy. I mean quite frankly a pro-German orientation. His signing of the pact with Hitler for friendship and mutual pledges against war between England and Britain would seem to indicate that England has thrown over her erstwhile allies in her fear of Russia. The lines of a completely new world situation begin to emerge. Perhaps we shall see some rapprochement now in the Far East between Japan and England. The prospect for us is rather terrifying. We've got to do a number of things, as I see it. We have got to build up the strongest possible defense forces with an immediate expansion in the air. Also, while attempting to hold the lines of the democratic front, we have got to look carefully on all sides. But you know that better than I. My friend Herbert Adams Gibbons was right when he pointed out that self interest, and self interest alone, dominates the foreign policy of nations. He did not mean that we should sacrifice the ideals that we have, but in a world of realists we too are forced to be realists.

I look for increasing pressure from Fascist states - pressure of propaganda and organization. This pressure will be sympathetically viewed by potential American Fascists and an increasing emphasis will be laid by conservatives in industry and finance and politics upon the Red menace. Advantage will be taken of dissatisfied groups. The strands of loyalty that reach across the ocean will stir the foreign born masses in America, who will be moved by the spectacle of successful fatherlands. We have the beginnings here of another Spain if we don't look out.
Our primary job at the present time, it seems to me, is to keep the country, so far as possible, united. But there must first be a recognition that we face this internal danger. What to do?

I have confidence in the decency of the masses of the people. You may remember last year I spoke with you about the possibility of organizing some instrument of educational propaganda. I feel keenly that if public opinion had been hospitable to some strong statement on the part of the President, the whole situation today might have been different. The State Department was in no position to go further than the utterances of Mr. Hull and the President because the country was not behind them. The country was not behind them because it did not understand the implications of a Fascist victory in Europe. As I see it, our job today is to enlighten public opinion. If we were in danger before, the danger is much nearer now. Recent events in Brazil and more recently in Chile indicate the boring in process. On my return home through Panama, I checked with important people on the Isthmus what the situation is there. Our foes are active.

My thoughts run roughly along these lines:

1. There are many men like myself who probably contact thousands and hundreds of thousands through the spoken and written word, who might be used as instruments in a great educational campaign.

2. Such a campaign, however, will have to have source material of the most authoritative kind. I believe the Foreign Policy Association, headed up by Raymond Buell, is in a position to produce a series of pamphlets which would outline the implications and give historical data. This is absolutely essential.

3. The whole thing should not be done publicly as an Administration effort. It should be a non-partisan effort. The personnel should be quietly picked and carefully. But if you turn loose fifteen or twenty influential figures, I believe you will see a realization on the part of the people of the profound implications for the future of our country in a Fascist dominated Europe.

Something of this sort may have already been undertaken. However, if it has not, don't let us wait until it is too late. The plan envisages also speakers on the economic front, not in denunciation of either capital or labor but in the effort to show the necessity in the present emergency that we unite our American household. Chamberlain never would have been able to get away with his present program in the view of an enlightened British public opinion, nor would Daladier.
4. Another item in such an educational propaganda program might well be the careful selection of a group of our powerful industrialists and manufacturers, men who do an export trade particularly to South America -- a personal invitation from the Secretary of State or the President, who would in a purely informal and social way let them in on what is taking place, the attempts that will inevitably be made to drive us out of South America, the necessity for them to keep their eyes open and to make concessions for the South American trade. All of which perhaps may have already been done but I include for additional emphasis.

In my judgment, the fight is just beginning. We have got to be on our national toes. The isolationists have a five-mile view. We need a twenty-five mile view. All the obvious instruments are on the side of the isolationists, true. I have never been so disheartened as I was when Chamberlain's plan first hit me with all of its implications. My first reaction, as I am sure the reaction of most people friendly to cooperation with England and France, was, "Well, they not only sold out Czechoslovakia but they have sold out their potential allies on this side." However, the last step is not taken and in the end we would find ourselves side by side with France and England.

I hope I have made myself clear. I am not pleading for an educational program for foreign entanglements. What I envisage is a quiet, persistent, well organized effort to inform our citizens of the danger to us here. If you think these considerations merit the eye of Judge Moore and the Secretary of State, I am enclosing copies which you may turn over to them.

With warm personal greetings,

Faithfully yours,

Morris S. Lazarof.

The Honorable George Messersmith,
Department of State,
Washington, D. C.