December 21, 1938.

Personal

Mr. Welles:

With reference to the call which you told me yesterday the German Chargé is making on you today to make a protest based on the recent speech of Secretary Ickes, I venture to suggest that it may be received very coldly and practically without comment. The remarks of Secretary Ickes were concerned principally with the act of certain Americans in receiving decorations from other Governments. Our people generally do not approve of our private citizens taking decorations from other Governments and it is quite natural that they should particularly not approve of their taking such decorations from Governments which practice discriminatory measures against our citizens and against their own people. This aversion to decorations in general is deeply rooted in our tradition and basic law for we have constitutional and statutory provisions with regard to decorations and awards from other Governments. Completely aside from the above, however, to which you might wish to make reference, it seems to me that any protest from the German Government concerning the relatively innocuous remarks of Secretary Ickes comes with particularly bad grace.
graos at this time. The German newspapers recently have contained dastardly attacks on the President and Mrs. Roosevelt and high officials of this Government and on our Government in general. As the complete coordination and control of the German press and all opinion-forming means is a declared part of the program of the National Socialist Government, the German Government cannot escape responsibility for such attacks. I do not have before me the actual newspapers in which these attacks appeared but my recollection is that they were in newspapers which are controlled by Party members. You know that Hitler, Goebbels, Goering and others high in the German Government are directly or indirectly the owners of the principal German newspapers today. In any event, we know that nothing appears in the German press today without the knowledge and consent of the German Government, while we in this country do not exercise any control over the press whatever. We would be far more justified in making a protest to the German Government over the tenor of these recent articles.

I venture to suggest, therefore, that you may wish to consider simply informing the German Chargé that you are taking note of what he has had to say without offering any comment, other than such of the foregoing as you might think useful for his background.
I venture further the thought that, knowing Thomsen as I believe I do, he will feel himself very much embarrassed in making such a protest under instructions of his Government and that he will quite understand any absence of comment.

G.S.M.